

# Linguistics 4300: Phonology

## Spring 2026

Meeting times: Tuesday and Thursday 2:20-3:40

Meeting locations: Jennings Hall 164

**Instructor:** Dr. Becca Morley  
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**Office Hours:** by appointment, just send me an email, really, it's part of my job

## Course Description

This course is an introduction to phonology: the study of the sound systems of language. There are two main goals of instruction in this course: 1) to learn how to do phonological analysis, and 2) to develop a familiarity with the types of phonological patterns that occur commonly in languages of the world. In the course of pursuing those two goals we will address issues relating to data collection and sampling, theory building and evaluation, and the conventions and notations employed in language description.

In order to learn how to analyze phonological systems it is necessary to actually look at a number of phonological patterns in diverse languages; that is, to be exposed to a large amount of data. For this reason, this course will be organized along lines very similar to a field methods course. In such a course, a linguist typically has access to a native informant from which he or she can elicit words and sentences of a previously undescribed language. From this corpus, the phonologist then attempts to deduce the inventory of contrastive sounds, their allowable combinations, and how sound segments are altered in certain environments. Similarly, students in this course should approach the material as field linguists, developing their own hypotheses about how individual language patterns are organized, and developing theories about how phonological systems work in general.

There is not a great deal of reading required for this course, nor are there any tests or exams. However, **you should expect a fairly heavy workload**. The bulk of the class will be taken up with working through a large number of datasets. This will occur through the homework assignments, as well as in-class exercises. This will be a collaborative process, therefore it is crucial that students both attend class, as well as contribute to class discussion.

## Required Materials

### Textbook:

The first half of the class will be devoted to natural language datasets. For the second half, we will read selections from the following book:

*Hayes, Bruce. Introductory phonology. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.*

### Devices:

Access to a tablet, laptop, or other internet-enabled computer (let me know if this will be a problem for you)

## Class Format & Procedures

**This class will be taught exclusively in person.**

## Grading & Evaluation

Assignments	Total Number	Percentage of Total Grade
Exercises	~38	30%
Homework	5-6	50%
Final Typology	1	20%

Assignments will be described below.

I do grade on a curve. I do this because the homework is difficult, and I don't expect you to get everything the first time you do it. I use a non-penalty curve, by which I mean that it will only be used to improve your grade (or have no effect); it will never lower your grade.

The percentages below are the non-curved OSU ranges, just for reference. I also take improvement into account, so there is a very good chance that your letter grade will be higher than what is reflected in your actual percentage score.

**Please note that you should ignore the grade that appears on carmen.** Carmen calculates this grade based purely on number of points, it does not know what percentage I assign to each category

**If, at any point in the semester, you become concerned about your grade, you can email me, and I can give you an estimate of your grade at that point.**

## **Non-Curved Grading scale percentages**

93–100: A  
90–92.9: A-  
87–89.9: B+  
83–86.9: B  
80–82.9: B-  
77–79.9: C+  
73–76.9: C  
70 –72.9: C-  
67 –69.9: D+  
60 –66.9: D  
Below 60: E

## **Special Considerations & Late Work**

I understand that sometimes you will miss class – and I strongly encourage you to stay home or to wear a mask if you are sick. If you do miss class, though, I do expect you to get the materials you need and to turn in your assignments on time. Exercises will be done collaboratively during class times. However, when I “collect” them, I will set the due date to be prior to the next class meeting time. If you do miss the relevant class, I expect you to work on the exercise on your own (with optional help from your peers). Because of this policy, **I do not accept late work as a general rule**. Homework can be turned in early if you know that you will be absent that day. The exceptions to this policy are actual emergencies, health issues, family stuff, and maybe other things if you **let me know about them in advance, or as soon as you know about them.**

## **Accommodation**

**LET ME KNOW NOW – NOT HALFWAY THROUGH THE SEMESTER**

The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements

with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion.

If you are ill and need to miss class, including if you are staying home and away from others while experiencing symptoms of a viral infection or fever, please let me know immediately. In cases where illness interacts with an underlying medical condition, please consult with Student Life Disability Services to request reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; or [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu).

Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential.

With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities. Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance.

A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement and the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy.

If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the [Civil Rights Compliance Office](#). (Policy: [Religious Holidays, Holy Days and Observances](#))

## Mental Health Services

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you, or someone you know, is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the **Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS)** by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu) or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

## Ethics

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's *Code of Student Conduct* (<http://studentconduct.osu.edu>), and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's *Code of Student Conduct* may constitute "Academic Misconduct."

## Intellectual Diversity

Ohio State is committed to fostering a culture of open inquiry and intellectual diversity within the classroom. This course will cover a range of information and may include discussions or debates about controversial issues, beliefs, or policies. Any such discussions and debates are intended to support understanding of the approved curriculum and relevant course objectives rather than promote any specific point of view. Students will be assessed on principles applicable to the field of study and the content covered in the course. Preparing students for citizenship includes helping them develop critical thinking skills that will allow them to reach their own conclusions regarding complex or controversial matters.

