

# Introduction to Linguistic Theory

Department of Linguistics

Spring 2010

01:615:201:03

- Instructor:** Aaron Braver  
abraver@rutgers.edu (please include “201” in your subject line)
- Class Meetings:** Mondays and Thursdays 9:50 am – 11:10 am  
Frelinghuysen Hall Room A4 (College Avenue Campus)  
<http://maps.rutgers.edu/building.aspx?id=140>
- Office Hours:** Mondays, 12 pm – 1 pm, and by appointment  
18 Seminary Place, Room 001 (College Avenue Campus)  
<http://maps.rutgers.edu/building.aspx?id=189>
- Course Website:** On Sakai (<http://sakai.rutgers.edu>)  
Contact me immediately if you cannot access the course Sakai site

## About this course

Human languages are complicated and diverse—but also highly systematic. This course provides a basic introduction to these systematic, structural properties of human language, as illuminated by modern linguistic theory. We will examine the methods employed by linguists, as well as some of the key results from this work. This class is a prerequisite for all higher-level linguistics courses at Rutgers.

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- (1) Find patterns and regularities in linguistic data
- (2) Infer from these patterns what kind of knowledge speakers of any language must have in order to produce and perceive speech sounds, and to construct and comprehend words and sentences
- (3) Understand how linguistic theory aims to capture this knowledge, as well as the motivation behind the theory

This course is *not* about ‘proper’ grammar, literary analysis of language, or how to learn hundreds of languages (in fact, we’ll see that *linguistics* is not about these things at all).

## Assignments and Grading

### Assignments (40%)

Each unit has one homework assignment worth 10 points. In-class assignments, including problem sets, short answer questions, or reflections on readings or other course materials are worth 2 points each. In-class assignments may be given at any class meeting without prior warning, and may not be made up due to absence.

### Midterm exam (20%)

A midterm exam will be given in class on Thursday, 3/11.

### Final exam (30%)

A final exam will be given on Friday, 5/7, from 8am-11am.

### Participation (10%)

In addition to attending class, you are encouraged to ask and answer questions, make relevant comments, and generally contribute to discussions. Participation will be evaluated on both the quantity and quality of your contributions—keep in mind that any question that helps you understand the material is of high quality. If you are uncomfortable talking in class, you may accrue participation points by discussing course content with me via email, posting in the forums on the course Sakai site, or by coming to office hours.

### Extra credit

The best way to earn a good grade in this course is to participate in class, turn in your assignments on time, and prepare adequately for the exams.

From time to time, participants may be needed for experiments run by members of the linguistics department. If such a need arises, you will be notified of how you can participate in the experiment. You may only participate in one experiment for extra credit, for which you will receive two points added to your lowest non-dropped homework score. Department policy states that no student may be excluded from participating in an extra credit experiment, even if the student does not speak the target language, or has a speech or language disorder. You must request from the experimenter and present to me a receipt showing your participation in the experiment.

Grades are earned, not given—as such, it is impossible for me to give you a grade other than the one you earn according to the criteria outlined in this syllabus.

## Keeping track of your grade

You can track your assignment grades via Sakai. Navigate to the course Sakai site, then click on the 'Gradebook' link in the lefthand navigation bar.

## Policies and expectations

### Attendance

You are expected to come to class, and to participate fully in class discussions and exercises.

Because there is no textbook for this course, and because you will be introduced to new ways of thinking and reasoning about language, it will be extremely difficult (if not impossible) to pass the course without consistently coming to class.

University policy (University Regulation on Attendance, Book 2, §2.4.7B) requires that no penalty be imposed upon students who are absent from class because of religious observances, and allows for students to make up the work missed because of such absence. Please *notify me as soon as possible* of an upcoming absence for religious reasons.

### Responsibility for course material

You are responsible for all material covered in class, assigned readings, and homework assignments. Any of this material may appear in exams, homework assignments, or in-class exercises. If you miss class, it is *your* responsibility to learn about any material or assignments you miss from your classmates. It is not the instructor's responsibility to make up for your absence or to re-teach the material.

### Civility in the classroom

The environment in the classroom will be one of civility and respect.

I'll do my part by making my expectations clear, providing opportunities to ask for clarification and get help, grading your work fairly and promptly, and beginning and ending class on time. You need to do your part by coming to class on time and prepared, giving your full attention while you're here, and staying until the end of class.

If something in the classroom interferes with your learning, participation, or enjoyment—whether it's something I'm doing, or something someone else is doing—please bring it to my attention immediately.

## Late work

Assignments must be submitted on time—this is at the start of class, unless otherwise specified. *Assignments turned in after the deadline will receive zero points.* There is no partial credit for late work.

Since circumstances sometimes unavoidably prevent the timely, satisfactory completion of homework, your lowest homework grade will be dropped in the calculation of your final course grade.

