

Ling 170D Introduction to Linguistics

Dr. Nick Danis, nsdanis@wustl.edu

Description

This course introduces students to the scientific study of language. All major subfields are covered: the physical description of speech sounds (phonetics), the cognitive patterning of these sounds in a speaker's grammar (phonology), the creation and analysis of word and phrase structure (morphology and syntax), and the study of compositional meaning of these sentences (semantics) and their interaction in a discourse (pragmatics). Students will learn the fundamental tools and analytical methodology in each. Additionally, this course covers special topics in language variation, acquisition, and change; and writing systems.

Course Info

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Course Number | L44 Ling 170 |
| Semester | Spring 2025 |
| Time | MWF 9-9:50AM (Section 3); 11-11:50AM (Section 4) |
| Location | Mallinckrodt 302 (Sections 3 and 4) |
| Office | January 206 |
| Office Hours | Tuesdays 12-1pm |
| Homepage | https://wustl.instructure.com/courses/149327 |

Goals

1. Learn to view natural language, and humanity's capacity for it, as an object of scientific inquiry
2. Understand the different core subfields within linguistics: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics
3. Create representations and implement methodology within these subfields
4. Analyze and solve problems in novel natural language data
5. Apply linguistic tools to critique and debunk common myths about language

Required Materials

The required textbook is the 12th edition of Language Files (abbreviated LF12). Earlier editions are likely to differ in content and organization. Any additional readings are posted as PDFs as necessary. Please check Canvas for the availability of this book.

Attendance and delivery

In-person attendance is required for the course. However, be smart and put your health, and the health of others, first. If you are sick, or think you are getting sick, please take all necessary precautions (follow university and CDC guidelines, visit health services, etc) and also contact me as soon as you think you might miss class. You will not be penalized for excused absences. Lectures will not be recorded by default, so it is important for you to contact me as soon as you feel you may miss significant class time.

Grade

The grade breakdown is shown below.

| Category | Weight |
|------------------------------|--------|
| Exams | 50% |
| Assignments & Skills Quizzes | 40% |
| Participation | 10% |

Exams

There are four exams throughout the duration of this class. These are administered on Canvas, graded, open-book, and with a time limit. You have only one submission. Treat these as mini-midterm exams that are taking the place of in-person exams. These are the bulk of your grade. There is no in-person final. The fourth exam is due during finals week but it is still administered online and is not cumulative.

Assignments & Skills Quizzes

Assignments

Several critical thinking problem sets will be assigned throughout the semester. These usually involve real linguistic data and application of the theory and material in a way that might require some novel thinking. You are free to collaborate and work in groups on these, but everyone must submit their own individual assignment. If you do work together, put “Worked together with: ...” on the heading of your assignment.

Skills Quizzes

The Skills Quizzes are short, autograded online quizzes on various topics throughout the semester. You will receive instant feedback and can take each quiz multiple times (the highest grade will be counted). These are both meant to show me that the concepts are being understood and also as a tool for study itself. If you don’t understand a concept, try using the Skills Quiz as a study guide, and work on it until you get a score you are comfortable with. Each quiz has a due date and there will be a penalty for quizzes submitted after this, but they are open throughout the semester so you can always go back to review.

Participation

I aim to provide a wide variety of participation methods, and trust that you will fall into a rhythm that works best for you. In addition to speaking up and contributing in class, there will be occasional slides with surveys (e.g. PollEverywhere) that will count as attendance for that day. More details will be given in class. Additionally, if you come across any article/meme/whatever that relates to content for class, feel free to send it my way. These are always appreciated.

Letter grades

Letter grades are assigned based off the following scale. Numerical grades are **not** rounded.

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| $100 \geq A+ \geq 98$ | $80 > C+ \geq 77$ |
| $98 > A \geq 93$ | $77 > C \geq 73$ |
| $93 > A- \geq 90$ | $73 > C- \geq 70$ |
| $90 > B+ \geq 87$ | $70 > D+ \geq 67$ |
| $87 > B \geq 83$ | $67 > D \geq 63$ |
| $83 > B- \geq 80$ | $63 > D- \geq 60$ |

If you are taking this class pass/fail, you must receive at least a C- (70%) to pass.

