Field Methods of Linguistics / Linguistic Field Research
LING 415 / LING 610 — Fall 2023
M 11:35–2:25
Linguistics Building 002

Instructors

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office hours Tuesdays 3:30–4:30pm or by appt.

Kanien’kéha language expert: Mary Onwá:ri Tekahawáhkwen McDonald

Content of the course

The primary goals of this course are for students to learn how to collect, describe, and analyze reliable and accurate language data through direct work with a native speaker consultant of a particular language—here Kanien’kéha—as well as to gain practice in formulating and testing linguistic hypotheses, and working collaboratively with language speakers and communities. In doing this, students will also learn about topics in fieldwork ethics and in linguistic typology; will create a collaborative language database; as well as learn about topics specific to the grammar of the language at hand. Students will gain practice presenting their findings and supporting proposals with linguistic data.

Given that this particular iteration of this course involves work with an under-resourced Indigenous language which is being actively revitalized by local communities, this course will also focus on communicating the results of linguistic research in a way that is accessible to language-learners and community-based language practitioners, with a goal of making results and findings from the course available outside of academia.

Requirements and evaluation

We will investigate the above topics through a combination of readings, short-assignments, in-class discussion, group work, and—most importantly—active elicitation. The evaluation break-down is as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>LING 415</th>
<th>LING 610</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>short assignments</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>final project &amp; presentation</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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Class participation

This class is a workshop, not a lecture, and active participation in class and in your small group is absolutely essential to its—and your!—success. Participating in class means asking questions, contributing ideas, and taking careful notes. The class will be divided into 6 small groups. These groups will be responsible for planning and guiding a portion of the elicitation for certain class meetings, and may complete some assignments together. While certain groups will be responsible for guiding our elicitation on any given meeting, everyone should be participating actively in all class sessions.
Class blog and database

**Database:** In order to organize the Kanien’kéha language material we will be gathering, we will have a password-protected class database. It is your responsibility to ensure that all language material you elicit is entered into the database. Because we are learning about the language as we go along, the database will contain errors, mistake, and there will be parts that we don’t understand. Nonetheless, it is crucial that all information is kept in a single shareable location so that we have a record of our progress.

Leading elicitation

Together with your group, you will be responsible for leading in-class elicitation for one week during the semester, either on the topic assigned for the week, or on a modification of the topic mutually agreed upon by the class. This will involve completing the reading for the week and coming up with a plan for material to elicit. You will submit your plan by email to the instructor (1–2 pages, including specific example sentences), the preceding Wednesday by 5pm. Your group will be responsible for ensuring that the online database is up-to-date with the material elicited in class that week.

Assignments and late policy

Over the course of the semester, you will have 5 assignments to turn in, roughly every other week. These assignments are due on MyCourses in PDF format at 5pm on Thursday of the week it is listed as due on the timeline below. You have one free late-pass which you may use to turn in one of your assignments 24 hours late. In order to use your late pass, let me know you are using it by the original deadline. Once this pass has been used, late work cannot be accepted for grades without a documented medical note.

Final projects and presentation

You will be asked to complete a project on a topic in the grammar of the language of your choosing (in consultation with me). Final projects are due December 13, and will be discussed further in class. You will give a short presentation on your chosen topic the last week of class.

Readings

There are two books available for this course, available at the McGill bookstore:


We will read most of the Payne book, which provides background in linguistic typology. The topics for each given week may serve as the topic for elicitation, or we may decide to modify topics as needed. We will also read selected chapters from the Bowern book.

Readings will also cover topics on elicitation methodologies, research ethics, and specific topics in Kanien’kéha and related languages. Your responsibility is to complete the reading before coming to class. Altogether, you can expect to read approximately 4 articles or chapters per week.
Class policies and university regulations

Respect and use of electronics

Classroom dynamics affect all of us. While vigorous discussion and conflicting opinions are always welcome, personal attacks, disrespectful comments, or sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, or other discriminatory remarks are not tolerated. Since disruptive behaviours are not always explicit and immediately apparent, all are encouraged to think critically and self-reflexively about listening and communication strategies and to take responsibility for group dynamics, in order to create an environment conducive to respectful dialogue.

Electronic devices may be used for taking notes and accessing information directly related to class content. Out of respect for the group, electronic devices should not be used for any other purposes.

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 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.

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.
### Course outline (readings subject to modification)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>date</th>
<th>topic &amp; readings: □ = required, ★ = recommended, 610 required / 415 optional</th>
<th>due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 0</strong>&lt;br&gt;9/10</td>
<td>Cultural information and language context&lt;br&gt;□ - DeCaire (2023, chs. 1–2) – <em>Kani’en:kéha Language Revitalization</em></td>
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<td><strong>Week 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;9/11</td>
<td>Introduction, ethics + greetings&lt;br&gt;□ - Stacey (2016, esp. chs. 1–2) – <em>Language Revitalization in Kahnawake</em>&lt;br&gt;□ - Mithun (2005) – <em>Mohawk and Iroquoian</em>&lt;br&gt;□ - Bowern (2008), ch. 11 – <em>Ethical field research</em>&lt;br&gt;□ - Tsikewa (2021) – <em>Reimagining the current praxis of field linguistics training</em>★ - Chelliah and de Reuse (2011, skim ch. 3) – <em>The history of linguistic fieldwork</em></td>
<td>(assn. 1 posted)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 6</strong>&lt;br&gt;10/23</td>
<td>Nouns&lt;br&gt;□ - <em>TBD</em>&lt;br&gt;□ - Payne (1997), chs. 0–3 – <em>Describing morphosyntax</em></td>
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<td><strong>Week 7</strong>&lt;br&gt;10/30</td>
<td>Nouns (Group 1 leads)&lt;br&gt;□ - <em>TBD</em>&lt;br&gt;□ - Payne (1997), ch. 4 – <em>Constituent order typology</em></td>
<td>★3 – morphosyntax</td>
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<td><strong>Week 8</strong>&lt;br&gt;11/6</td>
<td>Verbs (Group 2 leads)&lt;br&gt;□ - <em>TBD</em>&lt;br&gt;□ - Payne (1997), ch. 5 – <em>Noun and NP operations</em></td>
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<td><strong>Week 9</strong>&lt;br&gt;11/13</td>
<td>Verbs (Group 3 leads)&lt;br&gt;□ - <em>TBD</em>&lt;br&gt;□ - Payne (1997), ch. 6 – <em>Predicate nominals</em></td>
<td>★4 – project proposal</td>
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<td><strong>Week 10</strong>&lt;br&gt;11/20</td>
<td>Verbs (Group 4 leads)&lt;br&gt;□ - <em>TBD</em>&lt;br&gt;□ - Payne (1997), ch. 7 – <em>Grammatical relations</em></td>
<td>(assn. 5 posted)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 11</strong>&lt;br&gt;11/27</td>
<td>Verbs (Group 5 leads)&lt;br&gt;□ - <em>TBD</em>&lt;br&gt;□ - Payne (1997), ch. 8 – <em>Voice and valence operations</em></td>
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<td><strong>Week 12</strong>&lt;br&gt;11/30 (Th!)</td>
<td>Verbs (Group 6 leads)&lt;br&gt;□ - <em>TBD</em>&lt;br&gt;□ - Payne (1997), ch. 9 – <em>Other verb and VP operations</em></td>
<td>★5 – revision + review</td>
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<td><strong>Week 13</strong>&lt;br&gt;12/4</td>
<td>Class presentations (schedule TBA)&lt;br&gt;— final presentations —</td>
<td>Projects due Dec. 13</td>
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Readings