

Linguistics Course Descriptions

Fall 2004

Ling 105 Honors Seminar in Language and Mind

This course is open to freshman and sophomore honors students. Students will be introduced to inquiry into the nature of the human mind (individual cognitive psychology) with particular focus on the Chomskyan

Revolution in Linguistic Theory, within which “language” study constitutes a revealing inquiry into the nature of human cognitive capacities. The kinds of questions to be examined include:

1. What is (a) language? What is English? Where is it?
2. What is the human mind?
3. When you see things, how does that work? Is there a little projector showing a film in your head? And if so, who is watching that film?
4. Close your eyes; Think of and/or visualize the exact route you would take from your current location back to your dorm. Again, is there a little movie in your head? Is there a map in your head? and you “read” it?
5. Suppose I say to you “Add 7 and 9 and 15”. Are there little numbers (or sounds of them?) or better yet a symbol-manipulating calculator in your head? If not, how are you managing this feat? What happens when you do this? If its not happening in your head, is it in your knee? Does your mental calculator have limits, hence inherent (investigable) properties? Is there a (in principle surgically removable) place in your brain where the “7” appears when you perform such addition operations?
6. Suppose I say John hit the clown with the twinkie on his head yesterday. What does that mean? Does it have just one meaning-or more? How can a single stimulus, have multiple meanings? Is there something in your head? How did you “learn” what you know about it, even though you’ve never heard it before? Did someone give you a lesson about this exact sentence?

Ling 140 Introduction to Deaf Culture

This course introduces students to Deaf culture within the United States, and focuses on the link between culture and language (in this case,

American Sign Language). An analysis of medical and cultural models of perceiving deafness is investigated to familiarize students with the range of perceptions held by members of the cultural majority and the effect it has on the Deaf community. The influencing factors of educational systems on deaf children are reviewed to understand the link between language systems used in the classroom and the development of a Deaf identity. The historical roots of American Sign Language and the value of language preservation provide for additional overview of attitudes in American society. Social adaptations to deafness and individual factors of communicative and linguistic development are analyzed for understanding the implications of family and social systems on deaf children and adults.

Instructor will use a course pack. There will be weekly written assignments (1-2 paragraph reaction statements to readings from the course pack) or weekly quizzes. There will be a written midterm and final.

Ling 150 Elementary American Sign Language

LING 150 is a beginning course in American Sign Language (ASL) that introduces students to basic grammatical structures and sign vocabulary through intensive classroom conversational interactions. Emphasis is on practical communicative functions as students learn how to communicate in a visual-gestural channel. Classroom work is supplemented by video-taped workbook exercises to facilitate development of receptive language skills. LING 140 (Introduction to Deaf Culture) is a pre- or co-requisite for this course. Class will meet two days, two hours per day. There will be 1-2 hours of weekly lab work to be completed at the [Language Resource Center](#).

This course will be conducted exclusively in American Sign Language. Required course materials include a workbook and videotape. Handouts will also be provided. An optional Dictionary of ASL is suggested. Students will complete weekly assignments from the workbook. There will be both a midterm and

final consisting of both written exams and videotaped Sign Language interactions. A 3-5 page term paper is also required (a report on a Deaf social event, on an interaction with Deaf persons, or on an approved article or subject).

Ling 210 Introduction to Linguistics Analysis

Nothing is more distinctly human than our ability to use language. Because of that, we expect that the study of language can provide insight into 'human nature.' This course is an analytic introduction to the methods linguists use for describing languages (although general training in analytic thought is our ultimate goal). Drawing on examples from a large number of the world's languages, we will look at the sounds of language, how they are produced and how they pattern into words; we will study the diverse ways in which individual languages approach processes of word and sentence formation, while we ask whether there are processes universal to all languages. By focusing simultaneously on language data and on the techniques used by linguists to make sense of these data, we will see that our understanding of the object of inquiry (language) is influenced by our methods of inquiry. Requirements include problem-solving assignments, midterm and final exams; no prerequisites except an interest in language and thinking.

Ling 211 Introduction to Language

Human beings have always been curious about the uniquely human possession, human language — about its structure, its diversity, its use and its effects on others. This course explores the human capacity for language. We begin with the discussion of the uniqueness of human language and then review major properties of language structure including sound systems, word and sentence structure, meaning and their use. We explore how these properties relate to language acquisition, processing/computation, conversation and writing. The course also considers the rich variation of language in terms of language change, dialects, and identity. Course requirements include regular homework and in-class assignments, one mid-term exam and a final exam.

