Linguistics 190b: Topics in Linguistics

Fundamentals of Linguistic Research
Course Information and Syllabus — as of August 29, 2018

Lecture: MW, 2:00-3:20pm, Volen 106

Instructor: Lotus Goldberg
Phone: (781) 736-3265
Mailbox: Volen 261 [Computer Science Dept. Office]
Office: Volen 252

Office Hours for just this week: Thursday August 30, 11:00am-12:00pm
(for students in either of my two courses)

Regular Office Hours schedule: TBA soon!

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course provides a hands-on introduction to the scholarly approaches to research in linguistics, including the concepts, methodology, and terminology associated with scientific inquiry, ethical practice, and academic writing in the field. The course will allow students to engage with original research from a variety of angles—including improving the familiarity with and ability to understand published literature in the field, as well as carrying out their own research.

These aims will be achieved via the central notion of learning how to build up, discuss, and engage with knowledge of the academic literature on a single topic, and all that this entails. This begins with identifying a topic that seems interesting (and developing an eye for interesting problems on which progress seems doable), gradually building up a picture of the topic's the major publications, authors, themes, and controversies, and what issues within the topic have been resolved versus remain in need of further progress and understanding. Learning how to do this not only gives you the ability to then research any topic that interests you, but, importantly, allows you to set up a new project within the context of the existing literature.

The course is strongly encouraged for students advanced into the Linguistics major, and is especially useful for those considering graduate study in linguistics, (contemplating) doing a senior honors thesis, or (as the case for many Linguistics majors) just wanting to learn more about what doing research in the field involves.

The course is also encouraged for Computational Linguistics MS students advanced into the second year or beyond who are considering a Master's Thesis, but do not yet have a topic developed for which they are ready to begin work on a two-semester thesis. It has also been found useful by CL MS students who would like an experience doing independent research on some CL topic of their choosing.

For both groups, the course can serve as a way to develop substantial knowledge in a topic that is not taught directly in a course we currently offer.

Learning Goals: As a result of taking this course and fully engaging with the material and required work, students will deepen their knowledge and understanding of areas including:

- what constitutes research and research progress in the various linguistics subfields and in computational linguistics, and how research is done in each;
- how to identify and develop good topics for research, and how to build up knowledge of the research literature on a topic of interest;
- how to understand, evaluate, and develop empirical claims and theoretical proposals in research and writing of the fields studied;
how to compare competing claims or analyses and critically assess the merits and weaknesses of each;

- the standard methods for writing and presenting research and related content in the fields studied.

**Prerequisites:** either (a) at least two of the following core courses, or their equivalent: LING 110a–Phonological Theory, LING 120b–Syntactic Theory, LING 130a–Formal Semantics, or LING 140a–Discourse and Pragmatics, OR (b) (for students wishing to choose a CL topic) COSI 114–Fundamentals of CL, and, ideally, concurrent enrollment in COSI 134–Statistical Approaches to Natural Language Processing.

**Course Requirements**

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<th>Course Component</th>
<th>Percent of Final Grade</th>
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<td>Adopted Paper (AP) write-up (20%), presentation (5%)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Independent Paper (IP) (Rough draft 10%, Final draft 30%)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>IP Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Full and fully adequate completion of credit/no credit (C/NC) assignments</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Regular attendance and class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Final Course Grade</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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All grades for the course are on a scale of 6 total points, broken down as follows:

- A range = 5 to 6:  
  - 5.3 and up: A  
  - 5.0 up: A-

- B range = 3.5 and up:  
  - 4.5 up: B+  
  - 4.0 up: B  
  - 3.5 up: B-

- C range = 2.5 and up:  
  - 3.2 up: C+  
  - 2.8 up: C  
  - 2.5 up: C-

- D range = 1.5 and up:  
  - 2.2 up: D+  
  - 1.8 up: D  
  - 1.5 up: D-

- F = below 1.5

**IMPORTANT POLICIES AND THINGS TO NOTE**

- **Assigned Work**  
  Assigned work is always due at the start of class on its due date. No late work is accepted. Please contact me before an assignment is due if illness or other extraordinary circumstances prevent you from having your assignment handed in on time.

