

# Ling 201-05: Introduction to Linguistic Theory

(version: January 27, 2017)

LELAND PAUL KUSMER

SPRING 2016

## I COURSE OVERVIEW

Linguistics is the scientific study of language. Although you are all familiar with speaking a language, most of your knowledge of the language(s) you speak is unconscious. One way to state the goal of this course, and of linguistics in general, is that we are concerned with discovering and describing the patterns and rules that a speaker unconsciously “knows” when they speak a language natively. More specifically, we will look for (and find) patterns in the sounds of language, the formation of words, the structure of sentences, and the meaning of utterances. We’ll also develop precise methods of describing the patterns we see and learn to revise our hypotheses as we encounter additional data.

### Course information:

### Grade cutoffs:

<b>Class time:</b>	MWF 12:20 – 1:10pm	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>MINIMUM %</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
<b>Room:</b>	Hasbrouck 230	A	90%	900
<b>Course website:</b>	Moodle	A-	86%	860
<b>Instructor:</b>	Leland Kusmer	B+	82%	820
<b>Email:</b>	lkusmer@linguist.umass.edu	B	78%	780
<b>Office:</b>	ILC N421D	B-	74%	740
<b>Hours:</b>	Monday 2 – 3, Tuesday 1 – 2	C+	70%	700
<b>Important dates:</b>		C	66%	660
6 February	Last day to drop with no record	C-	62%	620
20 February	No class — Presidents’ Day	D+	58%	580
3 March	<b>First midterm</b>	D	54%	540
8 March	Last day to drop with a ‘W’	F	less than 54%	below 540
13 – 17 March	Spring break			
10 April	<b>Second midterm</b>			
17 April	No class — Patriot’s Day			
18 April	Monday schedule on a Tuesday			
1 May	Last class			
4 May	<b>Final exam: 1 – 3pm, Hasbrouck 230</b>			

### Grade breakdown:

COMPONENT	TOTAL	POINTS
Exams	45%	2X 100 (Midterms) 1X 150 (Final exam)
Homework	45%	9X 50
Daily Questions	10%	25X 4

## 2 COURSE DESCRIPTION

The main goal of this course is two-fold: (i) to introduce students to the basic methodology and results of modern linguistics, and (ii) to teach analytic reasoning through the examination of linguistic phenomena and data. This means that you will be taught:

- A basic introduction to some of the main results and ideas of modern linguistic theory.
- The scientific reasoning behind them, so that you might apply that reasoning to novel cases, both in language and in other spheres of life.

A more detailed schedule appears later in this syllabus (section 5), but broadly speaking you will be given a tour of the following key sub-areas of linguistic science:

- Phonetics and phonology (the study of the sounds of language)
- Morphology (the study of the structure of words)
- Syntax (the study of the structure of sentences)
- Language acquisition (the study of how children learn language)
- Psycholinguistics (the study of how the brain processes language)
- Typology (the study of language variation)

Given the course's focus on formal reasoning, it satisfies the 'R2' general education requirement.

## 3 COURSE REQUIREMENTS

You will be evaluated on the following course components:

Exams	45%	2 midterms and 1 (semi-cumulative) final
Homework assignments	40%	Approximately 8 over the semester
Daily questions	15%	See explanation in section 3.3

### 3.1 Exams

There will be two in-class midterm exams and one cumulative final exam. These exams will be worth 15% of your final grade each, or 45% all-together.

First mid-term	3 March	Phonetics, phonology
Second mid-term	10 April	Syntax, typology
Final exam	TBA	Cumulative (focus on semantics, pragmatics)

The final exam is scheduled for **Thursday, May 4th, 1 – 3pm** in our normal classroom.

### 3.2 *Homeworks*

There will be 9 homework assignments, which together will constitute 40% of your final grade. Your lowest homework grade will be dropped in the calculation of your overall grade.

**Distribution of homework:** Homework assignments will be posted to the class Moodle on a Wednesday and will be due the following Wednesday.

**Submission of homework:** All assignments must be submitted in one of two ways:

- In hard copy at the start of Wednesday lecture.
- In PDF format by email before the start of Wednesday lecture.

No other formats will be accepted.

**Late homework:** You may hand in exactly 2 homework assignments up to a week late without penalty; in order to take advantage of this, you must notify me by the start of the Wednesday due date that this homework assignment will be late. You will then have until the following Wednesday to submit the assignment. Any late submissions not in accordance with this policy will receive a 0.

**Collaboration policy:** You are strongly encouraged to collaborate on your homework assignments. However:

- Each person must hand in their own write-up of the assignment — no direct copies or jointly-authored assignments are allowed.
- At the top of each homework assignment, list the names of all collaborators.
- **Copying another person's homework is not acceptable.** See section 4.4 for the consequences of academic dishonesty.