Ling 250 Intermediate American Sign Language

Students in this intermediate course in American Sign Language (ASL) will learn more advanced communicative forms including understanding the essential role of facial communication (non-manual behaviors) in forming expressions. Additional vocabulary including idiomatic expressions will be introduced to expand students' abilities to understand and converse appropriately in various settings. Through a conversational approach, students will continue to study selected literature, history, culture, and outlooks of Deaf people in order to develop an understanding of appropriate standards of communicating in ASL. Students completing LING 250 will have acquired a basic understanding of how to communicate in a visual-gestural channel in order to receive and express ASL sentences in everyday conversational interactions. Regular attendance is essential. Participation in class includes short presentations and situational role playing. There will be 1-2 hours of weekly lab work to be completed at the [Language Resource Center](#).

This course will be conducted exclusively in American Sign Language. Required course materials include a workbook and videotape. Handouts will also be provided. An optional Dictionary of ASL is suggested. Students will complete weekly assignments from the workbook. There will be both a midterm and final consisting of both written exams and videotaped Sign Language interactions. A 3-5 page term paper is also required (a report on a Deaf social event, on an interaction with Deaf persons, or on an approved article or subject).

Ling 313 Sound Patterns

This course explores two fundamental aspects of the sounds of human languages: speech sounds as physical entities (phonetics) and speech sounds as linguistic units (phonology). In viewing sounds as physical elements, the focus is articulatory descriptions: How are speech sounds made? What types of articulatory movements and configurations are used to differentiate sounds in the world's languages? In this part of the course, the goal is to learn to produce, transcribe, and describe in articulatory terms many of the sounds known to occur in human languages. In the second part of the course, the

focus is on sounds as members of a particular linguistic system. Phonological data from a wide range of languages are analyzed — that is, regularities or patterns in sound distribution are extracted from the data set and then stated within a formal phonological framework. We will also construct arguments to support the proposed analyses, and will find that phonetic factors play a crucial role in validating phonological analyses. Throughout the course, a major emphasis is that speech sounds are simultaneously physical and linguistic elements, and that these two aspects of sound structure are interdependent. Class sessions will consist of lectures, phonetic practice, and discussion of phonological data sets. Each student will also write a research paper on the phonetics and phonology of a language. Course grades will be based on weekly assignments, midterm, research paper, and a take-home final exam. LING 210, 211, 411, or permission of instructor is required to take the course.

Ling 315 Introduction to Syntax

This course investigates the syntax (sentence structure properties) of human language. It addresses the need for a scientific model to explain human knowledge of language that also makes predictions about its representation in the mind. The focus here is on human language as a specific cognitive capacity restricted to humans, rather than on the individual languages (*e.g.*, English, Arabic, Hindi) that are made possible by the existence of this capacity. For this reason, the course explores in detail many structural properties that are common across different languages, even those that clearly do not share a common recent past. A simple example: all languages have specific strategies to ask questions that make them different from affirmative sentences (*e.g.*, English uses special question words — 'who', 'what' and so on — as most languages do). In order to explain this and many other common properties of human language, a scientific hypothesis that has been explored in depth is that a large part of human knowledge of language is biologically determined, and maybe innate. This is further supported by the fact that normal children effortlessly learn their native language at an amazing speed, despite the complexity of the task at hand (compare trying to learn for example Korean or Turkish as an adult, with years of language classes), and despite variation and

deficiencies of the language input they are exposed to.

It is also clear, however, that there is a huge diversity among human languages, which can be illustrated only in an unfair way in this short description (*e.g.*, only some languages change the sentence structure in a regular question: you say 'Who do you like?' in English, instead of 'You like who?', a possible word order similar to the one you would find for instance in Chinese). Given this kind of diversity, which will be made clear, children need to be exposed to some minimum input of a particular language in order to be able to acquire it proficiently. Therefore, a major question that arises in modern linguistic inquiry and that will be object of this course is how the hypothesis of a biological basis for human language — which provides an explanation for the common aspects among all human languages and for the striking success of the acquisition task — can be reconciled with the obvious diversity of the human language experience. Course requirements include (bi-weekly assignments, a midterm and a final exam).

