

Introduction to Linguistics Syllabus

Fall 2020

Instructor: Emma Manning

Course Dates: August 31 – December 18, 2020

Course Description

Linguistics is the scientific study of language. While most often classified as a social science, it's really an interdisciplinary field that sits at the intersection of social sciences, humanities, and STEM – language is such a fundamental piece of our collective humanity that it almost defies categorization.

This class will survey a broad range of linguistics topics. In particular, you'll learn about:

- How to think of language as an object of scientific study, and why linguists prefer to observe and describe language use rather than dictate what is “correct”
- How theoretical linguists analyze and explain language data, within and across languages, including sound systems, word formation, sentence structure, and meaning
- The roles language can play in our lives and society; how the language(s) you speak do or don't impact your life

A Typical Week

Each week of the semester (not counting Thanksgiving week) will include the following components, all posted on Canvas. With the exception of Zoom meetings, all are asynchronous activities for you to complete on your own time over the course of the week.

Required and Supplemental Materials

By materials, I mean things to read/watch/listen to, which may include a combination of videos, podcast episodes, written articles, interactive webpages, etc. These take the place of what would be in-person lectures and assigned readings in a typical in-person class. These are divided into **required materials** and **supplemental materials**.

Required materials are how you learn the core concepts you're expected to learn in this course, so you should read/watch all of them every week! Your understanding of these will be tested in the quizzes and assignments.

Supplemental materials are additional opportunities to dig deeper into a specific topic. I'll give you several options each week so you can choose what interests you the most! As a rule of thumb, I suggest aiming to engage with at least two of these each week, and of course you're welcome to do more when you have the time and interest. (It's also not the end of the world if you occasionally do less than two, especially if you're making up for it with more in other weeks).

Since not everyone will do the same supplemental materials, I won't test you on information from them in the quizzes or assignments, but I still want to know which ones you're choosing! Please send me a list of which ones you do via **direct message in Discord**. You can either send them to me as you do them or collect them into a list to send each week, whichever's easiest for you!

I also encourage you to discuss ones you particularly like or found interesting in the #supplemental channel on Discord.

Quiz

There will be one quiz each week (on the 'Quizzes' section of Canvas) that you can take to test your understanding of the content in the required materials. I'm *not* testing your speed or memorization; you're welcome to take as long as you want, and to reference your notes or go back and check materials for information you don't remember. However, please do *not* collaborate with your classmates on these – you wouldn't learn as much from someone telling you an answer as from finding it yourself.

Assignment

This will be a more detailed assignment to develop and apply your knowledge in a more complex way than the quiz, such as a written reflection or problem set. These can be found, and submitted, in the 'Assignments' section on Canvas.

Synchronous Meeting

We'll have one-hour video chat meeting via zoom each week (except Thanksgiving week) on **Fridays at 12-1pm Eastern Time**. These are optional – you won't be missing out on learning any core concepts if you can't attend, nor will it hurt your grade. That said, these will be a chance to engage in the course content in a different way through interactive activities and discussions, and a chance to interact with me and your classmates face-to-face, so I hope you will attend if/when your schedule allows!

Timing

Materials and assignments for each week will be posted on Canvas by the Monday when the week begins, and will be due by the end of the following Sunday (but see note on "Deadlines and Late Work" below). You can work through these materials at your own pace over the 7-day period. Below is a sample schedule that you could use if you plan to distribute the work over Monday-Friday; of course, this is just an example, and you can adapt it to your own schedule.

Day	Activities
Monday	Watch/read required materials
Tuesday	Watch/read supplemental materials; log supplemental materials
Wednesday	Review notes and take quiz; begin working on assignment
Thursday	Finish and submit assignment
Friday	Attend Zoom meeting

Sample weekly schedule for a student who works Monday-Friday

Grading

Grade Breakdown

Assignments	40%
Quizzes	25%
Supplemental Materials	25%
Participation	10%

Assignments

Of the 15 weekly assignments, the lowest 2 grades will be dropped; the rest will be averaged to compute this portion of the grade.

Quizzes

As with assignments, the lowest 2 out of the 15 quiz grades will be dropped and the rest will be averaged.

Supplemental Materials

This portion of the grade is based on whether you regularly engaged with supplemental materials, as reflected in the log you send to me via direct message and discussions in the #supplemental channel.

