

Introduction to the Study of Language

LING 200 — Winter 2018

MWF 10:35 – 11:25, MDHAR G-10

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Instructor

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<i>office hours</i>	Tu, 10am–11am, or by appointment

Teaching assistants

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Course description

This class will explore the nature of human language from a number of different angles. In the first part of the course, we will focus on language from the perspective of the individual. We will defend the position that all languages are complex, rule-governed systems that embody a single innate human capacity for language. We will discuss and practice with how Language is studied as a cognitive science and how we can construct empirically testable hypotheses on sound, word and sentence structure to gain knowledge about how language is mentally represented.

In the second part we will explore questions on how we acquire linguistic knowledge and how language is instantiated in the brain. In this section we look at multilingualism and language disorders.

In the third part of the course, we will examine language from a perspective external to the individual. We will discuss topics including linguistic variation, how languages change through time and how languages influence one another through social contact.

Requirements and assessment

The requirements for this course are of five types:

1. **ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION:** Come to lecture (and conference), and participate. There is no substitute for coming to class, and your grade will suffer if you are repeatedly late or absent. Lecture slides will be posted on myCourses, but cannot serve as a substitute for course attendance.

Your overall participation grade is worth 4% of the course grade. 1% of this is reserved as an incentive filling out the course survey by Friday, January 19th.

2. **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS:** There will be six homework assignments throughout the semester, and you should expect one about every two weeks. Assignments must be **submitted electronically through myCourses in PDF format by 10am on the day that they are due.**

Homework assignments may be done in groups (max 3 students). **Each group member must submit their own assignment.** Please indicate at the top of each homework who else in the class you discussed your homework with or worked with. You are not required to work in a group.

The six homework assignments make up 42% of the course grade (7% each). Assignments will not be accepted late unless you have a documented medical excuse and we have been notified within 24 hours of when the assignment was due.

3. **QUIZES:** There four short quizzes will be available on MyCourses. **Quizzes make up 12% percent of the course grade (3% each).** They will be open for a 24 hour period and once started must be finished within 2 hours. These are designed to help you keep up with the material and to check your understanding.

4. **EXAMS:** There is one final cumulative exam during the exam period (date to be determined), **worth 42% of the total course grade.** As soon as the exam is scheduled, the syllabus will be updated with this information.

A summary of the final grade composition is given below.

Homework assignments (6)	42% (7% each)
Quizzes (4)	12% (3% each)
Final exam (1)	42%
Participation	4% (1% course survey, 3% general participation)

Readings

Required readings are located on the course website, and additional readings on topics of particular interest to you are available upon request. There is no textbook for this course. However, if you miss a lecture or find textbook reading conducive to your learning style, the lecture material will largely overlap with the following introductory linguistics textbooks:

Course rules and procedures

Conferences

Starting in Week 3, Friday sessions will be held as conferences run by a TA. **The first conference will be held on Friday, January 26.** Conferences will be held at different times on Fridays as follows:

	Time	Location	TA
002	F 10:35 am – 11:25 am	Dr. Penfield 1085 002	Bing'er Jiang
003	F 9:35 am – 10:25 am	Dr. Penfield 1085 002	Bing'er Jiang
004	F 8:35 am – 9:25 am	Dr. Penfield 1085 002	Clinton Parker
005	F 1:35 pm – 2:25 pm	Dr. Penfield 1085 002	Clinton Parker
006	F 8:35 am – 9:25 am	EDUC 437	Gouming Martens
007	F 12:35 pm – 1:25 pm	EDUC 629	Gouming Martens

To determine which conference you will attend, **you must sign up on Minerva**. Once you have signed up for one section, you cannot switch to another. An effort will be made to divide the students evenly between sections. This means that once a section has a certain number of students, no more students will be accepted into that section.

Attending conferences is just as important as attending lectures and you are responsible for the material covered in conferences just as you are responsible for the material covered in lectures. Your conference attendance will contribute to your overall participation grade. If for some reason you cannot attend a conference or lecture, you should make sure that you get the relevant notes from a classmate.

Office hours and appointments

TA office hours are held every week, starting in Week 3. The TAs will take turns covering the office hours so you will have a chance to meet with all TAs throughout the semester.

Instructor office hours are held every week, starting in Week 2. If you are unable to meet with TAs or the instructor during their office hours, you can ask for individual appointments and generally these can be arranged within one week of the request. I will not arrange standing meetings outside of office hours

Tutors

If you feel that you need more individual attention, we encourage you to contact either the Student Tutorial Service (398-6011) or SLUM (the undergraduate linguistics student association: slum.linguistics@mail.mcgill.ca). It is understood that tutors help with the content of the course but do not help directly with assignments. Make sure that your tutor knows what is being covered in the course this term since the content can change from term to term.

Electronic devices in class

Theory. I and many students find the use of electronic devices in class to be highly distracting. Furthermore, recent research has shown that students process and retain material better when taking notes by hand rather than on a laptop.¹ You may also find that writing your notes by hand in this class will save you some trouble dealing with special symbols and representations that can be difficult to produce with a keyboard.

