

LINGUISTICS

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Program Director: Prof. John McWhorter, jm3156@columbia.edu

In any discussion of linguistics, in popular or academic contexts, the first question is always, what is linguistics, after all? This is remarkable. Language informs most of our mental and cultural activity, and linguistics is the just study of language.

Linguistics, especially since the 1960s, has become a highly multifarious, and even sprawling, field of inquiry. This requires that a major acquaint students with a number of subfields, all of which are crucial to understanding what modern linguistic analysis is about, and foster interdisciplinary inquiry as well. To wit, the person with a basic foundation in what constitutes linguistic study in our times (including realistic training for graduate study if desired) understands:

- the basics of grammatical analysis in terms of sounds and sentence structure
- how languages change over time
- the mechanics of how languages express meaning and implication
- the details and nuances of how language is used in social space
- the ways and extent to which the world's 7000 languages differ from one another
- the relationship between language and cognition writ large

Study Abroad

Undergraduates have engaged in unique travel and research projects, including sign language in Nicaragua; language attitudes in Kyrgyzstan; colloquial Arabic in Cairo; summer internship at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology; and study abroad in Spain, England, India, Hungary, and Ireland.

Graduate Study

Columbia's linguists have distinguished themselves with awards and plans after graduation, such as Fulbright Fellowships to France, Georgia, and Turkey; and graduate study of linguistics or psychology at Harvard, Stanford, UCSD, Northwestern, New York University, and SUNY Buffalo. Linguistics is also a natural background for the law, and our students have entered such law schools as Georgetown and Columbia.

There is no graduate program in linguistics at Columbia. Students interested in pursuing graduate study in linguistics in New York should investigate CUNY Graduate Center, New York University, or Teachers College (applied linguistics).

Affiliated Faculty

May Ahmar (Arabic; MESAAS)

Akeel Bilgrami (Philosophy)

Aaron Fox (Music)

Melissa Fusco (Philosophy)

Haim Gaifman (Philosophy)

Boris Gasparov (Slavic Languages)

E. Mara Green, (Anthropology, Barnard)

Tiina Haapakoski (Finnish, Germanic Languages)

Julia Hirschberg (Computer Science)

Ana Paula Huback (Latin American and Iberian Studies)

Rina Kreitman (Hebrew; MESAAS)

Meredith Landman (Slavic Languages)

Karen Lewis (Philosophy, Barnard)

Lening Liu (Chinese; East Asian Languages and Cultures)

Reyes Llopis-Garcia (Latin American and Iberian Cultures)

David Lurie (Japanese; East Asian Languages and Cultures)

Kathleen McKeown (Computer Science)

John McWhorter (American Studies)

Yuan-Yuan Meng (Chinese; East Asian Languages and Cultures)

Michele Miozzo (Psychology)

Fumiko Nazikian (Japanese; East Asian Languages and Cultures)

Youssef Nouhi (Arabic; MESAAS)

Christopher Peacocke (Philosophy)

John Phan (East Asian Languages and Cultures)

Owen Rambow (Center for Computational Learning Systems)

Robert Remez (Psychology, Barnard)

Francisco Rosales-Varo (Latin American and Iberian Studies)

Carol Rounds (Hungarian; Italian)

José Plácido Ruiz-Campillo (Latin American and Iberian Studies)

Richard Sacks (English and Comparative Literature)

Ann Senghas (Psychology, Barnard)

Mariame Sy (Wolof; Pulaar; MESAAS)

Herbert Terrace (Psychology)

Alan Timberlake (Slavic Languages)

Zhirong Wang (Chinese; East Asian Languages and Cultures)

Major in Linguistics

The complete major requirement – totaling 38 points – is the following:

- LING UN3101 Introduction to Linguistics (3pts.)
- LING GU4376 Phonetics and Phonology (3pts.)
- LING GU4903 Syntax (3pts.)
- One course from four out of five themes (12 pts. total):

a) Language in time

Content: Historical linguistics, as in how grammars transform over time (such as the development of Modern from Old English) in terms of sounds, structures, and meaning