## Respect

You should treat everyone in this classroom with respect. That means, among other things, using everyone's preferred name and preferred gender pronoun (PGP). You should also be aware of the norms of respectful address for your instructors. Don't use their first names unless you're given explicit permission. If you're not sure whether your instructor has a PhD or not, err on the side of caution; Professor and Doctor are always acceptable. If you *do* know that your instructor has a PhD *do not* use Mr., Mrs., Miss, or even Ms.

## Assignments

Reading assignments are to be completed prior to class time on the day that they appear in the schedule. I prefer that you not read ahead in the book, as this will give you a chance to develop your own hypotheses first.

Submitted assignments are also due at the beginning of the class period. **Assignments turned in after class has started are considered late, and will not be accepted.**

### *Format of work:*

You may write out your assignments by hand and then scan them to turn in. If you prefer you can annotate the pdf's I provide you using a tablet or other device. You are also, of course, welcome to turn in word-processed assignments. If you go the latter route you will want to download software that allows you to use the International Phonetic Alphabet. Some resources are given below.

**All work, regardless of the original format should be submitted as a pdf file.**

### *Exercises*

are small datasets that students will work on in class independently, prior to whole class discussion. These will be made available on Carmen in pdf form prior to class time. These will be graded on a scale from 0-5, reflecting the extent to which you did as asked, and the extent to which your analysis reflects the class discussion.

### *Homework*

assignments involve the same kind of analysis as the exercises but include more problems, and more data typically. There will usually be around 4 or 5 multi-part problems per homework, and the points will reflect the difficulty of the problem. Your point totals will depend on **how complete your analysis is, and how good** (not whether it is correct – see below).

I will be randomly assigning you to homework groups for the first half of the course. These are intended to provide you with a way to bounce ideas off each other and provide a support network. It is my experience that the homework is a lot more tractable with the help of a group. **Every group will turn in a single assignment.** If you don't find your groupmates helpful, or they don't get back to you, don't sweat it. Let them know you're cutting them loose. Maybe next time you'll get a better group.

### *Final Typology*

This is the culmination of all the data we have analyzed in class. This is where you put it all together and look for patterns among the patterns. Those of you who have kept on top of the assignments and have taken good notes and kept organized will be in a much, much better position to do well on this project. Specific details of this assignment will be provided later in the semester.

## Data

You will need to keep some kind of **notebook**, virtual or real, of all data we cover in class or in homework. This will allow you to complete the typology assignment, and will make it easier to do analyses. **You should have easy access to this notebook during class meetings**, as I will frequently ask you to refer back to something we analyzed in the past.

## Note Taking

You are responsible for keeping track of the analyses we do in class. I expect you to take notes. I will expect, for example, that you keep track not only of your own analysis of data, but alternative analyses we develop in class. I will expect you to be able to do homework problems based on those analyses. Note taking is a difficult art so I do not expect you to be very good at it to start. It is my responsibility to pace the class in a way that makes it possible for you to take notes, analyze data, and formulate questions within the allotted time. **If you need more time to write something down, or something isn't clear, let me know.**

## Questions

**I expect you to ask questions if you have them. I rely on you to let me know when what I'm saying doesn't make sense\***. I will probably slip up and use a term that you don't know from time to time. Ask in class. Email me to schedule office hours.

## Thinking

I expect you to think for yourself in this class. I expect you to try things before we read what the textbook has to say. This is scary. I know. Do your best to get over it<sup>†</sup>. Trust me; by the end of the class, you will feel like you've actually learned something<sup>‡</sup>.

**Try to avoid succumbing to any of the following fallacies:**

- Questions should only be asked as an absolute last resort<sup>§</sup>
- Being wrong is the worst thing that could ever happen to me
- Office Hours are for the weak – and should only be utilized once I have bombed on 4 assignments
- Since I can't figure out how to do every problem, and even though I sort of think I know what #2 is about, I'm probably wrong, so I should just not turn anything in.
- Probably everyone else totally knows what's going on, so I should just keep my mouth shut.
- **The fact that there is no single right answer means that there is no wrong answer.**

Finally, a few things that should be obvious, but alas:

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\* Believe me, you will not be the only one.

† I'm here for you. Your classmates are here for you. Walk towards the light.

‡ I have 17 years of empirical data to support this claim.

