

# LING 20001: Introduction to Linguistics

## Spring 2021

T, Th 2:40-4  
Kent 107

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Office hours: By appointment

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Sections:	F 10:20-11:20	F 9:10-10:10
Office hours:	By appointment	By appointment

## Course Description

This course offers a brief survey of how linguists analyze the structure and the use of language. Looking at the structure of language means understanding what phonemes, words, and sentences are, and how each language establishes principles for the combinations of these things and for their use; looking at the use of language means understanding the ways in which individuals and groups use language to declare their social identities and the ways in which languages can change over time. The overarching theme is understanding what varieties of language structure and use are found across the world's languages and cultures, and what limitations on this variety exist.

## Course Objectives

In the course of this class, students will:

1. Be introduced to the discipline of linguistics and gain an understanding of how linguists scientifically approach the study of language as a whole
2. Learn the basic units of linguistic analysis (phonemes, morphemes, syntactic heads and phrases) and how they are combined to create language
3. Gain awareness of language as a social (and socially-conditioned) phenomenon and of how speakers can manipulate language for social ends
4. Learn about differences in languages of the world and how linguists reconcile these differences in the study of language as an entity
5. Discover how all languages are subject to variation at any given moment in time and understand how this variation leads to language change and language loss

## Required Texts

You are not required to purchase a textbook for this course. All readings will be made available on Canvas.

If you are interested in obtaining a hard copy of the textbook, we will primarily be using:

*Contemporary Linguistic Analysis: An Introduction (Eighth Edition)* by William O’Grady & John Archibald (ISBN 978-0-321-83615-1)

A 9th edition is also available and will probably not differ overly much from previous editions.

## Course Requirements

### Attendance

Attendance and participation in lectures and sections is mandatory and constitutes 10% of your grade. Assignments will draw on material from both lectures and the required reading.

### Assignments

- (a) **Readings.** There will be a weekly reading assigned from the textbook which will supplement in-class lectures. There is no “due date” for the reading—you are expected to complete it at some point during the week. I recommend staying up-to-date with the readings, as they will serve as a helpful reference for assignments.
- (b) **Problem Sets.** There will be about 4 problem sets designed to test your mastery of the linguistic concepts covered in the course. They will be assigned on Thursday and due **at the beginning of class** the following Thursday. Late assignments will be marked down 10% each day they are outstanding.

You may hand-write your submission but you must turn it in online via Canvas.

Please ensure that scanned submissions are legible.

You are welcome to collaborate with classmates on the assignments but you must write up your solutions individually to demonstrate your own work and reasoning about the problems.

### Final project

There will be a final project assigned halfway through the quarter, which will involve creating a conlang (a constructed language) in a group and drafting a description of it. You will be asked to describe certain aspects of the grammar (phonology, morphology, syntax), provide a description of any sociolinguistic variation (and how it is conditioned), and submit a sample lexicon. The full details of the project will be made clear when it is assigned and will depend on what we have managed to cover in the course. You will be allowed to select your own groups or, if preferred, I will assign groups. Although this is a group project, everyone will

be required to submit their own write-up. **A draft of the final project will be due at the beginning of Week 9.**

## Grading

Attendance and participation:	10%
Assignments:	60%
Final project:	30%

## Administrative Policies

### Land acknowledgment

Linguistics, like all other social sciences, has a problematic history with respect to Indigenous peoples and other minority groups, whose languages have been used without their consent in the service of goals they did not agree with. This space is to acknowledge this history and the contributions made by Indigenous speakers and scholars to the study of language. Our course meets on the ancestral lands of the Council of the Three Fires (*Niswi-mishkodewinan*), a confederacy including the Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa peoples. Other indigenous groups of Illinois include the Miami, Menominee, Sac, Fox, Ho-Chunk, Kickapoo, and Illinois Nations.

### Accommodations

I am committed to creating an inclusive and accessible classroom environment for all students, including those with visible and non-visible disabilities. Please write to me and we will agree on reasonable accommodations so that your educational needs can be met appropriately. There is no need to tell me of the reason for your accommodation request unless you feel it would be helpful. I will not require supporting materials from the Office of Student Disability Services unless significant changes to the course requirements are necessary.

