ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY FALL 2015
INTRODUCTION TO LANGUAGE SCIENCE

Time: TR 11:00-12:15  Room: LBR 06-3244
Instructor: Cecilia Ovesdotter Alm, Ph.D.  Office: LBR 06-2110
E-mail/Phone: coagla@rit.edu/(585) 475-7327  Office Hour: Tuesday 2-3 & by appt.

Course Description: This course introduces the basic concepts of linguistics, which is the scientific study of human languages. Students will be introduced to core linguistic disciplines (phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics) and to principles of linguistics through discussion and the analysis of a wide range of linguistic data based on current linguistic models. English will often serve as the reference language, but we will discuss a wide variety of languages, including sign languages, to illustrate core concepts in linguistics. The course will have relevance to other disciplines in the humanities, sciences, and technical fields. Students will be encouraged to develop critical thinking regarding the study of human languages through discussions of the origins of languages, how languages are acquired, their organization in the brain, and languages' socio-cultural roles. Some other topics that will be introduced are: language globalization and language endangerment, language and computers, and forensic linguistics.

Course Policy: RIT requires students to attend classes. Come to class and arrive on time. This is for your own benefit. You are responsible for any material covered in class, including lectures, lab activities, tasks, and group work. If, by some unfortunate circumstances, you miss a class session, make sure you do the readings and any other assignment for that class, borrow class notes from a reliable classmate, and then come to talk to me if you have any question. Please make sure you prepare any assigned material before coming to class. In class, you are expected to contribute actively to class discussions and activities. This class takes place in a lab. Please do not engage with text messages, email, surfing, social network sites, etc. unless this is part of an in-class activity.

Course objectives: The material covered by the course is designed to be useful for students from a range of study areas that intersect with linguistics. By the end of the course, you will be able to …
  • explain and apply foundational concepts in the major areas of linguistics;
  • define conceptual and methodological principles of linguistics and apply them to basic linguistic problem solving and case studies;
  • use certain tools and resources for hands-on language analysis; and
  • understand the relation between linguistics and cognitive science, and use of linguistics in society.
  • You will also have developed skills in professional presentation, discussion, and writing further.

Statement of reasonable accommodations: RIT is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you would like to request accommodations such as special seating or testing modifications due to a disability, please contact the Disability Services Office. It is located in the Student Alumni Union, Room 1150; the Web site is www.rit.edu/dso. After you receive accommodation approval, it is imperitive that you see me during office hours so that we can work out whatever arrangement is necessary.


Course website: Course documents and some reading materials are available in myCourses, as well as web quizzes for content modules. Announcements will be channeled through myCourses. Please check the website before each class.

Final grading components:
  • Preparation and participation (discussions, exercises, labs, talk, peer review, etc.): 10%
  • Problem sets (2 of 3; the lowest assignment score will be dropped): 15%
• Self-check out-of-class web quizzes by topic (completed before class discussions; the lowest quiz score will be dropped): 10%
• In-class quizzes (2 of 3; the lowest quiz score will be dropped): 10%
• Essay: 10%
• Midterm exam (10%) and final exam (20%): 30%
• Term project poster presentation: 15%

Preparation and participation: Students are expected to attend and participate in classes. Learning in this course is cumulative, where each new topic may presuppose that the student has acquired an understanding of concepts covered previously. Students are expected to prepare for classes by reading the assigned material before the class in which the topic is discussed and, similarly, to prepare assignments in advance and be ready to submit them at class begin. That way, you can—and should—participate actively and make contributions in class. I expect that you are willing to learn, inquisitive, professional, respectful, and that you engage in interactive activities in class (pair/group work, exercises, labs with analysis tools, brain-storming, discussions, peer reviews, etc.). Above all, please take a critical point of view to the studied topics and confidently question course and reading materials. In addition, please take advantage of office hours; you should come to office hours at least once within approximately the first month of class.

Talk requirement: On Thursday 10/15 (date may be subject to change) Dr. Tetreault from Yahoo! will visit RIT to give the 2015 Distinguished Computational Linguistics Lecture 12:30-1:45 pm in the Golisano Auditorium (GOL-100, Atrium entrance). You are required to attend this talk and post a commentary about it afterwards in a forum thread on our myCourses website. (In the event of a legitimate course-related time conflict, report this in advance to the instructor.) As compensation, there will be no class on Thursday 9/17.

