Department of Linguistics

Chair
• Lenore Grenoble

Professors
• Diane Brentari
• Susan Gal, Anthropology
• Anastasia Giannakidou
• John Goldsmith
• Lenore Grenoble
• Chris Kennedy
• Jason Merchant
• Salikoko Mufwene
• Michael Silverstein, Anthropology
• Alan Yu

Associate Professors
• Karlos Arregi - Director of Graduate Studies
• Amy Dahlstrom
• Jason Riggle
• Ming Xiang

Assistant Professors
• Itamar Francez
• Yarolsav Gorbachov

Postdoctoral Scholars
• Natalia Bermudez
• Sharese King
• Erik Zyman

Emeritus Faculty
• Howard I. Aronson, Slavic Languages & Literatures
• Bill Darden, Slavic Languages & Literatures
• Gene B. Gragg, Oriental Institute
• Paul Friedrich, Anthropology
• Victor Friedman
• Eric P. Hamp, Linguistics
• Carolyn G. Killean, Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations
• Colin P. Masica, South Asian Languages & Civilizations
• G. David McNeill, Psychology
• Jerrold Sadock, Linguistics

Since 1926, the Department of Linguistics at the University of Chicago has been at the center of the development of the field, counting among its faculty linguists of the first rank such as Sapir and Bloomfield. It is theory-oriented with a deep empirical interest in languages. One of its outstanding characteristics is its commitment to a wide range of approaches to the study of language. Interdisciplinary, interdepartmental study is encouraged, and students regularly work with faculty in several other departments. Students are expected to become active researchers as soon as possible after their arrival here. Many students come with strong undergraduate training in linguistics, or with a Master’s degree; others come with strong training in fields such as philosophy, mathematics, or a particular language or language group. The faculty are involved in synchronic and diachronic research on languages from around the world. These varied interests are reflected in the topics of the dissertations that have been written in the Department.
Program

The graduate program in linguistics leading to the PhD degree is intended to be completed in five years. The University of Chicago operates on the quarter system. Graduate students normally register for three courses per quarter, three quarters per year. They generally take three to four years of coursework.

In the first two years, students take eight foundational courses chosen from a selection of thirteen available options. Six of these eight classes must be completed during the student’s first year in the program.

In addition to these foundational courses, students must also take a methods course and three additional graduate-level courses in linguistics.

In years two and three, when students are writing qualifying papers, they must also take the Research Seminar.

A large proportion of courses offered in the Linguistics Department are advanced courses that are open to all students. The topics of these courses change from year to year, in reflection of the ongoing research interests of both faculty and graduate students, and cover areas of current interest in the field at large. Students are also free to take courses related to their research interests that are offered by other departments in the University.

In the second and third years, students continue taking courses and write two qualifying papers under faculty supervision. In addition to these major landmarks, students are required to satisfy a non-Indo European language requirement and to pass a reading examination in an additional language other than English. Upon completion of the qualifying papers and course and language requirements and defense of a dissertation proposal by the end of the fourth year students are admitted to candidacy for the PhD; the only remaining requirement is the dissertation.

Application and Admission

Completed applications for admission and aid, along with all supporting materials, are due in mid-December for the academic year that starts in the following Autumn.

Four parts of the application are critically important and should accompany the application: the student’s academic record, letters of recommendation submitted by persons able to describe the student’s achievements and promise, the student’s statement of purpose, which describes the intellectual issues and subjects which they hope to explore at Chicago, and a sample of pertinent written work that demonstrates the applicant’s research interests or capabilities. The sample may consist of published essays, class term papers, or a B.A. or M.A. thesis, or some combination of all of these. The student’s academic record is documented through official transcripts, but applicants are also encouraged to submit as supplemental material an ‘annotated transcript’: a file they create that lists all the courses they have taken which are relevant to graduate study in linguistics, with the grade received, the full name of the instructor, major texts used or studied, and a brief (no more than five sentences) description of the material covered in the course. Such a supplemental file is more informative for judging the preparation of an applicant than is the official transcript.

When completing the application form, it is of benefit to the applicant to be as specific as possible in describing his or her research interests. General comments are of relatively little use; applicants are encouraged to discuss specific linguistic subject matters that they are interested in or have worked on.

If an applicant knows faculty members with whom he or she might work, the latter’s names should be given as well. The faculty of the Linguistics Department would be happy to answer any questions that prospective students may have. Please contact them individually regarding their research or classes, or contact the Director of Graduate Studies for more general or administrative questions. Contact information is available at the Linguistics Department website.

