

## **Course Outline for LING 425 (Historical Linguistics)**

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: The version of LING 425 to be offered in the Fall of 2020 reflects major changes in curriculum delivery and student assessment that were made necessary by McGill's decision to switch to a remote instruction model for public health reasons. The basic content of the course is the same as in previous years, but lectures are replaced with a schedule of directed reading, following the model of independent study courses, and exams are replaced with written assignments. Assuming the public health situation allows it, the course will return to its previous format in future years. Students are encouraged to consider their options carefully when deciding whether to take the course in its revised version this year or wait until the standard version can be taken at a later point.

Content: This course will provide you with an introduction to **HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS** -- the study of how languages change over time, of the changes that have occurred throughout the history of individual languages or language families, and of the historical “genetic” relations among languages with shared ancestry. In the first half of the course, we will examine sound change, borrowing and analogy, the three major types of change that underlie the comparative method of reconstructing proto-languages. In the second half, we will examine the comparative method itself and survey a number of other issues in historical linguistics, including the genetic classification of languages into historical families; models of linguistic change; language-internal reconstruction; semantic, lexical and syntactic change; proposals for distant genetic relationships; and the study of linguistic prehistory, with a particular focus on the Indo-European language family.

Instructional method and technology policy: In the past, this course has relied on traditional lectures as the main instructional method, along with required readings and class discussion. Given the current pandemic situation, lectures will be replaced with a schedule of directed reading and written work that can be done remotely. **The course will not involve any on-line content or materials:** submission and return of written work and all communication between students and the instructor will be exclusively by **email**. Emails will be sent to the addresses on the official class list; it is the student's responsibility to make sure that they are received.

Time/Place: Tuesday/Thursday, 10:05-11:25 a.m., but lectures will not take place, so time and place are irrelevant.

Instructor: Prof. Charles Boberg. E-mail: [charles.boberg@mcgill.ca](mailto:charles.boberg@mcgill.ca).

Access to the instructor: You are encouraged to e-mail me if you have questions or concerns about the course or about other advising matters.

Prerequisites: LING 330 (Phonetics) and LING 320 (Sociolinguistics 1), or permission of instructor. As a 400-level class, Historical Linguistics involves advanced skills in linguistic analysis and a considerable amount of work. In particular, it assumes a solid understanding

NB: 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](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information). Also note that, per 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.

of phonetics and phonemic analysis and builds on the basic principles of linguistic variation and change taught in LING 320. Students without this background may experience difficulty. Consult the instructor if you have any concerns about your level of preparation.

Evaluation: Exercises (2 @ 10% and 2 @ 15%) 50%  
Term paper 50%

Required textbook: Lyle Campbell. 2013. *Historical Linguistics: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. Available at McGill Bookstore (or Amazon, Indigo, etc.), or electronically through McGill Library.

Exercises: these will give you an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the most important technical material covered by the textbook. The exercises dealing with sound change (Ch. 2) and internal reconstruction (Ch. 8) are worth 10% each; those dealing with borrowing (Ch. 3) and comparative reconstruction (Ch. 5) involve more work and are worth 15% each. If phonetic symbols pose a problem, you may add handwritten modifications or write out your answer entirely by hand, scan it and submit it as a pdf file. You may consult with me by email if you need guidance in approaching an exercise.

Term paper: this will give you an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the textbook material at a broader level and apply it to fresh examples of language change identified in your own research. It will also test your ability to think critically and develop and express an argument effectively. Your assigned topic is: **Language change today** (you can choose your own title based on the examples and themes you write about). Campbell's textbook focuses mostly on language changes that have happened in the past, but language change is also an active process in the present, affecting today's languages in similar ways, involving the same basic principles that Campbell discusses. Thinking about these principles, identify **five changes** that are in progress today, in any language(s), beyond the examples discussed by Campbell. Your choices can be based either on your own knowledge or on a search through academic studies, but they should represent at least two of the **six main types of change** discussed by Campbell (sound change, borrowing, analogical change, semantic and lexical change, morphological change and syntactic change). You are welcome to consult with me by email if you have questions about your choices. Substantiate your discussion of each example with reference to at least one academic study of it and supply **two of your own instances** of it, from Internet or other sources. The sources of your own instances should be properly documented as much as possible; alternatively, if appropriate, you may elicit fresh instances from native speakers of the language in question, in which case your sample and elicitation method should be clearly described.

In the **discussion** section of your paper, go beyond the data to reflect more generally on the nature of modern language change, thinking about some of the broader topics discussed in the book (e.g. those in Chapters 6, 7, 14 and 16, as appropriate in your case) and using the changes you have studied as examples: how do you think the nature and speed of language change are affected by today's world of cultural globalization and digital communications?