Quizzes: Web quizzes are available on our myCourses website and help to digest modules’ materials. You are allowed multiple attempts and your highest score is entered into the gradebook. In-class quizzes are closed book 20 min. quizzes that give feedback to yourself and the instructor on your understanding of course topics. They take place at lesson end. There are no make-up quizzes.

Problem sets: Problem sets involve practical interaction with linguistic data or succinct analytical writing tasks. They increase practical understanding on topics discussed in class and in readings. Problem set write-ups are submitted in class at lesson begin. There are no make-up problem sets.

Term project poster and lightning talk: In this term project, you will demonstrate how you have explored a topic with relevance to linguistics. The project can be corpus-oriented or focus on research review. Your poster project topic (with title and one-paragraph abstract) will be submitted for instructor approval on Tuesday 11/3. You will bring four printed letter-sized copies of your poster draft to class on Tuesday 12/1 for a peer review session. On Tuesday 12/8, we will have a Term Project Showcase with academic-style 3 min. lighting talks in our regular classroom. You will also review some peers’ posters and succinct presentations then. Instructions for preparing the term project poster and evaluation criteria will be provided ahead of time.

Essay: You will write a reflection essay (3-4 pp. 1.5-spaced, 12 pt font, 1 inch margins). This essay will provide a literature review leading into your poster project. In-class peer review on Thursday 11/12 and hard-copy submission on Tuesday 11/17. I expect at least 3-4 peer-reviewed, scholarly sources (journal articles, conference proceedings papers, chapters in academic books, etc.). If you are unsure of a source is considered scholarly, talk with a librarian or the instructor.

Academic integrity statement: As an institution of higher learning, RIT expects students to behave honestly and ethically at all times, especially when submitting work for evaluation in conjunction with any course or degree requirement. The Department of English encourages all students to become familiar with the RIT Honor Code and with RIT’s Academic Integrity Policy. RIT Honor
A note on assignments: Working in a responsible and ethically sound way with peers is an important skill in the intellectual process. There are both group and individual assignments. Throughout the course, follow the specific conditions in the table below, in regards to academic honesty. For writing consultation see Writing Commons: http://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/writing. For guides to citing practices and tools see: http://infoguides.rit.edu/citationguide.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course component</th>
<th>Specific conditions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparing readings</td>
<td>Student collaboration is encouraged.</td>
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<td>Problem sets: solving</td>
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<td>Project poster task: developing and review</td>
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<td>Essay: first draft and review</td>
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<td>Quizzes (online/in class)</td>
<td>Individual exercises and collaboration of any kind is unacceptable.</td>
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<td>Problem sets: write-up</td>
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<td>Project poster task: final draft and presenting</td>
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<td>Essay: final draft</td>
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<td>Midterm and final exams</td>
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Emergencies: In the event of a University-wide emergency course requirements, classes, deadlines and grading schemes are subject to changes that may include alternative delivery methods, alternative methods of interaction with the instructor, class materials, and/or classmates, a revised attendance policy, and a revised semester calendar and/or grading scheme. Please familiarize yourself with these RIT documents: process for emergency closing (weather, etc.): https://finweb.rit.edu/grms/close_university_process.html, and emergency preparedness: http://finweb.rit.edu/publicsafety/preparedness/.

Final grading: At the end of the quarter your letter grade will be assigned based on this scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final grade in percentage</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93.00-100.00</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90.00-92.99</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>87.00-89.99</td>
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<td>83.00-86.99</td>
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<td>80.00-82.99</td>
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<td>77.00-79.99</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>73.00-76.99</td>
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<td>70.00-72.99</td>
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<td>60.00-69.99</td>
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WEEKLY OUTLINE

Subject to change with advanced notice announced in MyCourses

You are expected to complete readings and assignments before we meet for class, and to know when quizzes take place and assignments are due with this time plan.

