

# Introduction to Language Syllabus

## ELL101.0358 (67509)

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### Instructor's information

<b>Instructor:</b>	Tomonori Nagano, Ph.D.
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<b>Preferred communication:</b>	E-mail is preferred, with which you should expect my response within 24 hours. Also, please talk to me after class if you have any question about the class.
<b>Class Schedule (ELL101.0358):</b>	Tuesday 11:45-12:45pm (Room M-315) Thursday 11:45-12:45pm (Room M-315) Online (1 hour)

### Course goals and objectives

**Catalog Course Description:** An introduction to the nature, structure, and history of language. This course surveys the scientific study of language and answers the question of what it means to "know" a language. Areas covered include phonology, word structure, sentence structure, how language is acquired, how languages change through time, language in society and writing systems.

**Section Description:** The goal is to cover the foundational concepts of theoretical linguistic inquires. Although the primary focus of the course is on phonetics/phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, we will also discuss some applied fields such as first/second language acquisition, neurolinguistics, sociolinguistics, and computational linguistics. At the end of the semester, students are expected to be able to:

- describe the nature and general properties of language
- explain what it means to know a language
- identify phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic features of language
- explain how language and the brain are related
- compare and contrast the nature of the first and second language acquisition
- describe ways that language can change over time and the ways language change is studied
- explain ways in which language and society are related

### Hybrid (partially online) Section

This course is a "hybrid" class. Our goals and objectives are comparable to any other class, but the hybrid section combines a face-to-face classroom with substantial internet- based readings, activities, and video viewing. Each week, one class session is replaced by online work. This online work will prepare you to engage in practical applications and discussions in the face-to-face class, and therefore must be completed before your face- to-face class. In addition to this online class work, you may also have regular and online homework, just as would be part of any regular course. Note that asynchronous online assignments are time sensitive. Your timely participation in the course's online components counts as your attendance in the hybrid course. In addition, the quality of your online work determines 33% of your grade.

You must have regular and reliable internet access to complete this course; on-campus labs are available for this purpose. If you experience any difficulties with getting access to your campus online course, sending assignments, or any other technical support issues, stop by the Technology Support Center located in B127.

To take an online class, a student must have completed at least one semester at LaGuardia and achieved a cumulative grade-point average (GPA) of 2.0 or better on all college-level work. See <https://www.laguardia.edu/online/> for more information about students' minimal requirements for taking a hybrid class.

The convenience of hybrid courses brings increased responsibility for time management. You should adhere to a personal schedule for working on the online components of the course, and set reminders to meet assignment deadlines. Avoid waiting until the last minute to complete and submit online hour assignments as technical problems may occur. Computer or Internet problems are not an excuse for late work.

#### Flexible Core Objectives: Scientific World

The course bears 3 credits that count as Flexible Core (Scientific World) of the CUNY's new general education curriculum (a.k.a. Pathways).

In this course, students will:

- Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
- Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
- Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.
- Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the scientific world, including, but not limited to: computer science, history of science, life and physical sciences, linguistics, logic, mathematics, psychology, statistics, and technology- related studies.
- Demonstrate how tools of science, mathematics, technology, or formal analysis can be used to analyze problems and develop solutions.
- Articulate and evaluate the empirical evidence supporting a scientific or formal theory.
- Articulate and evaluate the impact of technologies and scientific discoveries on the contemporary world, such as issues of personal privacy, security, or ethical responsibilities.
- Understand the scientific principles underlying matters of policy or public concern in which science plays a role.

#### Textbook, grading, and other class logistics

**Textbooks:** The textbook is available at the bookstore. The reference books are available at the library and most book stores, especially online bookstores, but they are not required for this class (read them only if you are interested in the topic). **You should read chapters from Yule (2014) before each class.** Extra reading assignments will be posted online for syntax, semantics, and language acquisition. All the books listed below and in the bibliography are available in my office, so feel free to stop by my office if you want to borrow them.

