Languages of the World

McGill University
LING 215 — Winter 2021
TR 10:05AM–11:25AM

Instructor

Dr. Carol-Rose Little
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office hours: Tuesdays 11:30-12:30:

Content of the course

This course will provide an introduction to the study of linguistics through a look at the world's languages. Topics covered will include linguistic universals and language diversity; language endangerment, death, and revitalization; and the relationship between language and thought.

Readings and other media

Readings will be provided via myCourses throughout the course. In addition to readings, there will also be podcasts, short videos and other multimedia assigned, also available via myCourses throughout the course.

Remote delivery

- All lectures will be taught live via Zoom. All Zoom links will be posted on myCourses.

- All course materials (e.g. lecture slides, supplementary readings) will be posted on myCourses as early as possible, and will remain available throughout the semester.

- Instructor office hours will be held weekly online, and can be scheduled by appointment.

- All times correspond to the Montreal time zone.

Requirements and evaluation

Each student or group of students will choose a lesser-resourced language to examine from various perspectives throughout the semester. No prior knowledge of the language is required. I will provide a list of languages and possible grammars to choose from. Students may also choose a language not on the list, with my consent. Choosing a language will be discussed during the first two weeks of class.

Evaluation scheme

Discussion board posts	25%
Participation	5%
apprx. 7 HWs	35%
Final project	35%

Discussion board posts (25%)

Students are required to participate via discussion board posts. Discussion board posts include reading responses, responses to multimedia assigned, or answers to a prompt. There will be 1–2 discussion board posts a week. Responses should detail questions or challenges from the reading/multimedia assigned, engage with other posts, or be responses to a prompt. They should be short (about 100 words) and submitted via myCourses.

Participation (5%)

You will be required to participate synchronously during class via zoom. While I will not take enrollment, this means that attendance is necessary in order to receive full points for your participation grade. Use of camera is strongly encouraged. Use of voice or hand-raising is preferred. I will not be actively monitoring the chat.

Assignments (35%)

Over the course of the semester, you will have about 7 homework assignments to turn in. These assignments will be submitted through Crowdmark and must be typed. Late submissions will lose 5% of the grade per day. No late submissions will be accepted once assignments are returned or answers are made available. Groups may be formed via Crowdmark by students and the group must submit **a single assignment**. All members of a group will receive the same grade. You are not required to work in groups.

Final project (35%)

A final project on at least one language, the one chosen for previous work throughout the semester. The project will examine the linguistic structure of the language as well as describe and discuss the social history and/or current situation of the language or relation to more general history and policies.

Office hours and appointments

If you are unable to meet with me during office hours, you can ask for individual appointments or seek tutoring.

Email

While I will try to respond to your email within two business days, please ask yourself the following before sending an email:

- Is the information I need on the syllabus or in other course material?

- Does a classmate have this information? or could it be answered on the myCourses discussion board?

- Can my question wait until lecture/office hours?

Tutors

If you need additional help with course material, we encourage you to contact either Student Tutorial Services (www.mcgill.ca/tutoring/) or SLUM (slum.linguistics@mail.mcgill.ca), the undergraduate linguistics association. Tutors can 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.

Class policies and university regulations

Academic integrity

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/integrity for more information).

Right to submit work in French

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.

Inclusivity

As the instructor of this course I 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.

Copyright: Instructor-generated course material

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Extraordinary circumstances

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

Territory acknowledgement

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

Tentative schedule

	Date		Topics (tentative)	Readings due	Deadlines
1	Th	7/1	Introduction	–	
2	T	12/1	What is language	–	
	Th	14/1	Language families	Porzucki (2017) (podcast)	
3	T	19/1	Sounds	Maddieson (2013a,c,b)	
	Th	21/1	Sounds	Silver & Miller (1997)	Language selection due
4	T	26/1	Morphology, word structure	–	
	Th	28/1	Morphology, word structure	Silver & Miller (1997, Ch. 2)	HW 1 due
5	T	2/2	Syntax, sentence structure	Dryer (2013c,b,a)	
	Th	4/2	Syntax, sentence structure	–	
6	T	9/2	More syntax fun	Corbett (2013a,b)	
	Th	11/2	Nonverbal communication	Silver & Miller (1997, Ch. 7)	HW 2 due
7	T	16/2	Writing systems	Coulmas (2003, Ch. 2)	
	Th	18/2	Counting systems	Harrison (2008, Ch. 6)	
8	T	23/2	Multilingualism	Silver & Miller (1997, Ch. 9)	
	Th	25/2	Linguistic relativity	Pullum (1989)	HW 3 due
			STUDY BREAK: MARCH 1–5		
9	T	9/3	Guest lecture Juan Jesús Vázquez Álvarez	Vázquez Álvarez (2011, Ch. 1)	
	Th	11/3	Literature	TBA	
10	T	16/3	Language preservation	Littlebear (1999)	
	Th	18/3	Language preservation	Porzucki (2018) (podcast)	HW 4 due
11	T	23/3	Turkic languages Eszter Otott-Kovacs	Cox (2014) (podcast)	
	Th	25/3	TBA	TBA	Project proposal due
12	T	30/3	Presentations on final projects	–	Short presentation
	Th	1/4	Language policies	DeGraff (2020)	
13	T	6/4	Mesoamerican language documentation	TBA	HW 5 due
	Th	8/4	Mesoamerican language documentations	TBA	
14	T	13/4	Last class	–	
		TBA	**Final project due**		