Ling 316 Aspects of Meaning

This course focuses on the core aspects of the representation of meaning in human language. It adopts a compositional approach to meaning: how humans combine basic linguistic units (*e.g.*, words or lexical items) into complex linguistic expressions that allow them to represent the complex aspects of reality and thought in natural language. More specifically, the course focuses on the connection between the structure of linguistic expressions (*i.e.*, their syntax) and the construction of meaning (semantics). It adopts a simple but precise and powerful approach to meaning, focusing on the conditions under which complex linguistic expressions are true or not true. The students will become familiar with various tools that are relevant for a theory of meaning in human language, including set theory, propositional and predicate logic, (generalized) quantifier theory, scope and polarity.

Ling 318 Types of Languages

Human languages, especially those spoken by members of unfamiliar and distant cultures, appear on the surface to be very different from one another. But closer examination reveals that languages differ in systematic ways and that more than half of them can be divided into a relatively small number of basic types. In this course we will identify and study some of these basic patterns and explore possible reasons for their existence, seeking explanations where possible in the communicative function of language as well as in the historical evolution of languages.

The course will introduce students to basic grammatical structure and function by (1) having them investigate unfamiliar languages through study of published descriptive grammars and (2) relating this direct experience to the principle findings of contemporary typological research.

Coursework will consist of:

1. readings and lectures on the major categories and parameters which are used to define language types,
2. the completion of a number of short assignments or reports on given phenomena as they are manifested in the languages that students will adopt,
3. discussion and comparison of these individual findings in class,
4. a midterm exam, and
5. a course paper examining a particular typological parameter in one or more languages.

Toward the end of the course students will make a ten minute oral presentation to the class of a pre-final version of their term papers.

Ling 320 Computer Programming for Linguistics and Language Studies

Designed for linguists and others in humanities and social sciences with interest in the computational study of language, this course provides essential programming skills for language processing, including corpus processing (sociolinguistics, language preservation, authorship studies), and

computational modeling of parsing (psycholinguistics, computational linguistics).

Ling 340 Introduction to Sociolinguistics

This course examines language as a social phenomenon, focusing on the ways in which variation in language form and use can enhance our understanding of social processes. The course will give an overview of various approaches and issues related to the role of language in society. In studying language variation, we will see how a person's background and identity shape the ways in which they speak and the ways in which they perceive the speech of others. Topics related to these questions include the following: quantitative approaches to language variation and change; registers (varieties tied to particular contexts; and various regional, social, and ethnic varieties of English (including African American English); relationships between language and gender; social and cultural issues associated with signed languages.

The course will also consider social dimensions of bilingualism, multilingualism, diglossia, and code-switching. We will look at the effects of language contact situations, including the emergence and structure of pidgin and Creole languages, the process of language death, and attempts to preserve and maintain minority languages.

Finally, we will examine the relationship between language and power, with particular attention to language planning and language standardization. In the course of this discussion we will examine some educational and political issues which are raised by a sociolinguistic analysis.

Ling 350/450 Perspectives on Second Language Learning and Second Language Instruction

The purpose of this course is to explore past and current directions in both theoretical and practical aspects of second/foreign language learning and teaching. The course will examine a number of language learning/teaching paradigms and focus on the changing forms and functions of methodology, technique, and approach as the emphasis of language pedagogy has shifted from teacher-directed, drill and pattern practice to

learner-focused, task-based instruction. Students will have an opportunity to reflect upon and analyze their own language learning experiences and begin to critique and understand the instructional needs of varying language learning populations.

Ling 370/ANTHRUL 370 Language and Discrimination: Language as Social Statement

In this course we examine the interplay between language and ideological processes, particularly as they function below the level of conscious awareness. We are concerned with the suppression of linguistic variation; that is, with the development of a standard language ideology, which is understood to be a bias toward an abstracted idealized, (but ultimately unattainable) homogenous spoken language, modeled on variants favored by the white, middle American mainstream. This ideology is one of many social practices on which people depend without close analysis of underlying assumptions. In this class, we will look into those assumptions, both linguistic and social, and consider the arguments used to uphold them. We will examine the way in which these behaviors are institutionalized by the media, the entertainment industry, school systems, business community, and the judicial system, all of which promote standard language ideology and underwrite assimilatory and often discriminatory practices. The goal of these practices is to suppress perfectly functional language variation intimately linked to homeland, race, ethnicity, ability (*e.g.*, as it relates to the use of signed rather than spoken languages), or gender. We will look at issues of language choice and accent as legal issues in the courts, including battles about hate speech. This course should be of interest to those concerned with non-mainstream language varieties as a cultural resource and asset, historical heritage, and potential complication in supra-cultural communication. An introductory linguistics course would be helpful but is not essential.