The application process for admission and financial aid for all graduate programs in Humanities is administered through the divisional Office of the Dean of Students. The Application for Admission and Financial Aid, with instructions, deadlines and department specific information is available online at: humanities.uchicago.edu/students/admissions

International students must provide evidence of English proficiency by submitting scores from either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). (Current minimum scores, etc., are provided with the application.) For more information, please see the Office of International Affairs website at internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu, or call them at (773) 702-7752.

Questions pertaining to admissions and aid should be directed to humanitiesadmissions@uchicago.edu or (773) 702-1552.
Linguistics Courses

LING 23200. Topics in Semantics and Pragmatics. 100 Units.
This focus of this course is conversational implicature. We will take the classic characterization of implicature in Grice as our starting point, and spend the rest of the quarter working through subsequent proposals that refine, rethink and/or reject it, and the empirical and theoretical concerns that motivate them. Topics to be discussed include: the relation between implicature and semantic composition; the nature and calculation of alternatives to what is said; game theoretic approaches to implicature and their relatives; Bayesian pragmatics; free choice inferences; manner implicature; pragmatic weakening vs. pragmatic strengthening.
Equivalent Course(s): LING 42010

LING 30150. Language and Communication. 100 Units.
This course can also be taken by students who are not majoring in Linguistics but are interested in learning something about the uniqueness of human language, spoken or signed. It covers a selection from the following topics: What is the position of spoken language in the usually multimodal forms of communication among humans? In what ways does spoken language differ from signed language? What features make spoken and signed language linguistic? What features distinguish linguistic means of communication from animal communication? How do humans communicate with animals? From an evolutionary point of view, how can we account for the fact that spoken language is the dominant mode of communication in all human communities around the world? Why cannot animals really communicate linguistically? What do the terms language “acquisition” and “transmission” really mean? What factors account for differences between “language acquisition” by children and by adults? Are children really perfect language learners? What factors bring about language evolution, including language speciation and the emergence of new language varieties? How did language evolve in mankind? This is a general education course without any prerequisites. It provides a necessary foundation to those working on language at the graduate and undergraduate levels.
Instructor(s): Salikoko Mufwene Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): EDSO 20150, CHDV 20150, LING 20150, CHDV 30150

LING 30201. Syntax I. 100 Units.
Graduate student standing. Undergraduates with a grade of A or A- in Intro to Syntax may petition the instructor for admission. This course is an advanced survey of topics in graduate syntax examining current syntactic theory through detailed analysis of a range of phenomena and readings from the primary research literature.
Instructor(s): Jason Merchant Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): Graduate student standing

LING 30202. Syntactic Analysis - II. 100 Units.
This course is a continuation of Syntax I. The emphasis will be on A'-movement and ellipsis operations within the framework of Principles and Parameters and the Minimalist Program. Although we will examine different types of movement and ellipsis constructions, as well as their interactions, the objective will be to understand to what extent we can develop a general theory of syntax. The course will have a strong cross-linguistic aspect to it, examining data from Irish, Austronesian languages, Mayan languages, Wolof, Russian, Romance, Germanic, and others. The topics will include wh-movement in questions, relative clauses, and other constructions, islands and other constraints on movement, sentence fragments (sluicing, split questions), VP-ellipsis, and gapping.
Instructor(s): Jason Merchant Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): LING 30201

LING 30301. Semantics and Pragmatics I. 100 Units.
This is the first in a two-course sequence designed to provide a foundation in the scientific study of all aspects of linguistic meaning. The first quarter focuses primarily on pragmatics: those aspects of meaning that arise from the way that speakers put language to use, rather than through the formal properties of the linguistic system itself, which is the domain of semantics. However, a central goal of the course will be to begin to develop an understanding of the relation between pragmatics and semantics, by exploring empirical phenomena in which contextual and conventional aspects of meaning interact in complex but regular and well-defined ways, and by learning analytical techniques that allow us to tease these two aspects of linguistics meaning apart.
Instructor(s): Itamar Francez Terms Offered: Autumn

LING 30302. Semantics and Pragmatics II. 100 Units.
This is the second in a two-course sequence designed to provide a foundation in the scientific study of all aspects of linguistic meaning. The second quarter focuses on the syntax-semantics interface and cross-linguistic semantics. The class will introduce in detail a theory of the way in which the meaning of complex linguistic expressions is formed compositionally from the meaning of constituent parts, and the interaction of semantic and syntactic composition. This theory will form the basis for exploring some empirical questions about the systematicity of cross-linguistic variation in the encoding of meaning.
Instructor(s): Chris Kennedy Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): LING 30301