Term papers will be graded out of 25 points, distributed equally among 5 criteria: effort; introduction; review of sources; critical analysis and argument; and general quality of presentation. For each of these aspects, grading will be on a 5-point scale: 5 for outstandingly good relative to other papers in the class; 4 for very good but not outstanding;

3 for basically satisfactory; 2 for somewhat unsatisfactory or partially incomplete; 1 for totally unsatisfactory or substantially incomplete; and 0 for missing (not submitted).

Policies on submission of written assignments (exercises and term paper): either individual or **group work** is acceptable. For group submissions, names of all members should be clearly indicated and all members will receive the same grade. Assignments should be **submitted by email** on the dates indicated below. Either **Word** or **pdf** format is acceptable: submissions in other formats may be rejected if they cannot be read. Comments and grades will be returned to you by email either on the paper itself (in a distinctive font) or in a separate document.

**Extensions** of submission deadlines will not be granted except in cases of legitimate, unanticipated and properly documented medical emergency or other serious incapacity. **Late submissions** without extension will be penalized at a rate of 10% of the paper grade per day, including weekends, starting at midnight of the due date. It is the **student's responsibility** to ensure timely and effective submission of all written work; any irregularities in this respect, including late submissions, should be communicated clearly and as soon as possible to the instructor.

In writing and formatting your text, you should observe the following guidelines. Papers that ignore the guidelines may be penalized or rejected.

- All written assignments should be **neatly** presented, beginning with a **title page** stating the student's name and McGill ID number, the title of the submission, the course (LING 425) and the date. ID numbers may be omitted from group submissions on privacy grounds.
- **Page numbers** and a header containing the student's or group's name should be included on every page of text (following the title page) except, if you prefer, the first page; page numbering should count the first page of text, not the title page, as page 1.
- The main text should be in **12-point font, double-spaced**.
- The text should be free of typographical, stylistic and grammatical errors. If you have difficulties in this respect, or you are not a native-speaker of English, you are encouraged to seek help in checking over your text before you submit it. All students should **edit** their work carefully before submitting it. Care in this regard shows respect both for your own work and for your reader.
- **In-text citation** should follow the normal practice in Linguistics, which is to identify the author's last name and the year and, if possible, page number of the citation in parentheses after the quotation or cited idea, e.g., "quoted text" (Smith 1975:12).
- Students are reminded that all ideas, facts and spoken or written passages taken from other sources or authors must be properly attributed to their original sources and/or authors, and that failure to do so may constitute **plagiarism**, which could result in a failing grade on the paper or, potentially, more serious disciplinary measures. If you have questions about citation, consult the instructor.
- Term papers should conclude with a **list of references** to all works cited in the text, in a consistent format, with entries listed alphabetically by author's last name. Beyond that, the particular reference format you use is up to you (if in doubt, use the reference list in the course textbook or one of the assigned articles as a guide).
- **Tables and figures** (graphs or illustrations) should be sequentially numbered for easy reference and accompanied by brief captions explaining their content.

- **Appendices** of extra material may be included after the list of references but will not be read unless specifically referred to in the body of the paper; appendices do not count towards the page-length of the paper.

If you have any additional questions or concerns about written assignments, you are encouraged to consult the instructor as early as possible.

Tentative schedule of due dates for readings and written assignments:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Written work due</i>
09.03	TH	Begin reading Ch. 1		
09.08	TU	Introduction	Campbell Ch. 1	
09.10	TH	Sound change		
09.15	TU	Sound change, cont'd		
09.17	TH	Sound change, cont'd	Campbell Ch. 2	
09.22	TU	Borrowing		Exercise #1
09.24	TH	Borrowing, cont'd		
09.29	TU	Borrowing, cont'd	Campbell Ch. 3	
10.01	TH	Analogical change		
10.06	TU	Analogical change, cont'd	Campbell Ch. 4	Exercise #2
10.08	TH	Comparative method		
10.13	TU	Comparative method, cont'd		
10.15	TH	Comparative method, cont'd	Campbell Ch. 5	
10.20	TU	Linguistic classification	Campbell Ch. 6	Exercise #3
10.22	TH	Models of linguistic change	Campbell Ch. 7	
10.27	TU	Internal reconstruction	Campbell Ch. 8	
10.29	TH	Semantic and lexical change	Campbell Ch. 9	
11.03	TU	Morphological change	Campbell Ch. 10	Exercise #4
11.05	TH	Syntactic change	Campbell Ch. 11	
11.10	TU	Distant genetic relationship	Campbell Ch. 14	
11.12	TH	Linguistic prehistory	Campbell Ch. 16	
11.17	TU	Coursework complete		<b>Term papers due</b>
11.19	TH	Coursework complete		
11.24	TU	Coursework complete		
11.26	TH	Coursework complete		
12.01	TU	Coursework complete		