## Extraordinary circumstances

Life is complicated—illnesses and injuries happen, swine flu is still in a pandemic state, crises of one sort or another happen.

If these or other life events are interfering with your ability to meet course requirements, please *let me know as soon as possible.* We can work together to find a way for you to complete the work and do well in the course. Do note, however, that verification—such as a note from the dean—may be required.

## Academic integrity and collaboration

You are encouraged to form study groups outside of class to help you understand the course material.

Collaboration is permitted on homework assignments, *under the following conditions:*

- a. You must each write up and hand in your own assignment
- b. Any explanations or reasoning in the assignment must be written in your own words
- c. You must clearly indicate on the assignment who you collaborated with

Collaboration is *not* permitted on exams.

Copying from another source, or misrepresenting ideas as your own constitutes plagiarism—please cite any sources you use.

Violations of this policy will be handled in accordance with the University's academic integrity policy, which can be found at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>.

If you have any questions, please consult the instructor, a dean, or the University's academic integrity policy.

*A word of warning:* Homework assignments are designed to prepare you for the kinds of questions you will be asked on the exams. Depending too heavily on collaboration for your homework will negatively impact your performance on the exams.

## Office hours

Office hours for this course are Mondays from 12 pm – 1 pm (and by appointment) in Room 001 (in the basement) of 18 Seminary Place, on the College Avenue Campus. Attending office hours is a good way of clarifying any questions you might have, discussing course material you find interesting, or seeking additional help. If you attend office hours for help on an assignment, it is important that you attempt the assignment on your own first. *Students who come to office hours tend to do better in the course than those who do not.*

## Accommodations for students with disabilities

If you have a disability and require some type of accommodation, your coordinator in the Office of Disability Services should provide you with a Letter of Accommodation, describing the accommodations to which you are entitled.

Please bring me your Letter of Accommodation as soon as possible. Don't wait until you start having problems, or just before a test—I want you to have every opportunity to do well in this course, but advance notice may be necessary.

If you have any questions, you can contact me directly, or the Office of Disability Services at (732) 932-2848 or via email at [dsoffice@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:dsoffice@rci.rutgers.edu).

## Suggestions and complaints

I welcome suggestions and complaints at any time. The sooner an issue is brought to my attention, the sooner it can be remedied. You may provide anonymous feedback at any time at <http://rci.rutgers.edu/~abraver/feedback.html>.

The Bylaws of the Linguistics Department state that any complaint must first be directed to the instructor. Only if the complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of all parties will it be referred to the Undergraduate Program Director, followed by the Chair of the Department, then the dean of the school. This procedure does not apply to complaints about specific grades assigned to particular students, about which the instructor is the final arbiter.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits me from discussing your course performance with your parents or other family members. If you need to discuss your course performance, please contact me directly.

## Materials

All readings will be made available on the course Sakai site. Please contact me immediately if you cannot access the Sakai site.

## Schedule

This schedule is subject to change. Please check the course Sakai site for updates.

Date	Topic	Assignments	Reading
R 1/21	Introduction		
M 1/25	Introduction	HW #1 out	<i>Basic facts about language, Why major in linguistics?</i>
R 1/28	Signed languages		<i>What is sign language?, Myths about ASL</i>
M 2/1	Morphology	HW #1 Due	Fromkin pp. 69–74 Halle 1973 pp. 3–5
R 2/4	Morphology		
M 2/8	Morphology		
R 2/11	Morphology	Morphology HW out	
M 2/15	Language games		
R 2/18	Syntax	Morphology HW due	Fromkin pp. 117–123 Chomsky 1957 pp. 13–25
M 2/22	Syntax		
R 2/25	Syntax		
M 3/1	Syntax	Syntax HW out	
R 3/4	Syntax		
M 3/8	Review	Syntax HW due	
R 3/11	<i>Midterm exam</i>		
M 3/15	<i>No class</i>	<i>Spring recess</i>	
R 3/18	<i>No class</i>	<i>Spring recess</i>	
M 3/22	Phonetics		Fromkin pp. 231–235 Halle 1978 pp. 295–299
R 3/25	Phonetics		
M 3/29	Phonetics		
R 4/1	Phonetics	Phonetics HW out	Perfors' study/explanation
M 4/5	Language and the brain		
R 4/8	Phonology	Phonetics HW due	Fromkin pp. 273–275 Halle 1978 pp. 294, 299–303
M 4/12	Phonology		
R 4/15	Phonology		
M 4/19	Phonology		
R 4/22	Phonology	Phonology HW out	
M 4/26	Semantics		
R 4/29	Semantics	Phonology HW due Semantics HW out	
M 5/3	Review	Semantics HW due	
F 5/7	<i>Final exam (8am)</i>		