

English 301: Language & Linguistics
California State University—Northridge

Syllabus & Course Outline

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Textbook (required):

An Introduction to Language (9th ed). (Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., Hyams, H.)
(Wadsworth-Cengage Learning 2011).

Description:

A basic course in the nature of language, its origin and development. This class is designed to introduce students to general concepts of language & linguistics. The course is organized in a ‘bottom-up’ fashion—from smallest to largest segments of language—by starting with *An Introductory to Language*, moving through *Sound*, *Word*, and ending with *Sentence*. Aspects of *language origin & design* will be examined as well as cross-linguistic language typologies. Topics on *Pidgin & Creole* as well as *Child Language Development* will be explored.

This introductory language course is primarily designed (i) to allow students to gain a sufficient amount of ‘Explicit’ (conscious) Knowledge of Language and Linguistics and (ii) to provide students with the tools necessary for understanding language structure. The course is divided into four basic lectures:

I. Introduction: What is language, its origins and design? What is the ‘brain-to-language’ corollary and which areas of the brain impact language processing? Historical accounts of linguistic theory are traced from earlier models of Behaviorism (Skinner) to the more recent Generative framework (Chomsky).

II. Sound (Phonology): How are languages organized as sound systems and how do these features transfer over to writing systems? Phonology as a rule-based/categorical system is presented along with a brief introduction of IPA. Child language phonological development is discussed.

III. Word (Morphology): What shapes do languages take regarding their internal formation? How do different language types differ with regards to their morphological structure? Some cross-linguistic data are examined.

IV. Sentence (Structure, Syntax and Transformations): How do words form phrases, clauses, and sentences and how does one define these constituencies? Syntactic structures are examined with a note on cross-linguistic parameter distinctions.

The rationale behind Ling 106 is to provide undergraduate/liberal studies students with basic theoretical and practical knowledge of language structure and to allow students to discover how linguistics might be applied to other areas of humanistic and scientific knowledge.

Course Objectives:

- Understanding the origins, structure and development of language and its application to other areas of humanistic and scientific knowledge.
- Understanding the general characteristic of the structure of language, its phonological sound system, word structure, and phrase and sentence patterns.
- Learning the terminology used to describe and analyze the structure and systems of language.
- Understanding basic principles of linguistic theory.

Assignments:

- Readings (based on Lectures), Exercises
- Four 'in-class' Exams (one after each of the four lectures: bluebook) on relevant lecture topics
- One Paper (3,000 words) on a related topic.

Method of Instruction:

The four lectures are based on material taken from the text. Regular attendance is essential. Absences and late assignments must be discussed directly with the instructor.

Grading:

All evaluated work is based on a five point scale:
5 (=A, 90%+), 4 (A/B, 85%+), 3 (B/C, 75%+), 2 (C/D, 65%+), 1(F, failed)

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Lecture Schedule
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Lecture I: Weeks 1-4 What is Language? Processing & Theory

Chapters 1, 2, 8.

Introduction: A brief outline of language philosophy: Nativism (Chomsky) vs. conditioning/Behaviourism (Skinner). Linguistic perspectives, What is language and why is it special: The biological basis of language (Language and Brain)? Child Language Development: Lexical vs. Functional Grammar (Galasso's 'Sally Experiment' & Berko's 'Wugs Test', p. 344).

→ **Exam 1**

Lecture II: Weeks 5-8

Sounds/Phonology: Chapters 6, 7, 8, 11, 12.

- Phonology and the English Sound System (Ch.6)
 - Vocal Tract (p. 236 Fig. 6.1)
 - IPA: Place & Manner of Articulation (p. 245 Fig. 6.4)

- Phonological Processes (Ch. 7)
 - Phonological Rules/Assimilation (p. 267-8)
 - Minimal Pair (p. 273)

- Phonemic patterns across Languages (p. 281)
 - Aspiration
 - L1 vs. L2 Phonological Interferences
 - Categorical Perception

- A brief note on Child Phonology (Ch.8, p. 341)
 - Phonemic Development
 - Syllabic Development

- A brief note on Phonological Change (Ch. 11 p. 493)
 - The Great Vowel Shift
 - irregular formation

- A brief note on Writing Systems (Ch. 12)

→ **Exam 2**

Lecture III Weeks 9-12

Words/Morphology: Chapters 3, 8.

- Word Classes (Ch.3)
 - Sally Exp. (revisited)
 - Lexical vs. Functional words (p. 78)
 - Morphological properties of English Verbs

- Morphemes (pp. 83, 93 Fig. 3.1)
 - Derivational & Inflectional (pp. 88, 90)
 - Compounding (p. 100)

- Morphology across languages (p. 91)
 - Isolating, agglutinating, inflectional

- A brief note on Early Child Morphology: (Ch. 8)
 - First words: Lexical vs. Functional (p. 335)

→ **Exam 3**

Lecture IV Weeks 13...

Sentences: Chapters 4, 8, 10

- Basic Terminology (Ch. 4)
- Sentence Structure (p. 123)
 - Syntax, Tree Diagrams
 - Heads and Complements (p. 142)
 - Transformations & Movement (p. 155)

- A brief note on Syntactic differences across languages
 - Parameters of Language (p. 164)

- A brief note on L1, L2 Syntactic Development (Ch. 8)
 - Is there a Critical Period? (p. 365)

- A brief note on Pidgins & Creoles (Ch. 10, p. 454)

→ **Exam 4**