LING GU4108 Language History

ENGL GU4901 History of the English Language

CHNS GU4019 HISTORY OF CHINESE LANGUAGE

b) Language in context

Content: How language varies in structure and usage according to sociological factors such as gender, class, race, power and culture

LING GU4800 LANGUAGE # SOCIETY

LING UN3102 Endangered Languages in the Global City: Lang, Culture, and Migration in Contemporary NYC

ANTH UN1009 Introduction to Language and Culture

ANTH GR6067 Language and Its Limits (graduate seminar open to undergraduates)

AMST UN3931 Topics in American Studies (Languages of America)

AMST UN3931 Topics in American Studies (Language Contact)

SPAN GU4010 LANGUAGE CROSSING IN LATINX CARIBBEAN CULTURAL PRODUCTION

SPAN BC3382 Languages in Contact: Sociolinguistic Aspects of U. S. Spanish (taught in Spanish)

PORT GU4033 Language # Queer Brazil (ENG)

c) Language diversity

Content: How languages differ from one another and in which ways; especially valuable in this module are a) Field Methods, eliciting the vocabulary and structure of a lesser documented language by questioning a native speaker, in the fashion of professional linguists, b) courses focusing on the structure of individual languages

LING GU4206 Advanced Grammar and Grammars
 LING GU4120 Language Documentation and Field Methods
 LING GU4171 Languages of Africa
 HNGR UN3343 Descriptive Grammar Hungarian

d) Language and meaning

Content: semantics, philosophy of language, cognitive linguistics, natural language processing

LING GU4190 Discourse and Pragmatics
 PHIL UN2685 Introduction to Philosophy of Language
 SPAN GR5450 A COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS ACCOUNT OF LANGUAGE
 SPAN GU4030 Spanish Pragmatics (taught in Spanish)
 COMS W1002 Computing in Context

e) Psychology and biology of language

Content: psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, language genesis. This is especially important given the burgeoning research on the actual structural representation of language in the brain, as well as increasingly influential proposals that ground language in larger thought processes (as opposed to the Chomskyan proposal that language is, to a considerable extent, generated via exclusive cognitive mechanisms).

LING UN3103 Language, Brain and Mind
 PSYC BC3164 Perception and Language
 PSYC GU4232 Production and Perception of Language
 PSYC BC3369 Language Development
 PSYC GU4242 Evolution of Language (Seminar) (graduate seminar open to undergraduates)
 PSYC GU4272 Advanced Seminar in Language Development

4. One elective course (3 pts.) from either a) one of the themes, or b) a linguistics-related course from another department subject to approval from the program. This option will allow students to either sample more widely or specialize somewhat in a subarea of linguistics that has come to interest them.

5. Senior thesis (two semesters, 3 pts. per semester)

6. Two language courses at the intermediate level (8pts.), separate from the core curriculum foreign language requirement. The choice of language must be from those listed below, under "In Fulfillment of the Language Requirement for Linguistics, 'or upon consultation with the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

Special Concentration in Linguistics

The special concentration in linguistics is not sufficient for graduation in and of itself. It must be taken in conjunction with a major or a full concentration in another discipline.

Please note: the requirements for the special concentration in Linguistics were modified in the Fall 2019 semester. Students who entered Columbia before the Fall 2019 semester have the option of following the new or the old requirements. If you have any questions, please contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

For the new requirements, students must take 23 points in the linguistics program as specified below.

For the old requirements, students must take 18 points; the requirements are specified below, with the exception that the language requirement is one language course at the intermediate level (4pts.), separate from the core curriculum foreign language requirement.