- **The Importance of Class Meetings**  
  Class meetings are the way in which this course's content is presented, through primarily a blend of lectures and group discussions. Given this and the class' very small size, the success of the course is very dependent on everyone attending and participating fully. Please let me know in advance if you will be unable to attend on a given day. Your final grade may be lowered by 5-10% for failure to attend and/or participate regularly, including completing any credit/no credit assignments I may give.
**Laptops and Other Electronic Devices**

It is very important to me that students who come to class be able to be here and engage fully with the class material and discussion throughout our entire class meeting. Therefore, no laptops or other electronic devices are allowed to be open or used during class. Exceptions are granted for students who have a compelling reason (such as difficulties taking notes by hand) to use a laptop to take notes—in which case the only program that can be open while our class is meeting is the text or word processing program used to take notes. Students with such requests should see me immediately. Absolutely no web browsing is allowed during class, with no exceptions.

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. The University policy on academic honesty is distributed annually as section 4 of the *Rights and Responsibilities* handbook. Instances of alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Office of Campus Life for possible referral to the Student Judicial System. Potential sanctions include failure in the course and suspension from the University. If you have any questions about my expectations, please ask!

**Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

**SYLLABUS** (Subject to change, including the addition of other C/NC work)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week/Dates - Subject to Adjustments</th>
<th>Topics (Subject to some change per requests for topics that this year's students would especially like to be covered)</th>
<th>Assigned Work for the Following Week (* = Turn in for letter grade; C/NC = turn in for Credit/ No Credit)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong>: W – Aug 29</td>
<td>Course Introduction and Organization; what is scientific linguistic research?; developing a research plan and process;</td>
<td>Read assigned literature selection closely, for class discussion next week C/NC: short write-up identifying subarea for of focus for your Adopted Paper and Independent Paper, and write up a short description of topics within the subarea</td>
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<td><strong>2</strong>: WTh – Sept 5,6 [M 9-4=Labor Day, Th 9-6=Brandeis Mon]</td>
<td>• Discussion of last week's assigned reading, with attention to content as well as to the details of writing and presentation • Literature Searching, including Guest Lecture #1 on 9-6 by Linguistics and CL Librarian Alex Willett</td>
<td>Begin doing your own searching for an Adopted Paper (AP)</td>
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<td><strong>3</strong>: W – Sept 12 [M 9-10=Rosh Hashanah]</td>
<td>Introduction to using LaTeX</td>
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<td><strong>4</strong>: M – Sept 17 [W 9-19=Yom Kippur]</td>
<td>Keeping your literature searches and reading organized, including Guest Lecture #2 on 9-17 on Zotero and bibliography-managing software by Linguistics and CL Librarian Alex Willett</td>
<td>*Lit search write-up describing 2-3 possible APs—including paper structure outlines and the plusses and minuses of each</td>
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<td><strong>5</strong>: TuW – Sept 25,26 [M 9-24=Sukkot, Tu 9-25=Brandeis Mon]</td>
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| **6: W – Oct 3**  
* [M 10-1=Shmini Atzeret]* | Wed 10-4: Class presentations of APs | *Detailed AP description and assessment* |
| **7: MW – Oct 8,10** | Finish class presentations of APs |  |
| **8: MW – Oct 15,17** | Conference and paper abstracts, handouts, and presentations in Linguistics and CL | C/NC: Individual Paper (IP) proposal due |
| **9: MW – Oct 22,24** | Conducting research in theoretical and experimental linguistics—including guest lectures |  |
| **10: MW – Oct 29,31** | Conducting research in CL and NLP |  |
| **11: MW – Nov 5,7** | Conducting research in theoretical and experimental linguistics—including guest lectures |  |
| **12: MW – Nov 12,14** | Conducting research in CL and NLP | *IP Rough Drafts Due* |
| **13: M – Nov 19**  
* [W 11-21=Thanksgiving]* | Going to graduate school in linguistics and CL — guest speakers! |  |
| **14: MW – Nov 26,28** |  |  |
| **15: MW – Dec 3,5**  
M – Dec 10 | Course wrap-up |  |

*IP Presentations will occur during our Final Exam slot assigned by the Registrar's Office on the Final Exam Schedule.