LING 30800. Phonology-1. 100 Units.
Equivalent Course(s): LING 20800, ANTH 37301

LING 30900. Phonology-2. 100 Units.
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 37302, LING 20900
LING 31000. Morphology. 100 Units.
Looking at data from a wide range of languages, we will study the structure of words. We will consider the nature of the elements out of which words are built and the principles that govern their combination. The effects of word structure on syntax, semantics, and phonology will be examined. We will think critically about the concepts of morpheme, inflection, derivation, and indeed, the concept of word itself.
Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 37500

LING 35100. Old Church Slavonic. 100 Units.
This course is an introduction to the language of the oldest Slavic texts. It begins with a brief historical overview of the relationship of Old Church Slavonic to Common Slavic and the other Slavic languages. This is followed by a short outline of Old Church Slavonic inflectional morphology. The remainder of the course is spent in the reading and grammatical analysis of original texts in Cyrillic or Cyrillic transcription of the original Glagolitic.
Equivalent Course(s): LING 23115, REES 33115, REES 23115, MDVL 25100

LING 38355. A Linguistic Introduction to Swahili I. 100 Units.
Spoken in ten countries of Eastern and Central Africa, Swahili has more speakers than any other language in the Bantu family, a group of more than 400 languages most prevalent in sub-equatorial Africa. Based on Swahili Grammar and Workbook, this course helps the students master key areas of the Swahili language in a fast yet enjoyable pace. Topics include sound and intonation patterns, noun class agreements, verb moods, and sentence structures. Additionally, this course provides important listening and expressive reading skills. For advanced students, historical interpretations are offered for exceptional patterns observed in Swahili, in relation with other Bantu languages. This is a general introduction course with no specific prerequisites.
Instructor(s): Fidèle Mpiranya Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): LING 28355

LING 38356. Linguistic Introduction to Swahili II. 100 Units.
Based on Swahili Grammar and Workbook, this course is a continuation of Linguistic Introduction to Swahili I. It addresses complex issues related to grammatical agreement, verb moods, noun and verb derivation, non-typical adjectives and adverbs, double object constructions, subordinate / coordinated clause constructions, and dialectal variation. Additionally, this course provides important listening and expressive reading skills. For advanced students, historical interpretations are offered for exceptional patterns observed in Swahili, in relation with other Bantu languages. This course allows fulfilling the non-Indo-European language requirement.
Instructor(s): Fidele Mpiranya Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): LING 28356

LING 38600. Computational Linguistics. 100 Units.
This course introduces the problems of computational linguistics and the techniques used to deal with them, focusing primarily on probabilistic models and techniques. Topics are drawn primarily from phonology, morphology, and syntax. Special topics include automatic learning of grammatical structure and the treatment of languages other than English.
Instructor(s): J. Goldsmith Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): CMSC 12200, 15200 or 16200, or by consent
Equivalent Course(s): DIGS 30013, CMSC 35050

LING 38610. Computational Linguistics I. 100 Units.
This course is an introduction to topics at the intersection of computation and language, oriented toward linguists and cognitive scientists. We will study computational linguistics from both scientific and engineering angles -- the use of computational modeling to address scientific questions in linguistics and cognitive science, as well as the design of computational systems to solve engineering problems in natural language processing (NLP). The course will combine analysis and discussion of these approaches with training in the programming and mathematical foundations necessary to put these methods into practice. Our goal in this quarter is for students to leave the course able to engage with and evaluate research in cognitive/linguistic modeling and NLP, and to be able to implement intermediate-level computational models.
Instructor(s): Allyson Ettinger Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): At least two courses in linguistics or other cognitive science field (or permission of instructor)
Equivalent Course(s): CMSC 35610, CMSC 25610, LING 28610