Ling 402 Research Seminar in Linguistics

Offers advanced Linguistics students the opportunity to investigate a research topic in depth and to gain experience in presenting their research to their peers. Each student chooses a topic, writes a research proposal, and writes

preliminary and final drafts at each stage of the research.

Ling 420 Word and Metaphor

English is an analytic language, organized around syntactic constructions of largely uninflected words. It's a well-known fact that English syntax is deep and complex, but as it turns out, those uninflected words are very interesting, too. This is a course in lexical semantics and cognitive word grammar, focusing on English, though not exclusively, with special attention to the study of metaphor, or 'cognitive blending', as it's sometimes called.

Metaphor is one of the most fascinating phenomena in human experience; using a metaphor consists in treating something as if it were something else, while realizing of course that it's not. In other words, lying, and getting away with it. Not only do we get away with it, we do it all the time; the overwhelming majority of utterances are metaphoric in nature, as is the cognition behind them. Metaphor, language, and thought are intimately connected.

In this course, we will explore a number of case studies of metaphor, how they structure the lexicon and how they influence the grammar. Topics treated include:

- basic metaphor themes (container, conduit, action/force, *etc.*)
- the embodied mind
- lexical fields
- sensory modalities, pattern recognition, and lexical categories
- verb classes and their effect in syntax
- classifiers and sound symbolism
- mental spaces and metaphor mappings
- denotation and connotation
- presupposition, entailment, and implicature
- negation, quantification, and modality
- cross-linguistic and -cultural differences

There will be occasional homework, two papers and a term project, and considerable reading.

Ling 447/Psych 447 Psychology of Language

Contact Psych Department

Ling 450 (See Ling 350/450)

Ling 492/792 Language variation and change

Students will be introduced to methods of studying the relationships between language variation and social structure and to the major findings of variationist sociolinguists who have examined these relationships. Particular attention will be paid to relationships between patterns of language use on the one hand, and on the other social status, gender, ethnicity and personal network structure of speakers. The course will focus largely on the quantitative methods developed by Labov, which are designed to reveal the way language change is rooted in synchronic variation. Taking as a starting point the proposals set out in Weinreich, Labov and Herzog's classic paper (1968), socially sensitive models of language change will be considered. Following a reading of the classic variationist literature, we shall examine more recent developments, such as models of change based on language contact frameworks, and the capacity of ideological change to shape the trajectory of specific language changes. Finally, we shall examine the new but already flourishing subfield of historical sociolinguistics, which involves the application of insights from contemporary sociolinguistics to illuminate processes of change at earlier periods. Students will be given the opportunity to carry out a small piece of original sociolinguistic or historical sociolinguistic research.

Ling 512 Phonetics

This course introduces students to the nature of speech sounds. One goal is to provide an overview of the type of sounds in the world's languages, and to train students in the production and transcription of these sounds. Practice with these sounds includes native-speaker presentations, in-class exercises, and software programs. A second goal is to arrive at an understanding of the speech process, which involves transmission of an acoustic signal from a speaker to a listener, and a corresponding description of speech sounds in terms of their articulatory (speaker-based), acoustic, and perceptual (listener-based) characteristics. In achieving this goal, students are introduced to basic principles of phonetic theory through readings, lectures, and hands-on experience in

the phonetics laboratory. A third goal is to investigate interactions among articulatory, acoustic, and perceptual properties and to consider their possible consequences for the structure of sound systems. These phonetic properties are viewed as imposing constraints on the notion of 'possible speech sound' and as contributing to the definition of 'possible speech sound system' for human languages.

Ling 515 Generative Syntax

In the Generative framework, syntactic structure is generated by a formal rule system and by applying constraints to its output. Some of these rules and constraints are hypothesized to be innate, or 'unlearned' (perhaps a species specific system). That is supported by how human language acquisition or grammar growth takes place, and by the observation of striking structural similarities across different human languages. Other aspects of our linguistic knowledge appear 'learned', *i.e.*, determined by an interaction of human biology and particular linguistic inputs, motivating different aspects of variation among human languages. This course introduces this so-called 'Principles and Parameters' approach to the analysis of human syntactic knowledge, focusing on how the various postulated ('simple') rules and constraints interact to generate ('complex') structures, characteristic of natural language sentences (such as the one you are now reading, and understanding).