Policy. **No one is permitted to use laptops, tablets, smart phones, or anything else with a screen in this class except by prior permission (or accommodation).** To get permission to use an electronic device in class you will need to submit an application: a typed document about one-third to one-half page in length, explaining what kind of device you want to use and how using this device will improve your learning experience in this class. Your application should also include a statement that you will not use your device in a way that could be distracting to me or other students (e.g., surfing the web, checking facebook, texting, etc.). **Applications for electronic device usage are due in one week (by Monday, January 15) and can be handed in as a hard copy or emailed to me as a PDF attachment.**

A word of warning: if you are texting or doing anything that looks remotely like texting during class, I reserve the right to awkwardly call you out and ask you to put away your phone. This is not because I don't like you it's just because I find it distracting.

¹Mueller, Pam A, and Daniel M Oppenheimer. 2014. The pen is mightier than the keyboard: advantages of longhand over laptop note taking. *Psychological Science* 25:1159–1168.

FYI: in addition to their own findings, Mueller and Oppenheimer report work by others showing that students using laptops are not on task during lectures (Kay & Lauricella, 2011; Kraushaar & Novak, 2010; Skolnick & Puzo, 2008; Sovern, 2013), show decreased academic performance (Fried, 2008; Grace-Martin & Gay, 2001; Kraushaar & Novak, 2010), and are actually less satisfied with their education than their peers who do not use laptops in class (Wurst, Smarkola, & Gaffney, 2008).

Course website

The course site is on myCourses. If you have any trouble accessing the course site, please notify me immediately. Access to the course site is a requirement of the course. Students often find the online discussions forums on myCourses helpful, e.g. for obtaining a faster response to questions than via email. Assignments will be submitted and graded via myCourses.

Emails

Please include “LING 200” in the subject line of emails to course staff. You can expect TAs and me to respond to your e-mail questions and comments. However, please do not expect instant responses. We will try to respond within two working days. Please email your TA's with questions concerning the content of the course. Email me for any other concerns or questions such as illness, missed assignments, registration issues etc. Longer questions should be reserved for in person meetings.

Late assignments

Assignments submitted within 24 hours after their due date will be accepted for no more than 50%. No make-up assignments will be given to anyone who does not have a certified medical excuse. We must be notified within 24 hours of a missed assignment by email. You are responsible for scheduling make-ups with the instructor as soon as possible and within a week. According to Senate regulations, instructors are not permitted to make special arrangements for final exams. Please consult the Calendar, section 3.7, General University Information and Regulations. (See <http://www.mcgill.ca/student-records/exam/regulations> for more information on final and deferred exams.)

Grading

Any problem with grading on a problem set, quiz, or exam must be reported within one week of when the problem set, quiz, or exam was returned. No answer to any graded material will be re-assessed unless the answer was originally written in ink and it has not been written over.

McGill Policy Statements

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter <https://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/fr/fairplay>).

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

As the instructors of this course we endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you

experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with us and the Office for Students with Disabilities (514-398-6009, <http://www.mcgill.ca/osd>).

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Copyright

Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., slides, handouts, conference materials, assignments, quizzes, exam questions, answer keys, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

Timeline

	Date		Topics (may change)	Reading (will be added to)	Assignments
1	M	Jan 8	Overview & Introduction		
	W	Jan 10	Knowledge of Language	Akmajian Ch 1; Isac & Reis Ch 1	
	F	Jan 12	Knowledge of Language	Isac & Reis Ch 2–3	
2	M	Jan 15	Language and cognitive science	Isac & Reis Ch 2–3	Quiz 1 Class survey
	W	Jan 17	Generative grammar, linguistic science		
	F	Jan 19	Phonetics/Phonology		
3	M	Jan 22	Phonetics/Phonology		HW 1 due
	W	Jan 24	Phonetics/Phonology		
	F	Jan 26	<i>Conference 1</i>		
4	M	Jan 29	Morphology		
	W	Jan 31	Morphology		
	F	Feb 2	<i>Conference 2</i>		
5	M	Feb 5	Morphology		HW 2 due
	W	Feb 7	Syntax		
	F	Feb 9	<i>Conference 3</i>		
6	M	Feb 12	Syntax		HW 3 due
	W	Feb 14	Syntax		
	F	Feb 16	<i>Conference 4</i>		
7	M	Feb 19	Language and the brain		
	W	Feb 21	Language and the brain		
	F	Feb 23	<i>Conference 5</i>		
8	M	Feb 26	Poverty of the stimulus		Quiz 2
	W	Feb 28	First language acquisition		
	F	Mar 2	<i>Conference 6</i>		
9	M	Mar 5	No class (reading week)		
	W	Mar 7	No class (reading week)		
	F	Mar 9	No class (reading week)		
10	M	Mar 12	Linguistic relativity		Quiz 3
	W	Mar 14	Dialectal variation		
	F	Mar 16	<i>Conference 7</i>		
11	M	Mar 19	Dialectal variation		HW 4 due
	W	Mar 21	Cross-linguistic variation		
	F	Mar 23	<i>Conference 8</i>		
12	M	Mar 26	Linguistic typology		Quiz 4
	W	Mar 28	Language change		
	F	Mar 30	<i>Conference 9</i>		
13	M	Apr 2	Language change		HW 5 due
	W	Apr 4	Language contact		
	F	Apr 6	<i>Conference 10</i>		

Date			Topics (may change)	Reading (will be added to)	Assignments
14	M	Apr 9	Language contact		HW 6 due
	W	Apr 11	Language vitality and revitalization		
	F	Apr 13	<i>Conference 11</i>		
15	M	Apr 16	Wrap up and review		