Aug 25
Introduction to Course
Accent on What Linguists Can Do (pp. 505-506)
Complete the Day 1 Information Survey in/after class, linked in myCourses
Aug 27  Chap. 1 (selection) – What is Language and How Do We Study it? (pp. 1-19; pp. 20-23 are optional)  
Chap. 14 (selection) – The Life Cycle of Language: Language Origins (pp. 479-484)  
Complete Web Quiz Module 1

Sep 1  Feature Movie: The Linguists (65 mins.)  
*Post commentary on the movie in the assigned myCourses forum in/after class*  
Chap. 14 (selection) – Language Shift, Revitalization, & Preservation (pp. 492-505)

Sep 3  Chap. 2 – The Human Capacity for Language  
Complete Web Quiz Module 2

Sep 8  Chap. 3 – Phonetics: Describing Sounds  
Complete Web Quiz Module 3

Sep 10  Chap. 4 – Phonology: The Sound Patterns of Language  
Complete Web Quiz Module 4

Sep 15  Chap. 4 – Phonology: The Sound Patterns of Language  
*In-Class Quiz 1*  
Problem Set 1 released (phonetics/phonology)

Sep 17  NO CLASS: Instead you will attend the distinguished lecture on 10/15

Sep 22  Guest lecture with P. Vaidyanathan and B. Meyers  
*Post guest lecture commentary in/after class in the assigned myCourses forum*

Sep 24  *Phonetics lab in class with Praat* (submit in/after class in the assigned Dropbox). Reading: Rutter & Cunningham (2013), available in myCourses  
Problem Set 1 is due

Sep 29  Chap. 5 – Morphology: Words and Their Parts  
Complete Web Quiz Module 5

Oct 1  Chap. 6 – Morphological Typology and Word Formation  
Complete Web Quiz Module 6

Oct 6  Chap. 7 – Syntax: Heads and Phrases  
Complete Web Quiz Module 7

Oct 8  Chap. 8 – Syntax: Phrase Structure and Syntactic Rules  
Complete Web Quiz Module 8  
*In-Class Quiz 2*  
Problem Set 2 is released (morphology/syntax)

Oct 13  NO CLASS: Classes follow a Monday schedule

Oct 15  *Syntax lab in class with Graphviz and web tools* (submit in/after class in the assigned Dropbox).  
*Attend Dr. Tetreault’s talk at 12:30pm in Golisano Auditorium and post a talk commentary in the assigned MyCourses forum afterwards*

Oct 20  *Midterm exam review and practice*  
Problem Set 2 is due (morphology/syntax)

Oct 22  MIDTERM EXAM on chapters 1-8

Oct 27  Chap. 9 – Semantics: Making Meaning with Words  
Complete Web Quiz Module 9

Oct 29  Chap. 10 – Semantics and Pragmatics: Making Meanings with Sentences
Complete Web Quiz Module 10
Problem Set 3 is released

Nov 3  Continued discussion: Semantics and Pragmatics
Submit poster project topic with title and one-paragraph abstract for approval

Nov 5  Semantics lab in class with web ontologies, games with a purpose, corpora (submit in/after class in the assigned Dropbox).
Chap. 11 – Historical Linguistics: The Early Story of English
Optional: Chap. 14 (selection) – Language Genesis (pp. 485-492)
Complete Web Quiz Module 11

Nov 10  Chap. 12 – Sociolinguistics: English Goes Global
Reading: Roberts (2012)
Complete Web Quiz Module 12
Problem Set 3 is due (semantics & pragmatics/historical linguistics)

Nov 12  Bring four printed copies of your essay draft for in-class peer review

Nov 17  Chap. 13 – Representing Language: The Written Word
Complete Web Quiz Module 13
Submit final essay

Nov 19  American Indian Languages
Reading: Golla (2001), available in myCourses
In-Class Quiz 3

Nov 24  Case studies: Forensic Linguistics & Experimental Linguistics
Reading: Hitt (2012), available in myCourses
Reading: Arunachalam (2013), optional: Mildner (2013), available in myCourses

Nov 26  HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Dec 1   Bring four printed copies of your poster draft for in-class peer review

Dec 3   Case study: Language & Computers
Special topic: Making sense of natural language computationally for public health
Reading: Schrading, Alm, Ptucha, and Homan (2015), available in myCourses

Dec 8   TERM PROJECT SHOWCASE WITH POSTER PRESENTATIONS
Room: Stan McKenzie Commons, Liberal Arts Hall (room: 06-1251)
Upload your poster in the assigned Dropbox in myCourses

Dec 10  Final exam review and practice
Complete the SmartEvals course evaluation

Dec 15  FINAL EXAM 10:15 am - 12:15 pm in LBR-3244 (our regular classroom)