If you believe there has been an error in grading, I am happy to discuss it with you. However, you must bring it up to me within one week of the graded assignment being returned to you. After this, the grade is considered final.

Schedule

The exact schedule is likely to change as the semester progresses. Please see [Canvas](#) for all up-to-date readings and assignment due dates. Below is current only to the start of the class.

| day | date | name | group |
|-----|--------|--|------------------------------|
| Mon | Jan 13 | Module Begins: Fundamentals | Participation |
| Wed | Jan 15 | Read LF1.0-1.5 | Participation |
| Mon | Jan 20 | Holiday - No Class | Participation |
| Wed | Jan 22 | Prescriptive vs Descriptive Quiz | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |
| Wed | Jan 22 | Module Begins: Phonetics | Participation |
| Fri | Jan 24 | Read LF2.0-2.7 | Participation |
| Mon | Jan 27 | Place and Manner Quiz | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |
| Wed | Jan 29 | IPA Vowels Quiz | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |
| Wed | Jan 29 | IPA Consonants Quiz | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |

| day | date | name | group |
|-----|--------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Fri | Jan 31 | IMF IPA | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |
| Mon | Feb 03 | Module Begins: Phonology | Participation |
| Wed | Feb 05 | Read LF3.0-3.5 | Participation |
| Fri | Feb 07 | Exam 1: Foundations & Phonetics | Exams |
| Mon | Feb 10 | Minimal Pairs Quiz | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |
| Mon | Feb 10 | Get To Know Us | Participation |
| Mon | Feb 17 | Natural Classes Quiz | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |
| Mon | Feb 17 | Phonemes Quiz | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |
| Mon | Feb 17 | Module Begins: Morphology | Participation |
| Wed | Feb 19 | Read LF4.0-4.5 | Participation |
| Fri | Feb 21 | Kuria Phonology | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |
| Mon | Feb 24 | Morphology Fundamentals Quiz | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |
| Mon | Feb 24 | Luisseño Morphology Practice | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |
| Mon | Feb 24 | Module Begins: Syntax | Participation |
| Wed | Feb 26 | Read LF5.0-5.5 | Participation |
| Fri | Feb 28 | Exam 2: Phonology & Morphology | Exams |
| Mon | Mar 10 | Spring Break - No Class | Participation |
| Mon | Mar 17 | Constituency Quiz | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |
| Mon | Mar 17 | Module Begins: Semantics | Participation |
| Wed | Mar 19 | Read LF6.0-6.4 | Participation |
| Fri | Mar 21 | Japanese Trees | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |

| day | date | name | group |
|-----|--------|---|------------------------------|
| Mon | Mar 24 | Set Theory Quiz | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |
| Wed | Mar 26 | Module Begins: Pragmatics | Participation |
| Fri | Mar 28 | Read LF7.0-7.5 | Participation |
| Fri | Apr 04 | Exam 3: Syntax & Semantics | Exams |
| Fri | Apr 04 | Module Begins: Language Change and Historical Linguistics | Participation |
| Mon | Apr 07 | Pragmatics Concepts Quiz | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |
| Mon | Apr 07 | Read LF13.0-13.4; 13.7 | Participation |
| Mon | Apr 14 | Historical Reconstruction Quiz | Assignments & Skills Quizzes |
| Mon | Apr 14 | Module Begins: Acquisition | Participation |
| Wed | Apr 16 | Read LF8.0-8.4 | Participation |
| Fri | Apr 18 | Module Begins: Psycholinguistics | Participation |
| Mon | Apr 21 | Read/Skim LF9.0-9.7 | Participation |
| Fri | May 02 | Exam 4: Pragmatics & Historical | Exams |

General policies

This course follows and takes seriously all policies on assault & harrassment, accommodations, academic integrity, and so on. In order to provide you with the most up to date material, I will link directly to the University guidelines below:

<https://provost.wustl.edu/syllabi-resources-and-template-language-danforth-campus/>

Please be familiar with these and don't hesitate to reach out if you ever have any related questions or concerns.

Last updated: January 10, 2025