LING 38620. Computational Linguistics II. 100 Units.
This is the second in a two-course sequence providing an introduction to topics at the intersection of computation and language, oriented toward linguists and cognitive scientists. In this quarter we will cover more advanced topics in cognitive/linguistic modeling and natural language processing (NLP), applying more complex programming and mathematical foundations. Our goal in this quarter is for students to leave the course able to implement advanced models and conduct novel research in cognitive/linguistic modeling and NLP.
Instructor(s): Allyson Ettinger Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): Computational Linguistics I or permission of instructor
Equivalent Course(s): CMSC 35620, CMSC 25620, LING 28620
LING 40301. Field Methods I. 100 Units.
The field methods course is a two-quarter course, taken by graduate students and advanced undergraduates. (Students may elect to take the course more than once.) This course is devoted to the elicitation, transcription, organization, and analysis of linguistic data from a native speaker of a language not commonly studied. Students will also gain practical experience in the use of fieldwork equipment. Language chosen may vary from year to year.
Instructor(s): Amy Dahlstrom Lenore Grenoble Terms Offered: Autumn

LING 40302. Field Methods II. 100 Units.
The field methods course is a two-quarter course, taken by graduate students and advanced undergraduates. (Students may elect to take the course more than once.) This course is devoted to the elicitation, transcription, organization, and analysis of linguistic data from a native speaker of a language not commonly studied. Students will also gain practical experience in the use of fieldwork equipment. Language chosen may vary from year to year.
Instructor(s): Amy Dahlstrom Terms Offered: Winter

LING 40310. Experimental Methods. 100 Units.
This course will cover the basic methods for experimental studies, including experimental design, data collection and statistical analysis. To demonstrate different design and analysis tools, we will look at data set from different types of studies, including self-paced reading, acceptability judgment, eye tracking, ERP, etc. Students will also gain hands-on experience on different paradigms.
Instructor(s): Laura Cassanto Terms Offered: Winter

LING 40311. Experimental Methods 2. 100 Units.
This course will cover the basic methods for experimental studies, including experimental design, data collection and statistical analysis. To demonstrate different design and analysis tools, we will look at data set from different types of studies, including self-paced reading, acceptability judgment, eye tracking, ERP, etc. Students will also gain hands-on experience on different paradigms.

LING 40312. Advanced Experimental Methods. 100 Units.
The Advanced Experimental Methods class provides comprehensive training on specific experimental paradigms/methods in language science research. In the current quarter we will focus on the EEG methods. Students will develop practical skills by carrying out a project, learning about the experimental design, data collection and data analysis procedures. In addition to the methodology training, we will also read and discuss how EEG is applied to address theoretical and empirical questions in the domain of language and cognition. Prior to this class, students should have taken the graduate level Experimental Methods class or the equivalent.
Instructor(s): Ming Xiang Terms Offered: Winter

LING 41920. The Evolution of Language. 100 Units.
How did language emerge in the phylogeny of mankind? Was its evolution saltatory or gradual? Did it start late or early and then proceed in a protracted way? Was the emergence monogenetic or polygenetic? What were the ecological prerequisites for the evolution, with the direct ecology situated in the hominine species itself, and when did the prerequisites obtain? Did there ever emerge a language organ or is this a post-facto construct that can be interpreted as a consequence of the emergence of language itself? What function did language evolve to serve, to enhance thought processes or to facilitate rich communication? Are there modern "fossils" in the animal kingdom that can inform our scholarship on the subject matter? What does paleontology suggest? We will review some of the recent and older literature on these questions and more.
Instructor(s): Salikoko Mufwene Terms Offered: Autumn. Autumn 2019
Equivalent Course(s): LING 21920, ANTH 47305, CHDV 21920, CHSS 41920, PSYC 41920, CHDV 41920, EVOL 41920

LING 57727. LingAnthSem: Voiced Revelations on "Fieldwork" on Languages and Cultures. 100 Units.
The recent publication (2019) and prominent popular reviews of Don Kulick's A Death in the Rainforest is at the leading edge of a long and distinguished line of publishing "the straight dope" on what it is like to engage in systematic empirical study of languages, particularly as denotational structures, and of cultures, particularly as the frameworks of value for the experiences in the field that envelop "natives" and the researcher. We take up the problem of how - and for whom - to 'voice' a kind of informal and revelatory retrospection of the fieldwork experience, using as examples writings by Bronislaw Malinowski, Hortense Powdermaker, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Margaret Mead, Robert M. W. Dixon, Don Kulick, and others - especially those suggested by members of the seminar.
Instructor(s): Michael Silverstein Terms Offered: Autumn. Autumn 2019
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 57727
Font Notice

This document should contain certain fonts with restrictive licenses. For this draft, substitutions were made using less legally restrictive fonts. Specifically:

- Times was used instead of Trajan.
- Times was used instead of Palatino.

The editor may contact Leepfrog for a draft with the correct fonts in place.