The requirements for the special concentration (23 points) are as follows:

1. Three core courses in linguistics chosen from:

LING UN3101 Introduction to Linguistics
 LING UN3102 Endangered Languages in the Global City: Lang, Culture, and Migration in Contemporary NYC
 LING UN3103 Language, Brain and Mind
 HNGR UN3343 Descriptive Grammar Hungarian
 LING GU4108 Language History
 LING GU4120 Language Documentation and Field Methods
 LING GU4171 Languages of Africa
 LING GU4190 Discourse and Pragmatics
 LING GU4206 Advanced Grammar and Grammars
 LING GU4376 Phonetics and Phonology
 LING GU4800 LANGUAGE # SOCIETY
 LING GU4903 Syntax

2. Two additional courses from either a) the core linguistics courses, or b) a linguistics-related course from another department subject to approval from the program. Course previously approved include those listed below:

Anthropology:

ANTH UN1009 Introduction to Language and Culture
 ANTH GU4042 Agent, Person, Subject, Self
 ANTH GR6067 Language and Its Limits
 ANTH GR6125 Language, Culture, and Power

Chinese:

CHNS GU4019 HISTORY OF CHINESE LANGUAGE

Computer Science:

COMS W1002 Computing in Context
 COMS W1012 Computational Linguistics
 COMS UN3261 Computer Science Theory
 COMS GU4705 Natural Language Processing
 COMS GU4706 Spoken Language Processing
 COMS GR6998 Topics in Computer Science

Comparative Literature & Society:

CPLS GU4111 World Philology

French:

FREN BC3011 History of the French Language

Philosophy:

PHIL UN2685 Introduction to Philosophy of Language
 PHIL UN3411 SYMBOLIC LOGIC
 PHIL UN3685 Philosophy of Language
 PHIL GU4490 LANGUAGE AND MIND

Psychology:

PSYC UN2215 Cognition and the Brain
 PSYC UN2440: Language and the Brain
 PSYC UN2450 Behavioral Neuroscience
 PSYC BC3164 Perception and Language
 PSYC UN3265 Auditory Perception (Seminar)

PSYC BC3369 Language Development
 PSYC GU4232 Production and Perception of Language
 PSYC GU4272 Advanced Seminar in Language Development

Spanish:

SPAN BC3382 Languages in Contact: Sociolinguistic Aspects of U. S.

Spanish

SPAN GU4010 LANGUAGE CROSSING IN LATINX CARIBBEAN CULTURAL PRODUCTION

SPAN GU4030 Spanish Pragmatics

SPAN GR5450 A COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS ACCOUNT OF LANGUAGE

Sociology:

SOCI GU4030 Sociology of Language

3. Two language courses at the intermediate level (8pts.), separate from the core curriculum foreign languages requirement. The choice of language must be from those listed below, under "In Fulfillment of the Language Requirements for Linguistics," or upon consultation with the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

In Fulfillment of the Language Requirement for Linguistics

The language taken in fulfillment of the linguistics requirement can be either an ancient or modern language, but should neither be the student's native (or semi-native) language nor belong to one of the major groups of modern European languages (Germanic, Romance). In addition to the regularly taught courses listed under the Foreign Language Requirement, the following is a list of languages that have been offered at Columbia. See the list of languages offered through the Language Resource Center and consult with the Director of Undergraduate Studies about other languages to determine if they are acceptable for the linguistics language requirement.

Ancient Egyptian
Anglo-Saxon
Aramaic
Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian
Cantonese
Chagatay
Czech
Finnish
Georgian
Hindi
Hungarian
Indonesian
Irish
Kannada
Kazakh
Korean
Nahuatl
Nepali
Old Church Slavonic
Quechua
Persian
Polish
Pulaar
Romanian
Sumerian Swahili
Syriac
Tajik
Tamil
Telugu
Ukrainian Uzbek
Urdu
Vietnamese
Wolof
Zulu

Linguistics

LING UN3101 Introduction to Linguistics. 3 points.

An introduction to the study of language from a scientific perspective. The course is divided into three units: language as a system (sounds, morphology, syntax, and semantics), language in context (in space, time, and community), and language of the individual (psycholinguistics, errors, aphasia, neurology of language, and acquisition). Workload: lecture, weekly homework, and final examination.

Spring 2021: LING UN3101

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
LING 3101	001/10689	T Th 2:40pm - 3:55pm Online Only	John McWhorter	3	286/400

LING UN3102 Endangered Languages in the Global City: Lang, Culture, and Migration in Contemporary NYC. 3 points.

CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement

Of the world's estimated 7,000 languages – representing migrations and historical developments thousands of years old – the majority are oral, little-documented, and increasingly endangered under the onslaught of global languages like English. This course will take the unprecedented, paradoxical linguistic capital of New York City as a lens for examining how immigrants form communities in a new land, how those communities are integrated into the wider society, and how they grapple with linguistic and cultural loss. Interdisciplinary with an experiential learning component, the course will focus on texts, materials, encounters, and fieldwork with three of the city's newest and least-studied indigenous immigrant communities (indigenous Latin Americans, Himalayans, and Central Asians).

Indigeneity, though often invisible or perceived as marginal in global cities like New York, is in fact pervasive and fundamental. Cities now constitute a crucial site for understanding migration and cultural change, with language a vehicle for culture. Studying cultures only in situ (i.e. in their homelands) risks missing a crucial dimension. Students will be immersed in stateless, oral, immigrant cultures while also gaining a hands-on critical understanding of language endangerment and urban sociolinguistic research, first through field experiences and guest speakers (Endangered Language Alliance partners) and then by going out together into communities to work on projects in small teams.

The Endangered Language Alliance (ELA), where the instructor is Co-Director, was formed as a non-profit research institute in 2010 as a forum for researchers, community members, activists, artists, and other New Yorkers to come together to support indigenous and minority languages. ELA's video recordings provide first-hand testimony of endangered languages in the global city – in indigenous languages with English translation – available in few other places. Those texts will be central to this course, supplemented by the new, first-ever, detailed language map of New York City being produced by ELA.

Fall 2021: LING UN3102

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
LING 3102	001/12208	T Th 2:40pm - 3:55pm Room TBA	Ross Perlin	3	32/30

LING UN3103 Language, Brain and Mind. 3.00 points.

The ability to speak distinguishes humans from all other animals, including our closest relatives, the chimpanzees. Why is this so? What makes this possible? This course seeks to answer these questions. We will look at the neurological and psychological foundations of the human faculty of language. How did our brains change to allow language to evolve? Where in our brains are the components of language found? Are our minds specialized for learning language or is it part of our general cognitive abilities to learn? How are words and sentences produced and their meanings recognized? The structure of languages around the world varies greatly; does this have psychological effects for their speakers?

Fall 2021: LING UN3103

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
LING 3103	001/12209	M W 2:40pm - 3:55pm Room TBA	William Foley	3.00	42/80

LING UN3997 Supervised Individual Research. 2-4 points.**LING UN3998 Supervised Individual Research. 2-4 points.**

Supervised Individual Research

LING GU4108 Language History. 3 points.

Prerequisites: LING UN3101

Language, like all components of culture, is structured and conventional, yet can nevertheless change over time. This course examines how language changes, firstly as a self-contained system that changes organically and autonomously, and secondly as contextualized habits that change in time, in space, and in communities. Workload: readings & discussion, weekly problems, and final examination.

Fall 2021: LING GU4108

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
LING 4108	001/10305	M W 11:40am - 12:55pm Room TBA	Meredith Landman	3	19/22

LING GU4120 Language Documentation and Field Methods. 3 points.

Prerequisites: LING UN3101

In light of the predicted loss of up to 90% of the world languages by the end of this century, it has become urgent that linguists take a more active role in documenting and conserving endangered languages. In this course, we will learn the essential skills and technology of language documentation through work with speakers of an endangered language.

Spring 2021: LING GU4120

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
LING 4120	001/10074	M W 2:40pm - 3:55pm Online Only	Meredith Landman	3	5/12

LING GU4171 Languages of Africa. 3 points.

The African continent is home not to simply a collection of similar "African dialects," but to at least 1000 distinct languages that belong to five language families, none of them any more closely related than English and its relatives are to Japanese. This includes the Semitic languages that emerged in the Middle East and are now most commonly associated with Arabic and Hebrew, the famous "click" languages of Southern Africa whose origins are still shrouded by mystery, and in the case of Malagasy on Madagascar, the Austronesian family of Southeast Asia and Oceania - the language traces to speakers who travelled over the ocean from Borneo to Africa. This course will examine languages in all of these families, with a focus on how they demonstrate a wide array of linguistic processes and how they interact with social history, anthropology, and geography.