#### Required

- Yule, G. (2014). *The Study of Language*. Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press. (Note: ISBN: 9781107658172; Price: \$32.99)

#### Recommended (for fun reading)

- Crystal, D. (2011). *A Little Book of Language*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT. ISBN: 9780300170825.
- Baker, M. (2001). *The Atoms of Language*. Basic Books, New York, NY. ISBN: 9780465005222.
- Bryston, B. (1996). *Made in America: An Informal History of the English Language in the United States*. Harper Perennial, New York, NY. ISBN: 9780380713813.
- Kenneally, C. (2008). *The First Word: The Search for the Origin of Language*. Penguin, New York, NY. ISBN: 9780143113744.
- McWhorter, J. (2003). *The Power of Babel: A Natural History of Language*. Harper Perennial, New York, NY. ISBN: 9780060520854.
- Ostler, N. (2006). *Empires of the Word: A Language History of the World*. Harper Perennial, New York, NY. ISBN: 9780060935726.
- Pinker, S. (1995). *The Language Instinct*. Harper Perennial, New York, NY.
- Pinker, S. (1999). *Words and Rules: The Ingredients of Language (P.S.)*. Basic Books, New York, NY. ISBN: 9780062011909.
- Pinker, S. (2003). *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. Penguin, New York, NY. ISBN: 9780142003343.

- Pinker, S. (2007). *The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature*. Viking Adult, Boston, Mass. ISBN: 0670063274.
- Pinker, S. (2009). *How the Mind Works*. Penguin, London, UK. ISBN: 9780393334777.

**Grades:** The weekly homework is announced during the lecture and also will be posted on the course website. Note that weekly homework accounts for 20% of your final grade and they will prepare you for the quiz and exams. **You can work on the homework with your classmates, but good understanding of those exercises is essential for passing this class.**

- final exam 20%
- mid-term 20%
- quiz 20%
- homework 20%
- in-class exercises 20%
- ▶ Grade distributions: A: 95-100%, A<sup>-</sup>: 90-94%, B<sup>+</sup>: 86-89%, B: 83-85%, B<sup>-</sup>: 80-82%, C<sup>+</sup>: 76-79%, C: 73-75%, C<sup>-</sup>: 70-72%, D<sup>+</sup>: 66-69%, D: 63-65%, D<sup>-</sup>: 60-62%, F: 59%, WU: Unofficial withdraw (≈ F), W: Withdraw

**Note about the class:** The class consists of lectures and exercise sessions. Weekly class schedule will be posted on the course website (at the URL above). **Regular visits to the course website are crucial part of the course** since important information about the class (e.g., assignments, handouts, and mid-term & final schedule etc.) will be posted there.

