

LX250: Introduction to Linguistics

Fall 2018
T, Th 2:00-3:15
Room: LSE B01

Instructor:

Jonathan Barnes
CAS Linguistics Program
621 Commonwealth Avenue, Room 119
617-353-6222
jabarnes@bu.edu

Office Hours: M 9:30-11, T 3:30-5, or by appointment

Teaching Fellows:

621 Commonwealth Avenue, Room 113

Will Clapp
wscclapp@bu.edu
Office hours: Th 11:10-12:30

Spencer Hanlin
shanlin8@bu.edu
Office hours: T 11-1

Madeline Reffel
mreffel@bu.edu
Office hours: M 10-12

Course Information:

This course examines the fundamental properties that all languages share, and how languages differ, with respect to structure (sound system, word formation, syntax), expression of meaning, acquisition, variation, and change; cultural and artistic uses of languages; comparison of oral, written, and signed languages.

- ♦ Part 1 considers the sound systems in languages and how units of meaning are constructed out of smaller articulatory/perceptual units that are themselves devoid of meaning.
- ♦ Part 2 addresses the organization of words, phrases and sentences and how language conveys meaning.

♦ Part 3 focuses on language variation and change, linguistic diversity, the way language functions in social settings, how it changes over time, and what we can learn about linguistic pre-history using methods of comparative reconstruction.

♦ The final days of the course will be devoted to the mental representation of language and language acquisition.

Throughout the course, we will emphasize the development of critical thinking and argumentation skills, as well as empirical methods for the support of abstract or formal models of language.

Materials and Resources:

Text required: *Contemporary Linguistics*. William O'Grady, John Archibald, Mark Aronoff, & Janie Rees-Miller. Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2017. ISBN: 978-1319039776. **Seventh Edition**.

Shop around, if you like, but be sure to get the right edition of this book!

- Handouts, homeworks, and occasional additional readings will be posted on the course Blackboard site.
- For students desiring additional help with course material beyond instructor and TF office hours, peer tutors are available through the BU Educational Resource Center: <http://www.bu.edu/erc/peer-tutoring/>
- Accommodations for Students with Documented Disabilities: If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at (617) 353-3658 to coordinate any reasonable accommodation requests. ODS is located at 19 Deerfield Street on the second floor.

Other Resources:

- There is a wealth of information and wonderful links to linguistics resources on our program website: <http://ling.bu.edu>. Check it out!

HUB Learning Outcomes:

Scientific Inquiry 1: Students will identify and apply the major concepts used in the natural sciences to explain and quantify the workings of the physical world. This will include an introduction to the way that scientists explain complex systems such as living organisms, the Earth, **or** the Universe.

Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy: Students will demonstrate, through comparative analysis, an understanding of global diversity as expressed in at least two

different languages, cultures, religions, political systems, **or** societies. Note: A course in this area might, for example, explore the political systems of two countries, while another might explore multiple religious traditions within a single country, and another might explore the literature of a single country and, in assignments, invite comparative analysis of works of other national literary traditions, including those of students' countries of origin.

Critical Thinking:

Outcome 1: Students will be able to identify key elements of critical thinking, **such as** habits of distinguishing deductive from inductive modes of inference, recognizing common logical fallacies and cognitive biases, translating ordinary language into formal argument, distinguishing empirical claims about matters of fact from normative or evaluative judgments, and recognizing the ways in which emotional responses can affect reasoning processes.

Outcome 2: Drawing on skills developed in class, students will be able to evaluate the validity of arguments, including their own.

Course Objectives:

In this course students will:

- Gain an understanding of the nature of human language: how it is structured, acquired, and used;
- Learn about properties shared by all human languages (spoken, written, and signed), as well as ways in which languages and dialects can differ from one another;
- Gain insights into various aspects of languages they already know (i.e., their native language and other languages they have studied) and learn something about languages that they have never encountered;
- Come to appreciate the rich heritage and wide diversity of human language;
- Become familiar with the major subfields of linguistics and the fundamental questions that drive modern linguistic research;
- Develop the ability to analyze sets of data to solve problems and discover regularities, as well as to construct and test hypotheses about linguistic data, and to use these to develop or assess formal models of human language;
- Learn to think critically, to evaluate popular beliefs concerning the nature and use of language, and to provide informed contributions to contemporary

debates about language.

Course Requirements:

- Regular attendance (!!!) and class participation: 5% of grade. Class time will present material that adds to, rather than repeats, what is in the reading. We will spend time actively developing the skills you will need to succeed on homework assignments and in exams. A variety of regular low-stakes quizzes and exercises will be administered to assess your progress.

Excused absences:

- a. Religious observance. If you are unable to attend class because of religious observance, please notify to Prof. Barnes via email, with a cc to your TF. If a religious conflict prevents you from submitting an assignment on the due date, you are invited to submit the assignment in advance.
 - b. In case of illness or other serious issues that may prevent your attending a class, please contact Prof. Barnes and/or your TF by email in advance (or as promptly after the class as possible, depending on circumstances). In such cases, you should make every effort to catch up with what you missed, by obtaining any relevant course materials, coming to office hours to ask any questions you may have.
- Regular problem sets: 40% of grade. Homework must be turned in by the *beginning* of class on the day that it is due. Please include date and assignment number at the top of each assignment. Staple together multiple pages of a single assignment. Homework must be legible. Lowest score will be dropped. Late homework, without *prior* excuse, will lose half a letter grade for each class that has passed since the due date.
 - You may, if you wish, collaborate with your fellow students on homework assignments. You must, however, state **CLEARLY** on each assignment the identities of your collaborators, and you must each write up your homeworks individually.
 - Readings: Do these carefully. This will make your homework assignments substantially easier, and won't hurt on exams either.
 - Discussion sections: Every student should be registered for a section. These sections provide you with a chance to review and practice in smaller groups material presented in lecture. They are a valuable resource for you, and they are not optional.
 - 2 exams: 30% of grade
 - Cumulative final exam held in LSE B01, Tuesday, December 18, 3:00-5:00 PM: 25% of grade.

A Reminder:

Boston University Academic Conduct Code:

It is expected that you are familiar with the provisions of the Boston University Academic Conduct Code, available to you online at:

<http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>

Cases of suspected academic misconduct will be referred to the Dean's office.

Schedule:

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENTS
1	Sep 4, 6	What is Language? What is Linguistics? Some basics...	READ: CL, ch. 1
2	Sep 11, 13	Phonetics	READ: CL, ch 2
3	Sep 18, 20	Phonology	READ: CL, ch 3
4	Sep 25, 27	Phonology and Morphology	READ: CL, ch. 4
5	Oct 2, 4	Morphology, Review	
6	Oct 11	Note: NO CLASS OCTOBER 9! Oct 11: Exam #1	
7	Oct 16, 18	Syntax	READ: CL, ch. 5
8	Oct 23, 25	More Syntax	
9	Oct 30, Nov 1	Syntax and Semantics	READ: CL, ch. 6
10	Nov 6, 8	Nov 6: Semantics and Pragmatics Nov 8: Review	
11	Nov 13, 15	Nov 13: Exam #2 Nov 15: Language in Society	READ: CL, ch. 13
12	Nov 20	Language Variation and Change Note: NO CLASS November 22	READ: CL, ch. 7, 8
13	Nov 27, 29	More Language Change	
14	Dec 4, 6	Pidgins and Creoles; Endangered languages	READ: CL, ch. 15
15	Dec 11	Conclusion and Review	

Note: This schedule is tentative and subject to change.