LING GU4172 The Structure of Cambodian. 3 points.

Like every other language, Cambodian is totally unique in some respects (these are of interest only to the language learner), and a representative human language in others (these are of interest to all students of language). Thus, for example, like every written language, Cambodian will exhibit diglossia: the grammar and the vocabulary of the written language will differ from that of the spoken language. It is also a member of a language family, known as Austroasiatic, whose members are spoken from NE India through Malaysia, Myanmar, and Indochina. In addition, Cambodian is a structural representative of a given type of language spoken throughout mainland Southeast Asia. That is, in many respects, the structure of Cambodian is similar to those of Lao, Thai, Vietnamese, as well as Hmong. In the "Far West" of SE Asia, are spoken other languages, among them Burmese, Mon, and Karen, which are still similar, but less so. All of these languages are isolating, monosyllabic languages. Of the languages just listed, only Vietnamese and Mon are genetically related to Cambodian. Finally, in its orthography and lexicon, Cambodian has borrowed so extensively from Indic languages, that all literate speakers have a considerable background in practical etymology, and recognize borrowings from , say, Pali, as English speakers generally do not recognize borrowings from Norman French or Latin or Greek. Since the Indic languages belong to Indoeuropean, some unexpected words in Cambodian (e.g. *niam* ,*smaeu*) will turn out to have English cognates (like *name*, *same*).

Your goal in this course is not to acquire a speaking knowledge of Khmer. (For that you would need a pedagogical grammar, a native-speaker instructor, and hours and hours of practice in the lab and in the classroom.) It is rather to understand from a linguist's point of view what it is that makes this language a typical language of this part of the world. We will be working through a reference grammar of the language together. You are each also going to 'adopt' another mainland SE Asian language for purposes of comparison, to experience for yourself what it means for a language to be a member of a linguistic alliance or Sprachbund. You may select your own 'pet' language, and your assignment will then be to 'master' this language in the same way that you have 'mastered' Khmer.

LING GU4190 Discourse and Pragmatics. 3 points.

Prerequisites: LING UN3101

How discourse works; how language is used: oral vs. written modes of language; the structure of discourse; speech acts and speech genres; the expression of power; authenticity; and solidarity in discourse, dialogicity, pragmatics, and mimesis.

LING GU4206 Advanced Grammar and Grammars. 3 points.

Prerequisites: LING UN3101 *LING W3101*.

An investigation of the possible *types* of grammatical phenomena (argument structure, tense/aspect/mood, relative clauses, classifiers, and deixis). This typological approach is enriched by the reading of actual grammars of languages from Asia, Africa, Australia, and the Americas in which grammatical descriptions are read with an eye to important notional concepts of grammar: reference and categorization, case and role of arguments with predicates (ergativity), tense/aspect/mood. Discussion of meaning is combined with attention to expression (that is, morphology), which yanks our attention towards language change (grammaticalization).

LING GU4376 Phonetics and Phonology. 3 points.

Prerequisites: LING UN3101

An investigation of the sounds of human language, from the perspective of phonetics (articulation and acoustics, including computer-aided acoustic analysis) and phonology (the distribution and function of sounds in individual languages).

Spring 2021: LING GU4376

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
LING 4376	001/10690	T Th 11:40am - 12:55pm Online Only	Meredith Landman	3	11/22

LING GU4800 LANGUAGE # SOCIETY. 3.00 points.

How language structure and usage varies according to societal factors such as social history and socioeconomic factors, illustrated with study modules on language contact, language standardization and literacy, quantitative sociolinguistic theory, language allegiance, language, and power

LING GU4903 Syntax. 3 points.

Prerequisites: LING UN3101

Syntax - the combination of words - has been at the center of the Chomskyan revolution in Linguistics. This is a technical course which examines modern formal theories of syntax, focusing on later versions of generative syntax (Government and Binding) with secondary attention to alternative models (HPSG, Categorical Grammar).

Fall 2021: LING GU4903

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
LING 4903	001/10306	T Th 11:40am - 12:55pm Room TBA	Meredith Landman	3	25/22