Weekly schedule (subject to change)
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WEEK	TOPIC (☞: TEXTBOOK PAGES)
Week 1	Introduction (mostly evolutionary linguistics and sociolinguistics) (☞ Ch.1 and 2 (just skim)) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Definition of <i>language</i> and <i>linguistics</i> as a scientific study (i.e., why study language?)</li> <li>- <i>Prescriptive</i> and <i>descriptive grammar</i> (and <i>UG</i> – explanatory adequacy)</li> <li>- Language modality (fields of linguistics)</li> </ul>
Week 2	Phonetics & IPA (Quiz 1) (☞ Yule (2010) Ch.3 <i>The Sounds of Language</i> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Motivation for phonetic alphabet (the problem of the English writing system)</li> <li>- Brief introduction to articulatory and auditory phonetics</li> <li>- The vocal tract (e.g., alveolar ridge, glottis, velum etc.)</li> <li>- Articulatory features of English consonants and vowels (e.g., place, manner, voicing etc.)</li> <li>- Decoding IPA transcriptions for English words</li> </ul>
Week 3	Phonology (Quiz 2) (☞ Yule (2010) Ch.4 <i>The Sound Patterns of Language</i> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Phonetics vs. Phonology</li> <li>- Definitions of <i>phone</i>, <i>phoneme</i>, and <i>allophone</i></li> <li>- Phonemic inventories of languages other than English (a brief talk about foreign accent)</li> <li>- Brief introduction to phonological features (e.g., [± sonorant])</li> <li>- Phonotactics (i.e., syllable structure)</li> <li>- Phonological processes (e.g., aspiration, assimilation, epenthesis etc.) in English</li> <li>- A little bit complex cases: English plural -s and past-tense marker -ed</li> <li>- Phonological processes in languages other than English</li> </ul>
Week 4	Morpheme Morphology (Quiz 3) (☞ Yule (2010) Ch.5 <i>Word Formation</i> and Ch.6 <i>Morphology</i> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Definition of <i>morpheme</i> (e.g., <i>cat</i>, <i>cats</i>, <i>catalogue</i>)</li> <li>- New word formation processes (e.g., coinage etc.)</li> <li>- Classification of morphemes (e.g., free vs. bound, inflectional vs. derivational, prefix, infix, and suffix etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hierarchical structure of derivational morphemes (e.g., <i>national-iz-ation</i>)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Morphemes in languages other than English</li> </ul>
Week 5	Syntax (Quiz 4) (☞ Yule (2010) Ch.7 <i>Grammar</i> , Ch.8 <i>Syntax</i> , and Language Files (2010) Ch.6 <i>Syntax</i> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Part-of-speech/Lexical categories (e.g., N, V, A, NP, VP, AP etc.)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Autonomous syntax (e.g., <i>Colorless green idea sleeps furiously.</i>)</li> <li>- Constituency test</li> <li>- Phrase structure rules (e.g., <math>S \rightarrow NP + VP</math>)</li> <li>- Hierarchical structure of syntax (i.e., tree drawing)</li> </ul>
Week 6	Catch-up Mid-term
Week 7	<p>Syntax, Semantics / Pragmatics (Quiz 5) (☞ Yule (2010) Ch.9 <i>Semantics</i>, Ch.10 <i>Pragmatics</i>, and Language Files (2010) Ch.7 <i>Semantics</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sense and reference (i.e., language and the signified objects in the real world)</li> <li>- Baby logic (truth-conditional semantics) and the set theory</li> <li>- Word relations (e.g., synonym, antonym, hypernym, meronym etc.)</li> </ul>
Week 8	<p>Semantics / Pragmatics (Quiz 5) (☞ Yule (2010) Ch.9 <i>Semantics</i>, Ch.10 <i>Pragmatics</i>, and Language Files (2010) Ch.7 <i>Semantics</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Compositional semantics (e.g., <i>doorknob, chair/desk/cabinet</i>)</li> <li>- Prototype theory (e.g., <i>bird - robin, turkey, penguin, ostrich</i>)</li> <li>- Thematic roles (e.g., AGENT, PATIENT etc.)</li> </ul>
Week 9	<p>First &amp; second language acquisition (Quiz 6) (☞ Yule (2010) Ch.13 <i>First Language Acquisition</i> and Ch.14 <i>Second Language Acquisition</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The order of first language acquisition (up to three years old)</li> <li>- Language and brain (e.g., Broca's area, Wernicke's area, aphasia etc.)</li> <li>- Critical period hypothesis &amp; accessibility to UG in SLA</li> <li>- Listening and analyzing actual baby's utterances (using CHILDES)</li> </ul>
Week 10	<p>Applied Field: neuro-linguistics (Quiz 7) (☞ Yule (2010) Ch.12 <i>Language and the Brain</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Broca and Wernicke's areas &amp; aphasia patients</li> <li>- Brain-imaging techniques (EEG, PET, MRI, fMRI)</li> <li>- Logical problem of language acquisition</li> <li>- Developmental stages of FLA</li> <li>- Classic FLA tests (<i>Wug</i> test, <i>Sibbling</i> test etc)</li> <li>- Unique factors in SLA</li> <li>- Critical Period Hypothesis</li> </ul>
Week 11-12	<p>Applied Field: historical linguistic, sociolinguistics (☞ Yule (2010) Ch.17 <i>Language History and Change</i>, Ch.18, Ch.19, and Ch.20)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regional variation of English</li> <li>- Some of syntactic properties of AAVE (e.g., habitual <i>be</i> as in <i>I always be...</i> etc.)</li> <li>- Language and power (e.g., "official" language)</li> <li>- Language and thought (e.g., linguistic relativism, linguistic determinism, Sapir-Whorf hypothesis etc.)</li> </ul>
Week 11-12	<p>Applied Field: pragmatics and computational linguistics (☞ Lee (2004) <i>I'm Sorry Dave, I'm Afraid I Can't Do that": Linguistics, Statistics, and Natural Language Processing Circa 2001</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Speech act (e.g., ASSERTION, QUESTION, REQUEST etc.)</li> <li>- Grice's maxims (e.g., the maxims of quality etc.)</li> <li>- Speech act and sentence forms (e.g., <i>Would you like to come up and see my etchings?</i>)</li> <li>- What we dreamed a few decades ago (e.g., <i>Knight Rider's</i> KITT, <i>Star Wars'</i> C-3PO, HAL 9000 in <i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> etc.)</li> <li>- Classic computer models (e.g., finite-state machine, Turing machine etc.)</li> <li>- Demonstrations of recent computer models</li> </ul>
Final exam	

### Policies

**Classroom policies:** The following policies have been instituted to ensure an optimal learning experience for all students:

- Please arrive on time.
- Please prepare for each class meeting by completing all writing/reading assignments beforehand.