Participation

This is based on making regular, positive contributions to the class via Discord discussions and, if you attend, in the Zoom sessions. Things like asking questions, making thoughtful contributions to discussions, and engaging in a friendly manner with your classmates are all good for your participation grade!

Final Grade Calculation

By default, grades will be calculated on a standard US scale with A as the highest possible grade, followed by A-, B+, B, etc. If you need grading on a different scale in order to be consistent with your school/program, or if you're taking this class for fun and would rather not receive a final grade at all, let me know!

Policies & Guidelines

Flexibility

We are living in a pandemic that has disrupted many aspects of our lives! It's likely that we're all dealing with significant stress, and it's possible that additional events will further disrupt the semester for some of us – you or a family member may get sick, you may have an internet outage that temporarily limits your ability to participate in the course, and so on. With that in mind, I've done my best to design this syllabus to allow for significant flexibility, and am open to making further changes if circumstances require it. I also hope you will extend the same flexibility and grace to me should it become necessary, though I hope not 😊

Deadlines & Late Work

In the spirit of flexibility, there will be **no grade penalty** for submitting quizzes or assignments late, provided they are submitted by the end of the semester (Sunday, December 20). However, if I have not received your work by the time I grade the bulk of submissions for a given assignment, *grading the late submission will be a much lower priority for me*, and you may not get a grade on the assignment for several weeks. Thus, it is in your best interest to aim to be on time if you want to get timely feedback on your work. It will also be less stressful to do the work every week than to put it off until the end of the semester!

Collaboration & Academic Integrity

You should complete the quizzes by yourself, without the help of classmates, though you're welcome to review the course materials and your notes as necessary.

You may discuss the assignments with your classmates, but what you turn in should be your own work. **If you collaborate on an assignment, you should indicate who you worked with in your submission.** Unless an assignment asks you to do internet research, please don't consult online sources beyond those provided as course materials for help with your assignments. In other words, don't Google a difficult problem to see if someone's posted a solution online 😊 If you **do** somehow find yourself consulting outside sources, provide links to any sources you consulted. Note also that online sources may be inaccurate or use slightly different terminology, notation, etc. than we do, so they won't always give you the expected answer!

Communication

You can find the materials, quizzes, and assignments for each week on Canvas. Please submit your assignments through Canvas (this helps me have them all in one place).

Otherwise, discussions will mainly happen through our class Discord server, which has channels for discussing course material as well as for off-topic socialization.

If you have questions about the course content or logistics that might apply to other people as well (e.g. generally clarification questions on a topic or on what's expected for an assignment), please post those to the #questions channel on Discord. This way your classmates can see it and benefit from the answer as well! If you have a question that's specific to you or that you're not

comfortable asking in front of your classmates, you can either email me (emma.sophia.manning@gmail.com) or send me a direct message through Discord.

Time Management for Asynchronous Learning

If you're new to asynchronous coursework, you may find that it requires more careful time management than you're used to. You may want to experiment with time/task management methods such as using a paper or digital planner or a to-do-list management app to see which strategies most help you keep track of assignments and deadlines. I hope that you'll learn to appreciate the freedom of having more control over how to spend your time, and that the strategies you develop now will help you in college and/or your future career, both of which will also likely give you more freedom than you've had so far!

Schedule

Week #	Begins	Unit	Main Topics
1	Aug 31	Introduction to Linguistic Thinking	Getting started; Descriptivism; Language in our lives
2	Sep 7		Subfields of linguistics; Languages of the World; Typology
3	Sep 14	Morphology: Forming Words	Morphological processes; Linguistic problem solving
4	Sep 21	Sounds of Language	Phonetics; International Phonetic Alphabet
5	Sep 28		Introduction to Phonology
6	Oct 5		Advanced Phonology
7	Oct 12	Variation & Change	Sociolinguistic Variation; Dialectology
8	Oct 19		Historical Linguistics
9	Oct 26	Syntax: The Structure of Sentences	Syntactic categories; syntactic structure
10	Nov 2	Language & Culture	Language & Thought; Language & Power
11	Nov 9		Language contact, death, and revitalization
12	Nov 16	Meaning	Lexical Semantics; Pragmatics
13	Nov 23	<i>Thanksgiving Week</i>	No assignments; possible bonus topic TBD
14	Nov 30	Learning & Processing Language	Language Acquisition in children and adults
15	Dec 7		Psycholinguistics
16	Dec 14	Applications of Linguistics	Linguistic applications and careers