Readings

CORBETT, GREVILLE G. 2013a. Number of genders. *The world atlas of language structures online*, ed. by Matthew S. Dryer and Martin Haspelmath. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. URL https://wals.info/chapter/30.

CORBETT, GREVILLE G. 2013b. Sex-based and non-sex-based gender systems. *The world atlas of language structures online*, ed. by Matthew S. Dryer and Martin Haspelmath. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. URL https://wals.info/chapter/31.

COULMAS, FLORIAN. 2003. *Writing systems: An introduction to their linguistic analysis*. Cambridge University Press.

COX, PATRICK. 2014. A University of Kansas linguist is risking Russia's ire in helping Kazakhstan change its writing system. Podcast 'The World in Words' https://www.pri.org/stories/2014-09-03/university-kansas-linguist-risking-ire-russia-helping-kazakhstan-change-its.

DeGraff, Michel. 2020. The politics of education in post-colonies: Kreyòl in haiti as a case study of language as technology for power and liberation. *Journal of Postcolonial Linguistics* 3.89–125.

Dryer, Matthew S. 2013a. Order of object and verb. *The world atlas of language structures online*, ed. by Matthew S. Dryer and Martin Haspelmath. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. URL https://wals.info/chapter/83.

Dryer, Matthew S. 2013b. Order of subject and verb. *The world atlas of language structures online*, ed. by Matthew S. Dryer and Martin Haspelmath. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. URL https://wals.info/chapter/82.

Dryer, Matthew S. 2013c. Order of subject, object and verb. *The world atlas of language structures online*, ed. by Matthew S. Dryer and Martin Haspelmath. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. URL https://wals.info/chapter/81.

Harrison, K David. 2008. *When languages die: The extinction of the world's languages and the erosion of human knowledge*. Oxford University Press.

Littlebear, Richard. 1999. Some rare and radical ideas for keeping indigenous languages alive. *Revitalizing indigenous languages*, ed. by Jon Reyhner, Gina Cantoni, Robert N. St. Clair, and Evangeline Parsons Yazzie, 1–5. Northern Arizona University https://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/RIL_1.html.

Maddieson, Ian. 2013a. Consonant inventories. *The world atlas of language structures online*, ed. by Matthew S. Dryer and Martin Haspelmath. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. URL https://wals.info/chapter/1.

Maddieson, Ian. 2013b. Consonant-vowel ratio. *The world atlas of language structures online*, ed. by Matthew S. Dryer and Martin Haspelmath. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. URL https://wals.info/chapter/3.

Maddieson, Ian. 2013c. Vowel quality inventories. *The world atlas of language structures online*, ed. by Matthew S. Dryer and Martin Haspelmath. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. URL https://wals.info/chapter/2.

Porzucki, Nina. 2017. Dialect versus language — what's the big deal? Podcast 'The World in Words'. URL https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-06-21/dialect-versus-language-whats-big-deal.

Porzucki, Nina. 2018. How the Basque language has survived. Podcast 'The World in Words' https://www.pri.org/stories/2018-05-16/how-has-basque-language-survived.

Pullum, Geoffrey K. 1989. The great eskimo vocabulary hoax. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*, 275–281.

Silver, Shirley, and Wick R Miller. 1997. *American indian languages: Cultural and social contexts*. ERIC.

Vázquez Álvarez, Juan Jesús. 2011. *A grammar of Chol, a Mayan language*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Austin PhD thesis https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/ETD-UT-2011-08-4293.