Linguistics 20001: Introduction to Linguistics  
Spring 2016
MWF 10:30 – 11:20, Harper 130

instructor  
Gallagher Flinn  
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Course Description

The goal of this course is to introduce you to some of the concerns, questions, and methods of modern linguistics. These include (but are certainly not limited to):

- Phonology
- Phonetics
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Semantics
- Pragmatics
- Language Acquisition
- Historical Linguistics

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. describe and give examples of the major problems in linguistics.
2. use and understand basic linguistic terminology.
3. apply the tools of linguistic analysis to the sounds, words, and sentences of a language.
Prerequisites

The goal of this course is to learn about the tools and formalisms that we have for studying language, so there’s no expectation that you would already know them. The only prerequisite is the ability to speak and understand a human language. Any language is fine, although if you only speak, say, Hittite, then we may have to find a workaround (also how did you get into college?).

Grade Distribution

1. Attendance and participation in the class and section ................................. 10%
2. Homework assignments ................................................................. 40%
3. Mid-term exam ................................................................. 20%
4. Comprehensive final exam .................................................. 20%
5. Research awareness requirement .................................................. 10%

Participation: Participation grades are based on your level of engagement in class and section. This means no devices – laptops, cells, pagers, gramophones, etc. I realize that many of us (myself included) have gotten used to taking notes on laptops, but the truth is that their potential as a distraction outweighs their benefits. Therefore your participation grade will be based not only on showing up and asking interesting questions, but also your ability to not watch YouTube videos during class. However, if you do require a keyboard to take notes, requests made through Student Disabilities Services will be accommodated without further discussion.

Late Assignments: Homework assignments will generally be weekly, due on Monday. Late assignments will have one letter grade deducted per day late.

Sections: There are three sections for this course, one led by each of the three course assistants. You must register for one of these three (the TAs will be contacting you about your preference, though unfortunately it may not be possible to give you your first choice: each section must have very close to the same number of students). Attendance at section is mandatory. Your assignments will be graded by the course assistant in charge of your section. Exams will be graded by me.

Extra credit: Over the course of the quarter there will be two or three extra credit assignments available. They will be fairly difficult and involve going deeper into some of the topics we’ve been talking about, but should offer a chance for you to stretch your legs a bit.
Readings

There will be weekly readings, usually for texts that you will need to refer to for the homework, but occasionally just things that I think are interesting. Hopefully you will too. There is no required textbook for the class. If you’re interested in a particular branch of linguistics, I can give you some recommendations for a good introductory text to read.

Research awareness requirement

In addition to coursework, you are also asked to help advance human knowledge by participating in some of the ongoing research in the linguistics lab here at the University of Chicago. You can sign up for one of our studies by creating an account at:

- https://uchicagoling.sona-systems.com/

You are also required to attend one of our workshops or colloquia and turn in a 500-word summary of the talk. Information on workshop schedules can be found at:

- https://linguistics.uchicago.edu/news-events/workshops
- https://linguistics.uchicago.edu/news-events/colloquia

Schedule

The schedule is provisional and may be subject to changes.

Week 1: Introduction — March 28, 30, April 1

What is linguistics? Animals, myths, and the limits of language
Give orange me give eat orange give me eat orange give me you.

Week 2: Phonology — April 4, 6, 8

The IPA, vowels and consonants, phonological rules
Why fnrpn isn’t an English word

Week 3: Phonetics — April 11, 13, 15

Acoustic phonetics and the anatomy of sound
X-ray your face! Paint your tongue purple! Yell into this microphone!

Week 4: Morphology — April 18, 20, 22

Word formation, morphological typology, and some very long words
Doctor, I need antibiotics. My verbs are inflected.
Week 5: Syntax — April 25, 27, 29

The nature of syntactic structure and linguistic complexity
Hint: It’s pretty complex

Week 6: More Syntax — May 2, 4, 6

Movement, constituency, and syntactic diagnostics
What we need is a way to identify pseudo-clefts.

Week 7: Semantics — May 9, 11, 13

Sets, types, and truth conditions
How do I know what you mean?

Week 8: Pragmatics — May 16, 18, 20

Implicature, presupposition, and information structure
How do I know you know I know what you mean?

Week 9: Language Acquisition — May 23, 25, 27

Stages and models of acquisition
Why babies should be able to crack bank passwords

Week 10: Historical Linguistics — May 30, June 1, 3

Proto-languages and reconstruction methods
Bringing it all together to find out what your great-grandparents sounded like