### COVID-related policies

We will meet in-person as often as possible; however, we must all be prepared to move to an online meeting format depending on the status of the virus in Chicago and the university's guidelines. I recognize that the pandemic has placed an outsize burden on all of us and will approve extensions and accommodations as needed. However, I ask that you communicate with me *in advance* of deadlines so that we can make arrangements ahead of time.

There will not be a standing Zoom meeting for this course except on scheduled online days (e.g., First Week classes). My experience (as well as that of other instructors) has cast serious doubt on the quality of hybrid in-person/online classrooms, so I expect you to make an effort to attend class in-person unless you have a compelling reason that you cannot (e.g., potential COVID exposure). In the event that you think you may have been exposed to

COVID or have COVID symptoms, please inform me and the appropriate university officials ([C19HealthReport@uchicago.edu](mailto:C19HealthReport@uchicago.edu)).

## Use of technology in the classroom

In this time of hyper-connectedness, I ask that you take a break from social media and other online or digital distractions during our class. (Speaking from experience, it just takes a quick glance at a text or email to make you lose the thread of discussion.) Recurrent and/or disruptive distractions will be noted as part of your participation grade. Otherwise, you are welcome to use whatever technology you need (laptops, tablets) in order to maximally participate during lectures.

## Academic integrity

At this point I expect all of you are familiar with the University's [strict policies](#) regarding academic honesty and plagiarism. Instances of academic dishonesty will be penalized accordingly and may result in a failing grade in the course.

## Tentative Schedule

### Week 1: Introduction to the science of language

*Reading:* O'Grady Ch. 1 & Ch. 2

- Tuesday, 3/30: what is a language and how do linguists approach it scientifically
- Thursday, 4/1: prescription vs. description; units of linguistic analysis

### Week 2: Sounds

*Reading:* O'Grady Ch. 3

- Tuesday, 4/6: Phonetics
- Thursday, 4/8: Phonetics cont'd; phonology

**\*\*Homework 1 assigned Th 4/8, due Tu 4/13\*\***

### Week 3: Sounds and their social context

*Reading:* Wolfram & Schilling Ch. 4; (Optional additional references: [Variation in the UK](#); [Do you speak American? \(videos\)](#); [Dialects of English](#))

- Tuesday, 4/13: Phonology cont'd; morphophonology
- Thursday, 4/15: Sociolinguistics and the study of variation

## **Week 4: Morphology, or the units of meaning**

*Reading:* O'Grady Ch. 4

- Tuesday, 4/20: Morphology
- Thursday, 4/22: Morphology cont'd; morphosyntax

**\*\*Homework 2 assigned Th 4/22, due Th 4/29\*\***

## **Week 5: Syntax**

*Reading:* O'Grady Ch. 5

- Tuesday, 4/27: Syntax
- Thursday, 4/29: Syntax cont'd

## **Week 6: Cross-linguistic differences in structure and representation**

*Reading:* O'Grady Ch. 15 (Optional: Lyovin Ch. 2)

- Tuesday, 5/4: Morphosyntactic systems of the world (Guest Lecture: Matt Hewett)
- Thursday, 5/6: Writing systems

**\*\*Homework 3 assigned Th 5/6, due Th 5/13\*\***

## **Week 7: Sign language; semantics & pragmatics**

*Reading:* O'Grady Ch. 6

- Tuesday, 5/11: Sign language (Guest Lecture: Emre Hakgüder)
- Thursday, 5/13: Semantics & pragmatics

## **Week 8: Language change**

*Reading:* O'Grady Ch. 7; O'Grady Ch. 8 (Optional: Lyovin Ch. 1)

- Tuesday, 5/18: Language classification; typology
- Thursday, 5/20: Historical linguistics

**\*\*Homework 4 assigned Th 5/20, due Th 5/27\*\***

**\*\*Draft of final project due Tu 5/25\*\***

## **Week 9: Contemporary language change, language endangerment**

*Reading:* O'Grady Ch. 14; Evans Ch. 3

- Tuesday, 5/25: Language contact; language variation and change; historical sociolinguistics
- Thursday, 5/27: Language endangerment and shift

## **Finals Week**

**\*\*Final project due Friday, June 4th at 11:59pm\*\***