§ This is the kind of class where you will probably feel much, much better about things if you ask questions. **I like it** when you ask questions. **Scientists are supposed to ask questions.**

## Things that are my job

- Doing what I can – within reason – to help you learn the material
- Making my expectations clear
- Providing feedback on your performance
- Being consistent and coherent
- Being responsive to requests and complaints

## Things that are not my job

- Going out of my way to enable you to pass without actually attending class
- Assisting you to exert the exact minimum amount of effort you need to pass the class
- Answering basic questions about assignments the night before they are due

## Technical Details

If you want to be able to use phonetic transcription with your word processor, you'll need to download some fonts. In fact, you're really going to want not only the font, but some sort of keyboard layout as well for shortcuts.

You can search around online for whatever works best for you, but here are a couple of sites that describe how to download and use different types of ipa fonts: [SIL font download](#)

Particularly for mac users:

[Mac IPA font](#)

## Other Stuff:

- Very cool site that has animations and movies of various sounds being produced:  
[Sounds of Speech](#)
- Lots of audio files of sounds from around the world:  
[UCLA Archive](#)
- IPA chart with clickable symbols for pronunciation:  
[IPA Chart](#)
- Encyclopedia of (all/most of ) the world's languages:  
[Ethnologue](#)

## LING 4300 — SPRING 2026

Week	Date	Topics	Exercises	Reading/HW
Week 1	1/13 (T)	<b>What is Phonology?</b>		Lecture 1
	1/15 (R)	Transcription Alphabet	Ex. 1 Balangao Ex. 2 Misantla Totonac I	Lecture 2
Week 2	1/20 (T)	<b>Inventories I:</b> Minimal Pairs	Ex. 3 Kodava Ex. 4 Misantla Totonac II	
	1/22 (R)	Sound Distributions	Ex. 5 Gujarati Ex. 6 Nootka	
Week 3	1/27 (T)	<b>Phonotactics:</b> ngram statistics #C(C) (C)C# VC(C)V #V V# VV ...	Ex. 7 Arabela Ex. 8 Cypriot Greek	Lecture 3
	1/29 (R)	<b>Phonotactics</b>	Ex. 9 Kishambaa Ex. 10 Papago Ex. 11 Jamaican Creole	
Week 4	2/3 (T)	<b>Phonotactics</b>	Ex 12 Makah Ex 13 Swedish	
	2/5 (R)	<b>Phonotactics</b>	Ex 14 Kimatuumbi Ex 15 Balangao II	HW 1
Week 5	2/10 (T)	<b>Inventories II:</b> Complementary Distributions [elsewhere condition]	Ex. 16 Mohawk Ex. 17 Papago II	Lecture 4
	2/12 (R)	Allophones	Ex. 18 Tibetan Ex. 19 Kuria II	
Week 6	2/17 (T)	Neutralization	Ex. 20 Japanese I Ex. 21 Tuyuca	
	2/19 (R)	Underlying Representations	Ex. 22 ASL Ex. 23 Ga	HW 2
Week 7	2/24 (T)	<b>Alternations I:</b>	Ex. 24 Koasati Ex. 25 Malay	
	2/26 (R)	Morphemes & Allomorphs	Ex. 26 Korean Ex. 27 Karok	<i>Ch. 5 (Morphology)</i>
Week	3/3 (T)	<b>Features I:</b> Sub-phonemic units	Ex. 28 Finnish Ex. 29 Macedonian	Lecture 5

8	3/5 (R)	<b>Alternations II:</b>	Ex. 30 Lebanese Arabic Ex. 31 Marghi	
Week 9	3/10 (T)	Morphophonology	Ex. 32 Chamorro Ex. 33 Yawelmani	HW 3
	3/12 (R)	Underlying Representations	Ex. 34 A.A II Ex 35 Koromfe [ATR]	
<b>SPRING BREAK: MON. 3/16–FRI. 3/20</b>				
Week 10	3/24 (T)	Rule Notation	Ex 36 Kashmiri Ex 37 Japanese II	<i>Ch. 1 &amp; 2 (Rules)</i>
	3/26 (R)	Con't	Ex 38 Koasati	<i>Ch. 8-8.3 (URs)</i>
Week 11	3/31 (T)	<b>Features II:</b>	Mohawk	HW 4
	4/2 (R)	super-phonemic units	Arabela Kipsigis Greek	<i>Lecture 7: syllables</i>
Week 12	4/7 (T)	<b>Features III:</b>	Malay 1 Korean Karak	<i>Ch. 4 (Features)</i>
	4/9 (R)	Matrix Notation Alpha Notation	Macedonian Keleyi Jamaican Creole	
Week 13	4/14 (T)	<b>Typology</b> Recurring patterns	Kishambaa Tuyuca Ga	
	4/16 (R)	<b>Hypothesis Selection</b> Descriptive vs. Explanatory Adequacy	Hungarian Lamba Kipsigis	HW 5
Week 14	4/21 (T)	Parsimony Naturalness	Kenyang Keleyi Russian	
	4/23 (R)	<b>Possible &amp; Impossible Languages</b>		
<b>Typology due during finals week</b>				