- Please turn your cell phone to silence during class.
- Please turn off your cell phone during the exam and the quiz.

**Valuing LaGuardia's Diversity:** As a college community we represent a world of perspectives on race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and nationality, to name a few. I concur with the College's Declaration of Pluralism, if you have any suggestions in helping me to create a welcoming classroom environment, please tell me.

**Rules for Personal Conduct:** You are expected to obey the rules and regulations of the College about conduct. Disorderly or indecent behavior is not appropriate in a college setting. It is a violation of college rules and is not acceptable.

**The student attendance policy:** As stated in the college catalog: "Attendance in class is a requirement and will be considered in the evaluation of student performance. Instructors are required to keep an official record of student attendance. The maximum number of unexcused absences is limited to 15% of the number of class hours. Note: Absences are counted from the first day of class even if they are a result of late registration or change of program" (117).

**The academic dishonesty policy:** As stated in the catalog: "Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in the City University of New York and is punishable by penalties ranging from a grade of 'F' on a given test, research paper or assignment, to an 'F' in the course or suspension or expulsion from the College. Academic Dishonesty includes:

- Cheating
- Plagiarism
- Internet Plagiarism
- Obtaining Unfair Advantages
- Falsification of Records and Official Documents
- Misconduct in Internships (117)

**Policy on assigning the grade of Incomplete:** As stated in the college catalogue: "The Incomplete grade may be awarded to students who have not completed all of the required course work but for whom there is a reasonable expectation of satisfactory completion. A student who is otherwise in good standing in a course defined as complying with the college attendance policy and maintaining a passing average but who has not completed at most two major assignments or examinations by the end of the course may request an incomplete grade. To be eligible, such a student must provide, before the instructor submits grades for the course, a documented reason, satisfactory to the instructor, for not having completed the assignment on time. Instructors giving IN grades must inform students in writing of the conditions under which they may receive passing grades. Departments may designate certain courses in which no incomplete grades may be awarded." (120).

## REFERENCES

- Aitchison, J. (2010). Teach yourself linguistics: Understanding linguistics. London, UK: Bookpoint Ltd. (ISBN: 9780071747561; Course: ELL101 (reference); Price: \$15.00)
- Crystal, D. (2003). A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics (5th ed.). Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers.
- Crystal, D. (2010). The Cambridge encyclopedia of language (3rd edition ed.). Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press. (ISBN: 9780521736503; Course: ELL110 (reference); Price \$xx.xx)
- Finegan, E. (2011). Language: Its structure and use. Boston, Mass.: Wadsworth. (ISBN: 9780495900412; ELL101 (reference); Price: \$153.95)
- Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., & Hyams, N. (2010). An introduction to language (9th edition ed.). Boston, Mass.: Thomson Heinle. (ISBN: 9781428263925; Course: ELL101 (reference); Price: \$143.95)
- Larsen-Freeman, D., & Anderson, M. (2011). Techniques and principles in language teaching. Cambridge, Mass.: Oxford University Press. (ISBN: 9780194423601; Course: ELL101 (reference); Price \$27.44)
- O'Grady, W., Archibald, J., Arnoff, M., & Rees-Miller, J. (2009). Contemporary linguistics (6th ed.). Essex, UK: Bedford St. Martin's. (ISBN: 9780312555283; Course: ELL101 (reference); Price: \$75.02)
- Payne, T. E. (2010). Understanding English grammar: A linguistic introduction. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. (ISBN: 9780521757119; Course: ELL101 (reference); Price \$37.99)
- The Ohio State University Linguistics Department. (2011). Language files 11 (11th edition ed.). Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press. (ISBN: 9780814251799; Course: ELL101 (reference); Price: \$49.95)