### 3.3 *Daily questions*

Linguistics isn't really something you can learn by cramming the night before a test, so it's important to understand the material as we move along. At the beginning of nearly every class there will be a quiz to test your understanding of the material presented in the previous class. These quizzes will be short (usually one question), and a list of the possible questions will be provided to you one class in advance. The use of your notes from the previous class will be allowed and encouraged.

The daily questions are meant to be an 'easy' grade, in the sense, that you will always know what's going to be on the quiz and should find the questions very straightforward. Quizzes will be graded for accuracy, but you will always get 2 points for turning one in (i.e., for being present and on time).<sup>1</sup> There will be around 30 of these over the course of the semester, and your lowest 5 scores will be dropped. I will not administer make-up quizzes, so an absence automatically generates a zero on that day's quiz. If you are absent with a documented reason, come see me and we may decide to waive that day's quiz for you.

If you miss a class for any reason, please check the Moodle for that day's DQs so that you will be prepared for the quiz the *following* class.

---

<sup>1</sup> If you turn in the daily question at the beginning of class and then immediately leave, you won't receive any points for it — you must stay for the class.

## 4 COURSE POLICIES

### 4.1 *Textbook and readings*

There is no textbook for this class; all assigned readings will be posted to the Moodle. If you really want a textbook, let me know and I will provide you with recommendations.

There will be several assigned readings throughout the class; these will all be posted to the Moodle.

### 4.2 *Slides, lecture notes, and handouts*

The main content of the course will all be presented directly in lecture. Following each lecture I will post the lecture slides to the course Moodle. Any supplementary materials, including in-class exercises, will also be posted to the Moodle.

### 4.3 *Attendance*

Your attendance in class is necessary for you to do well in two ways: (1) Attendance contributes directly to your grade through DQ quizzes, and (2) attendance will indirectly influence your grade because it is essential to your success on assignments and exams. Readings are generally to be considered a supplement rather than a substitute for class.

If you are participating in a university activity (e.g., athletics or marching band) that will require you to miss more than 5 classes please let me know now. If the activity requires that you miss more than 20% of classes in the course (9 or more), university regulations require that you drop either the course or the activity. (Please see me if you have questions about this.) If something unexpected happens during the course of the semester for which you end up missing lots of classes, please let me know as soon as possible and we will make arrangements accordingly.

### 4.4 *Academic honesty*

Collaboration on homeworks is allowed, but collaborating on quizzes and exams is never permitted. Cheating in any form on a test or a quiz will lead to a confrontation and a probable zero on that assessment. IF you are caught cheating a second time you will be reported to the Ombuds Office, which may result in a failing grade in the course. The same procedure will be followed if you cheat on homeworks. You can find the University's official Academic Honesty Policy here: <http://www.umass.edu/ombuds/honesty.php/>

### 4.5 *Classroom decorum*

Please treat your instructor and your fellow classmates with respect at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, abstaining from activities which may distract others (including me) during class. I specifically request that you not send/receive text messages, check social media, etc. during class. You are not invisible; it is generally quite easy for me to tell what you are doing!

## 5 COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK	DATE	UNIT	ASSIGNMENTS
1	M 23 Jan	Syllabus	
	W 25 Jan	Grammar	
	F 27 Jan	World Languages: Demographics	
2	M 30 Jan	Phonetics: Consonants & Vowels	A1 out
	W 1 Feb		
	F 3 Feb		
3	M 6 Feb		
4	W 8 Feb	Phonology: Inventories & Contrasts	A1 due; A2 out
	F 10 Feb		
	M 13 Feb	World Languages: Typology of sounds	A2 due; A3 out
	W 15 Feb		
5	F 17 Feb	Phonology: Phonological processes	
	M 20 Feb	No class	
	W 22 Feb		A3 due; A4 out
6	F 24 Feb		
	M 27 Feb	Review: Midterm 1	A4 due
	W 1 Mar		
	F 3 Mar	<b>Midterm 1</b>	
7	M 6 Mar	Morphology: Categories and morphemes	A5 out
	W 8 Mar		
	F 10 Mar		
8	13 – 17 Mar	<b>Spring Break</b>	
9	M 20 Mar	Syntax: Phrase structure	A5 due; A6 out
	W 22 Mar		
	F 24 Mar		
10	M 27 Mar	Syntax: Ambiguity	A6 due; A7 out
	W 29 Mar		
	F 31 Mar	Syntax: Other topics	
11	M 3 Apr	World Languages: Language Universals	A7 due
	W 5 Apr		
	F 7 Apr		
12	M 10 Apr	<b>Midterm 2</b>	
13	W 12 Apr	Semantics: Lexical & compositional	A8 out
	F 14 Apr		
	M 17 Apr	No class	
	T 18 Apr	TBD	
	W 19 Apr	TBD	A8 due
	F 21 Apr	TBD	
14	M 1 May	Review: Final Exam	