Course requirements may include weekly assignments and/or a midterm, and a final exam or paper. For undergraduates, Linguistics 315 and permission of the instructor are prerequisites. There is no prerequisite for graduate students.

Ling 517/ANTHRCUL 519/ GERMAN 517 Principles and Methods of Historical Linguistics

This course is an introduction to the theories and methods that enable linguists to describe and explain processes of linguistic change and historical relationships among languages. The major topics to be covered are the emergence of language families and means of establishing family relationships; sound change; grammatical change, especially analogy; language change caused by culture contacts; the Comparative Method, through which prehistoric language

states can be reconstructed with an impressive degree of accuracy; internal reconstruction, a less powerful but still important method for gaining information about linguistic prehistory; and ways in which the study of current dialect variation offers insights into processes of change.

Course requirements: regular homework assignments (45%), final exam (45%), class participation (10%).

Ling 518 Linguistics Typology

Human languages, especially those spoken by members of unfamiliar and distant cultures, appear on the surface to be very different from one another. But closer examination reveals that languages differ in systematic ways and that more than half of them can be divided into a relatively small number of basic types. In this course we will identify and study some of these basic patterns and explore possible reasons for their existence, seeking explanations where possible in the communicative function of language as well as in the historical evolution of languages.

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Coursework will consist of:

1. readings and lectures on the major categories and parameters which are used to define language types,
2. the completion of a number of short assignments or reports on given phenomena as they are manifested in the languages that students will adopt,
3. discussion and comparison of these individual findings in class,
4. a midterm exam, and
5. a course paper examining a particular typological parameter in one or more languages.

Toward the end of the course students will make a ten minute oral presentation to the class of a pre-final version of their term papers.

Ling 541/EECS 595 Natural Language Processing

An introduction to computational linguistics, stressing the processing of written language but with supplementary discussion of topics relating to spoken language. The course will be based on the following textbook: Daniel Jurafsky and James H. Martin, *Speech and Natural Language Processing*, Prentice Hall, 1999.

Topics covered in this course will include: finite state automata and finite state techniques for processing words, language models, tagging corpora for part-of-speech, context-free grammars, parsing techniques, unification grammars and unification-based parsing, probabilistic parsing, semantics, discourse modeling, word sense disambiguation and information retrieval, natural language generation, and (if time permits) machine translation. There will be a midterm and a final examination, as well as a course project and regularly assigned exercises. Non-CS students without strong programming experience will not have to do a project that requires programming.

This course is the normal introduction to computational linguistics for advanced undergraduates or graduate students in Computer Science, the School of Information, or Linguistics, and normally is a prerequisite for more advanced courses in the area at the University of Michigan. For linguistics students, LING 513 and any other 400- or more advanced level linguistics course are prerequisites. Computer literacy is essential; some programming experience would be helpful. Students in Computer Science or the School of Information should take the versions of this course offered in those units.

Ling 613 Advanced Phonology

In this course we will read and discuss selected works on issues that are of fundamental interest to phonology. We will focus on the following areas: Feature theory, Syllable theory, Metrical phonology, and Optimality theory. Regular course work includes assigned readings, participation in class discussion, and exercises. In addition, each student is expected to choose and work on a research topic, give a class presentation near the end of the course, and submit the result in a final term paper.

Ling 756/Psych 756 Language and Communication Skills

(see Psych website)

Ling 792 (See Ling 492/792)

Ling 801 Seminar on Graduate Study

This seminar has three goals. The first is to introduce students to the history of the modern field of linguistics. In the Fall Term we will focus on readings and discussions that will take us from 19th-century linguistics through the Chomskyan revolution of the 1960s. In the Winter Term we will concentrate on the past 30 years of (mostly American) linguistics. The second goal is to begin to develop an understanding of the diverse approaches to the study of linguistics and an appreciation for the relations among these different approaches. Thus, the course also serves as a forum where students can discuss how the various aspects of their coursework fit together. These two goals converge in helping us to build an integrated view of the discipline. The third goal is to orient first-year students to graduate study in the Department of Linguistics, and at the university, and to consider students' long-term goals relative to the course of study they are embarking on. Throughout the year, many of our discussions will be led by linguistics faculty with expertise in specific topics to be covered.

Ling 993 Graduate Student Instructor Training Program

A seminar for all beginning graduate student instructors, consisting of a two day orientation before the term starts and periodic workshops/meetings during the Fall Term. Beginning graduate student instructors are required to register for this course.