

210 Introduction to Linguistics
online – Tue/Thur 11:00 am -12:20 pm

Syllabus for Linguistics 210g
Introduction to Linguistics
Spring 2021 - course 38818R

Lecture times: Tuesdays & Thursdays 11 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.

Instructor: Prof. Sandra Ferrari Disner
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Section meetings: TBA

Course description:

Linguistics is the scientific study of language as it is represented in the human mind and activated (in the form of sound waves) by the human vocal tract. In this course you will learn to examine language in a systematic way, in order to uncover abstract patterns and generalizations. Your inquiry will focus on your own internalized ‘grammar’, which is comprised of a mental lexicon (your dictionary of known words); a recognized set of speech sounds, and the articulatory gestures associated with their production; sets of rules for word formation and for sentence structure; logical principles that underlie the relations between utterances; and even some idiolectal characteristics that can be of signal interest in a courtroom setting. We will also explore how these language components are acquired by children and may be lost by adults in consequence of cerebral damage.

The major subfields of theoretical linguistics to which you will be introduced in this course are:

- Phonetics – the production and perception of speech sounds
- Phonology – the systematic organization of speech sounds
- Morphology – the structure of words
- Syntax – the structure of phrases and sentences
- Semantics – the meaning of words and phrases
- Language acquisition – the manner and order in which children build up a vocabulary and grammar.

The data that we will consider comes primarily from English, though illustrative examples will be provided from a typologically representative sample of the world’s 7,000 languages.

This course fulfills the University’s GE requirement in category F, Quantitative Reasoning.

Textbook:

Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction, W. O'Grady, J. Archibald, M. Aronoff and J. Rees-Miller. *Seventh Edition*, 2017. [CL] (Previous editions are not acceptable.) For those with access to campus, two copies of the textbook will be on 3-hour loan at Leavey Library. Chapter 1 will be posted on Blackboard for advance preparation.

Course requirements:

1. Attendance and participation. Class meetings in Ling 210 will be comprised of both online lectures and online discussion sections. Attendance (both in class and in discussion sections) and participation are very important; not only are they usually correlated with achievement, but attendance in discussion sections will determine a portion of your grade.

The attendance and participation components of your grade (total: 5%) will be determined by your TA, based on the following criteria:

- Attendance in discussion section
- Responses to lecture guide questions and/or in-class exercises
- Participation in discussions and activities in section

Attendance in the discussion section is mandatory. Two absences over the course of the semester will be excused without penalty, but further absences will be excused only at the discretion of the T.A., and with appropriate documentation. When an absence is due to a valid reason, such as illness, you should contact your teaching assistant on or before the day of the missed class.

2. Readings. The reading assignments are mainly from the textbook [CL], but occasionally you may be asked to read articles from linguistic journals or chapters from other textbooks. These will be available on Blackboard. It is recommended that you read the assigned chapters and readings in advance of each class session, in order to better follow the lectures and to ask cogent questions. Any and all readings and handouts posted on Blackboard may show up on the exams, as is also the case with CL chapters.
3. Problem sets. At least six times during the semester you will be assigned a problem set based on the material in the textbooks and the lectures. *Your lowest score will be deleted*. The work product must be non-collaborative and timely (=submitted on the due date). It is your responsibility to find out whether a problem set has been assigned.

A note on collaboration: General discussion of the assignments with other students is acceptable and encouraged, but in the end you must arrive at the actual solutions to problems on your own, and write them up on your own. Certain indicia make it quite apparent to an instructor when two students have collaborated on a problem set. (Note that your instructor is a forensic linguist.)

Lateness policy: Points will be deducted from problem sets which are handed in late, at the initial rate of 10% of the total score if the problem set is handed in *after* the work is due, and then 10% for each successive day until the following class session, when the problem set

will no longer be accepted. Points will not be deducted when there is a valid, documented reason for the lateness, such as illness.

4. Exams. There will be three closed-book exams covering different portions of the material: two midterms and a final. They will include questions in a variety of formats, such as problem solving, labeling, short answer and multiple choice questions, and phonetic transcription. These exams are *not cumulative*; that is to say, the material tested in one exam will not be revisited in another. Each of the three exams, even the final, is to be completed in 80 minutes.

Grading plan:

Attendance and participation: **5%**

Problem sets: **20%**

Midterm 1: **25%**

Midterm 2: **25%**

Final: **25%**

Academic integrity:

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. Students are expected to uphold the USC Student Conduct Code (<https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>). Violations of the code harm every student in the class, and carry strict sanctions. (See Section 11 of the above.) Any student who is found cheating on an exam or homework, or who facilitates cheating by another student, will receive no credit for that work, and the matter may be reported to SJACS. Once again, you should keep in mind that the instructor is, by training, a forensic linguist.

Students with disabilities:

Students needing special accommodations (e.g., longer exam time) due to a physical or learning disability should contact the instructor as early in the semester as possible, and should also contact Disability Services and Programs (DSP) to obtain a letter of verification for approved accommodations. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776 and the webpage is http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html

Linguistics 210: Introduction to Linguistics

Tentative schedule of topics and reading assignments. Watch Blackboard for updates.

January 19, 21: The scientific study of language

The nature of Language (distinct from the study of individual languages)
Linguistic competence vs. linguistic performance
Descriptive vs. prescriptive grammars
Universal Grammar. Innateness of language.

Readings: CL: Chapter 1

January 26, 28, Feb. 2, 4: Phonetics.

Speech production. Anatomy & articulators. Classes of sounds.

Readings: CL Ch. 2, sections 1-6 and 10

The International Phonetic Alphabet. Transcription. IPA bingo.

Readings: CL Ch. 2, sections 7-8

And for pronunciation and transcription of the Int'l Phonetic Alphabet:

https://www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/IPAcharts/inter_chart_2018/IPA_2018.html

Articulatory processes

Readings: CL, Ch. 2, section 9

February 9, 11, 16, 18: Phonology.

Phonemes and allophones

Readings: CL: Chapter 3, sections 1-3

Phonological processes. Phonological rules. Phonological analysis.

Readings: CL Ch. 3, sections 4-6

February 23: First Exam

February 25, March 2, 4, 9: Morphology

The structure of words.
Inflectional and derivational morphology.
Compounding. Other morphological processes

Readings: CL: Chapter 4, sections 1-5

Morphophonemics

Readings: CL: Chapter 4, section 6

March 11, 15, 18: Syntax (Part I)

Sentence structure. Constituency.
Phrase structure and X'-theory.

Readings: *CL: Chapter 5, sections 1 and 2*

The use of modifiers.

Readings: *CL: Chapter 5, section 5.2*

March 25: <i>Second Exam</i>
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March 30, April 1: Syntax (Part II)

Transformations

Readings: *CL: Chapter 5, section 3, 4, and 5.1*

April 6, 8, 13, 15: Semantics

Semantics: the study of meaning

Pragmatics: meaning in context

Forensics: application of linguistics in the courtroom

Readings: *CL: Chapter 6, sections 1, 2.1-2.2, 3.1-3.3, 4.1-4.2 and 4.4.*

April 20, 27: First Language Acquisition

Guest speaker: Prof. Elaine Andersen, Emerita of Psychology & Linguistics

First language acquisition

Babbling. Early phonetic processes.

Vocabulary development.

Readings: *CL: Chapter 9, sections 1, 2, 4, and 6.5.*

April 29: Course review and concluding remarks

May 11 (11 a.m.) <i>Third exam</i> (not cumulative)
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