24.900: Introduction to Linguistics
M, W 11:00-12:00, 37-212

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office hours: Mondays, 1-2 or by appointment

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<tr>
<th>section I</th>
<th>section II</th>
<th>section III</th>
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<td>room: 66-144</td>
<td>66-168</td>
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<tr>
<td>leader: Teal Bissell</td>
<td>Lance Nathan</td>
<td>Linnaea Stockall</td>
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<td>phone: x8-5625</td>
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<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:bissell@mit.edu">bissell@mit.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>office hours: Thursdays, 11-12</td>
<td>Thursdays, 1-2</td>
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Recitation Notes:
- No recitation meeting in week 1.
- Section III is newly opened. In the second week of class, we will move some students who have been assigned to section I or II into section III.

GOALS OF THE CLASS
This class will provide some answers to basic questions about the nature of human language. Throughout the course, we will be learning (in many different ways) that human language is a surprisingly intricate -- yet law-governed and fascinating mental system. In the first 2/3 of the class, we will study some core aspects of this system in detail. In the last part of the class, we will use what we have learned to address a variety of questions, including how children acquire language, what are the similarities and differences among languages, how spoken (and signed) language relates to written language, among others.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Readings:
There is one required textbook, available in the Kendall Square MIT Coop:


You will find CL a generally excellent survey of the technical material covered in the course, but rather short on "message". To compensate for this deficiency, those of you with a deeper interest in the course should also read one or both of the following excellent books:


They are both widely available in area bookstores (including the MIT Press Bookstore and the Coop), and easily orderable on-line, so I have not made a special order of them.

There will also be handouts, especially in the section on syntax, that will supplement or (in some cases) substitute for sections of the textbook.
2. Attendance:
Attendance in class and recitations is required. While you can learn a lot from the readings, many classes will present material not in the readings, or will present the material in a slightly different way. Attendance will be taken in recitations and from time to time may be taken in the lecture as well.

3. Weekly problem sets:
There will be weekly assignments, some from CL, others handed out in class. These will often be problems from real languages (sometimes slightly simplified) that use the concepts and analytic techniques discussed in class and in the readings. A few assignments may call for extra effort, including data collection.

The problems will be handed out on Wednesday and will be due the following Monday. It is our goal to have the problems corrected for discussion in recitation by Friday. (When holidays intervene, we may make minor modifications in this schedule.) Late problem sets will not be accepted except for compelling reasons and with explicit e-mail permission of the instructor or recitation leader.

| Honesty policy for problem sets: | General discussion of the assignments with other students is acceptable and encouraged (e.g. "Remind me, how do I know if something is an allophone?") but you must arrive at the actual solutions to problems on your own and write them up on your own. |

If you are having serious problems with any assignment, do not hesitate to get in touch with the instructor or your recitation leader in person or by e-mail. We are more than happy to help.

4. Exams:
There will be two in-class (30 minute) quizzes and a sit-down final exam. The final exam will cover material from the entire course, and will be a mixture of factual questions and problems. If you did well on the problem sets and quizzes, you should do well on the final exam.

5. Grading
Problem sets & quizzes: 60%
Final exam: 30%
Attendance and participation: 10%

6. Web site
As the semester progresses, we will post important information and other helpful material on the class web site: web.mit.edu/24.900/www/
SYLLABUS

Details of this syllabus may change during the course of the semester, but the overall structure of the course will not. The syllabus will be updated as the need arises.

**Introduction**

1. W 9/5
   CL, chapter 1 (pp. 1-14)
   Read obituary for Peter Jusczyk at:

   [No recitation Friday 9/10]

2. M 9/10
   CL, chapter 4 beginning (pp. 131-154)

3. W 9/12
   CL, chapter 4 conclusion (pp. 154-179)

**Phonetics (sounds of speech: production and perception)**

4. W 9/19
   CL, chapter 2 (pp. 15-60)
   Good web resource (with sounds!):
   http://hctv.humnet.ucla.edu/departments/linguistics/VowelsandConsonants/index.html
   Phonetic fonts:
   http://www2.arts.gla.ac.uk/IPA/ipafonts.html

5. M 9/24
   Listen to:
   http://www.exploratorium.edu/exhibits/vocal_vowels/vocal_vowels.html

6. W 9/26
   **Phonology (grammar of sounds of speech)**
   CL, chapter 3 (pp. 63-90)

7. M 10/1

8. W 10/3
   **Wednesday 10/3: IPA/phonetics/intro phonology quiz**
   [M 10/8: Columbus day holiday]

9. W 10/10
   CL, chapter 3 (pp. 91-112)

10. M 10/15
    CL, chapter 3 (pp.112-128)
Syntax (grammar of sentence structure)

11. W 10/17  CL, chapter 5 (pp.183-196); class handout
12. M 10/22  CL, chapter 5 (pp.196-202); class handout
13. W 10/24  CL, chapter 5 (pp.202-213); also chapter 6 (pp. 268-2701); class handout
14. M 10/29  CL, chapter 5 (pp.213-242); class handout

Semantics (grammar of meaning)

15. W 10/31  CL, chapter 6 (pp. 245-285) [or substitute reading TBA]
16. M 11/5  **Monday 11/5: syntax quiz**

Historical change, language families and the history of English

17. W 11/7  CL, chapter 8 (pp.289-341), CL, chapter 9 (pp.365-383)
18. W 11/14  Language endangerment/language death/language revival

19. M 11/19  Guest lecture: Norvin Richards
20. W 11/21  Dialects, languages and registers

CL, chapter 14 (pp.537-589) 

*Discovery* magazine article on Ebonics ("Suite for Ebony and Phonics")
linked from http://www.stanford.edu/~rickford/ebonics/

[No recitation on Friday 11/23: Thanksgiving vacation]

21. M 11/26  Listen to the NPR interview with William Labov at
http://www.npr.org/ramfiles/atc/19990312atc08.rmm.

Acquisition of syntax and phonology

22. W 11/28  CL, chapter 10 (pp.409-445)

Language and Brain

23. M 12/3  CL, chapter 13 (pp. 513-534)

24. W 12/5  Special guest lecture

Animal Communication

25. M 12/10  CL, chapter 15 (pp.625-661)

26. W 12/12  Wrap-up