

LING 210G: Introduction to Linguistics (38990R)
Fall 2024, Tuesday/Thursday 3:30-4:50 p.m., DMC 152

Syllabus

Introduction to Linguistics (LING 210G)

Lecture times: Tuesdays & Thursdays 3:30 – 4:50 p.m.

Classroom: DMC 152

Instructor: Prof. Canaan Breiss
office: GFS 301E
e-mail: cbreiss@usc.edu

Office hours: Wednesdays, 10am-12pm, and by appointment

Teaching assistant: Haley Hsu, haleyhsu@usc.edu; office hours in GFS 340 Monday 2-4

Section meetings: Fridays at 9:30 a.m. and 11am.

Course description:

Linguistics is a branch of cognitive science: the study of human language as an aspect of the human cognitive system. Linguists ask questions like: how is language represented in the human mind? What are the different levels of linguistic structure? How are abstract mental representations of language translated into concrete gestural behaviors, like tongue movements (in spoken languages) or hand movements (in signed languages)? In this course you will learn to examine language in a systematic way, in order to uncover abstract patterns and generalizations. Every speaker of a language has internalized a mental ‘grammar’; the major subfields of theoretical linguistics focus on different aspects of these grammars. *Phonetics* studies how speech sounds are produced and perceived; *phonology* studies how speech sounds are abstractly represented and patterned; *morphology* studies how word-forms are stored in a ‘lexicon’, or mental dictionary, and how complex words can be built out of sub-word units; *syntax* studies how words can be used to build phrases and sentences; *semantics* studies the meanings of words, and how the meanings of phrases can be built out of word meanings. In this introductory course, you’ll get a survey of the basics of these ‘big five’ subfields of linguistics; we’ll also briefly discuss *sociolinguistics*, or the study of how linguistic variation is associated with social identity, and *historical linguistics*, or the study of how language changes over time.

Though we’ll see a lot of data from English, we’ll also see examples drawn from a typologically representative sample of the world’s 7000 languages.

This course fulfills the University's GE requirement in category F: Quantitative Reasoning. As such, you should be prepared for difficult homeworks that involve formal reasoning.

Textbook:

Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction, W. O'Grady, J. Archibald, M. Aronoff and J. Rees-Miller. *Seventh Edition*, Bedford/St. Martins (Macmillan Learning), 2017. Several copies of the textbook will be on 3-hour loan at Leavey Library. Chapters will also be available on BrightSpace.

Course requirements:

1. Attendance and participation. Class meetings in Ling 210 will be comprised of lectures and discussion sections. Attendance in class and in discussion sessions is expected, and is usually correlated with achievement. Your participation in the discussion sessions is very important, as it will determine a portion of your grade.

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

- Attendance in discussion sections
 - Responses to lecture guide questions and/or in-class exercises
 - Participation in discussions and activities in section
2. Readings. The reading assignments are from the textbook, and are assigned at the beginning of each *module*. These will be available on Brightspace. 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 Brightspace may show up on the exams, as is also the case with textbook reading chapters.
 3. Homeworks. Six times during the semester you will be assigned a problem set based on the material in the textbooks and the lectures, usually at the beginning of a module. Problem sets are usually due on the second class of the following module. *Your lowest problem set score will be dropped*. 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, to turn it in online on time. Contact the instructor *only* if you are unable to submit the assignment online for whatever reason.

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.

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.

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:

Participation: **5%**

Problem sets: **35%**

Midterm 1 (closed-book, closed-notes exam): **20%**

Midterm 2 (closed-book, closed-notes exam): **20%**

Final (closed-book, closed-notes exam): **20%**

Letter grade	Corresponding numerical point range
A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Academic integrity:

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. The USC Student Handbook (https://policy.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/USC_StudentCode_September2023-1.pdf) contains the Student Community Expectations for Academic Integrity on pages 8-14. Incidents of academic misconduct will be referred to the Office of Academic Integrity for its administrative review process.

Generative AI Policy:

You are expected to not use Generative AI of any sort for any part of this class.

Email policy:

I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours during the week; I will not respond to emails over the weekend. I expect the same of you.

Laptop Policy:

I prefer very strongly that you don't use laptops or other electronic devices in the classroom. If you have a very good reason why you can't take notes on paper, please tell it to me. I'm happy to make exceptions, if they're being made for a very good reason.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Other resources to support student well-being are provided on the last page of this syllabus.

Tentative outline of course

Module	Day	Date	Topic	Reading	HW	Exams
Intro	Tues.	27-Aug	Linguistic competence; prescriptive vs. descriptive grammar	Textbook ch. 1	HW 1 assigned	
Intro	Thurs.	29-Aug	Parity of languages; overview of subfields of linguistics			
Phonetics	Tues.	3-Sep	The International Phonetic Alphabet; the articulators; consonants	Textbook ch.2	HW 2 assigned	
Phonetics	Thurs.	5-Sep	Sonorants; vowels		HW 1 (intro) due	
Phonetics	Tues.	10-Sep	Suprasegmentals			

Phonology	Thurs.	12-Sep	Categorical perception; sound patterns	Textbook ch. 3	HW 3 assigned	
End of Add/Drop						
Phonology	Tues.	17-Sep	Phonemes; allophones; complementary distribution		HW 2 (phonetics) due	
Phonology	Thurs.	19-Sep	Phonological rules; derivations; features			
Phonology	Tues.	24-Sep	Natural classes; types of rules; syllables			
Phonology	Thurs.	26-Sep	Sonority; syllabification algorithms			
MIDTERM	Tues.	1-Oct	MIDTERM 1			
Morphology	Thurs.	3-Oct	Morphemes; morphophonology; complex words	Textbook ch. 4	HW 4 assigned	MIDTERM 1
Morphology	Tues.	8-Oct	Types of affixes		HW 3 (phonology) due	
BREAK	Thurs.	10-Oct	FALL RECESS - NO CLASS			
Last day to withdraw with a 'W'						
Morphology	Tues.	15-Oct	Derivational affixes; case; agreement			
Morphology	Thurs.	17-Oct	Gender; conversion; compounds			
Morphology	Tues.	22-Oct	Blending; morphological typology			
Syntax	Thurs.	24-Oct	Recursion; lexical categories; constituency	Textbook ch. 5 sections 1-2	HW 5 assigned	
Syntax	Tues.	29-Oct	Constituency tests; phrase structure		HW 4 (morphology) due	
MIDTERM	Thurs.	31-Oct	MIDTERM 2			MIDTERM 2
Syntax	Tues.	5-Nov	Generalizing phrase structure; selection	Textbook ch. 5 sections 3-5		
Syntax	Thurs.	7-Nov	Transformations			
Semantics	Tues.	12-Nov	Lexical semantics; entailment; presupposition	Textbook ch. 6	HW 6 assigned	

Semantics	Thurs.	14-Nov	Negative polarity items; intensionality		HW 5 (syntax) due	
Semantics	Tues.	19-Nov	Aspectual classes			
Semantics	Thurs.	21-Nov	Event structure			
Semantics	Tues.	26-Nov	Implicatures & Speech acts		HW 6 (semantics) due	
	Thurs.	28-Nov	THANKSGIVING RECESS			
Sociolinguistics	Tues.	3-Dec	Dialectology; registers, identity	Textbook Ch.13		
Historical linguistics	Thurs.	5-Dec	Historical linguistics, language change			
FINAL	Tues.	17-Dec	FINAL			FINAL

Support Systems:

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline consists of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-2500

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.