Readings in Linguistics

Linguistics 5372
Fall 2018

General Information

Instructor: Joey Sabbagh
Email: sabbagh@uta.edu

Class Time & Location: T, Th, 3:30PM-4:50PM, FA 309
Office Hours: Monday 11AM-12PM or by appointment, Hammond Hall 126

Course Overview

This course aims to offer a survey the field of contemporary linguistics. The survey begins with foundational issues ("what is the object of inquiry in linguistics?"), then moves on to survey contemporary research questions, methods, and discoveries in a variety of sub-fields within linguistics (e.g. syntax, phonology, semantics, psycholinguistics, etc.). The survey will also delve into contemporary controversies in the field such as the connection (or lack thereof) between culture and language structure.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the course, students will:

- Demonstrate ability to read critically, and ask meaningful questions.

- Demonstrate ability to take a position on a critical or controversial issues and defend that position with sound argumentation.

- Demonstrate ability to organize a discussion around a particular reading.

Course Structure and Course Requirements

This course is designated as a **seminar** course, not a lecture course. This is an important distinction. Although I will occasionally "lecture", the bulk of the learning will come from class discussion of the readings that are assigned. To help structure

things along the way, students will take turns "chairing" designated readings (description below). The readings for the course will vary in difficulty, but it is safe to say that they are all relatively difficult (each article will probably need to be read more than once). Our goal is not to understand everything and every word, but to extract the main ideas and arguments from the papers, enough to ask critical questions and supply reasonably sound answers to these questions.

Course Requirements

A. **Short answer responses to reading questions (Approx. 10):** In general, I will hand out a set of questions for each reading which we plan to discuss in class. Your responses (which can be short, but should be thoughtful) to these questions will be due in class the day we have scheduled to begin discussing these readings; or immediately before. Specific due dates will be assigned as we proceed. (NOTE: "Chairs" may, but do not have to turn in their responses to the reading questions. It is assumed that they will have read the text carefully enough to answer questions.)

B. **Preparation of reading questions (Approx. 14):** For each reading, each member of the class will prepare at least 5 questions based on the assigned reading, which they will submit either directly to me or — for readings with an assigned "chair", to them. Questions must be submitted at least 2 days in advance of the day we plan to begin our discussion of the reading.

C. **"Chair" at least one reading (possibly 2):** The role of the designated chair is to (i) Make sure that they have read the assigned reading and have understood it to the best of their ability; (ii) Serve as a liasonn between me and the other members of the class by (a) Collecting reading questions from individual members of the class; and (b) meeting with me one or two days before class to organize the questions and discuss ways to approach them in the context of class discussion.

D. **Critical Response Paper (One):** At roughly the midpoint of the semester, I will assign a set of readings and ask you to write a critical response to these papers (responding to specific questions).

E. **Participation:** Show up to each class, make verbal contributions, respect others (don't derail the conversation), don't text, hand written assignments A-D in on time. Provide notification in advance if these requirements cannot be met.

Grading

All required work will be graded on a "Pass"/"Fail" system. Specific criteria for the basis of "Pass"/"Fail" will be made clear in class, along with specific rubrics. Students are expected to receive a "Pass" for all required work. If a student receives a "Fail" for any required work, based on the expectations clearly defined, they will be asked to meet with me with me to discuss ways to improve their work. At the end of the term, a final grade of A-F will be assigned, as follows:

- A: All required work receives a "Pass", based on the expectations defined in class (and based on printed rubric).

- B: Student receives a second "Fail" after meeting with instructor to discuss ways to improve following an initial "Fail".

- C: Student receives an additional third "Fail".

- D: Student receives an additional fourth "Fails"

- F: Student receives more than four (4) "Fails".

NOTE: Participation is treated like all other assignments – three of more problems with respect to participation will count as a "Fail".

Course Schedule: Topics

NOTE: Specific dates for readings will be announced as we proceed, as it's hard to predict which readings will require more time and which will require less time. Please be willing to be flexible with this schedule. That said, the topics and the readings are presented below in the sequence in which we will tackle them. Some readings may be skipped in the interest of time, and additional readings may be introduced (in place of others) as needed.

Also NOTE: The outline below does not take into account the following:

- October 30 & Nov. 1 – No class.

- November 22 – Thanksgiving – No class.

I. Foundational Issues
Week 1-4

Focus: What is the object of inquiry in Linguistics? What is/what do we mean by "language"? What is the difference (if any) between "use" of language and "knowledge" of language?

Readings:

1. Chomsky, Noam. 1986. *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use.* Preface, Chapters 1-2. (pp. xxv-50).

2. Anderson, Stephen R. & David W. Lightfoot. 2000. "The Language Faculty as an Organ". (in the *Annual Review of Physiology*, Vol. 62.

3. Pullum, Geoffrey K. & Barbara C. Sholz. 2002. "Empirical assessment of stimulus poverty arguments". *The Linguistic Review*, 19, 9-50.

II. Survey of the Core and Beyond
Week 5-9

Focus: Chomsky and others have proposed a modular view of language (understood as I-Language) according to which there are independent (but potentially interacting) modules relating (primarily) to sound (phonology) and meaning (semantics) and the connection between the two (syntax). We will survey the major assumptions, questions, and findings relating to these "core" areas of Linguistics (Syntax, Semantics, and Phonology). In addition, we will survey

Readings:

4. McCloskey, James. 2010. "Syntax". In *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Language Sciences*, ed. Patrick Colm Hogan, Cambridge University Press, 822-828.

5. Speaks, Jeff. 2017. "Theories of Meaning". *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford University.

7. de Lacy, Paul. 2016. "Theoretical Phonology". *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics*

6. Korta, Kepa & John Perry. 2017. "Pragmatics". *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford University.

8. Psycholinguistics

III. Methods in Linguistics
Week 10-12

Focus: Linguistics, as a science, requires data. What is the nature of this data, and how do we obtain it? Is the method "reliable" (i.e. does it produce "good data")? What is the difference between a methodology and a sub-discipline?

9. Schütze, Carson & Jon Sprouse. In press. Judgment data. In Devyani Sharma & Rob Podesva (eds.), *Research methods in linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

10. Hunston, Susan. 2006. "Corpus Linguistics". In *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 2nd Edition. Elsevier. (234-248)

11. Garrod, Simon. 2006. "Psycholinguistic Research Methods". In *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 2nd Edition. Elsevier. (251-265)

    **** (Mid-Term Readings requiring critical response) ****

12. Gibson, Edward & E. Fedorenko. 2010. "Weak quantitative standards in linguistic research". *Trends in Cognitive Science*, 14 (pp. 233-234)

13. Culicover, Peter W. & R. Jackendoff. 2010. "Quantitative methods alone are not enough: Response to Gibson & Fedorenko". *Trends in Cognitive Science*, 14 (pp. 234-235)

14. Sprouce, Jon & D. Almeida. "Assessing the reliability of textbook data in syntax: Adger's *Core Syntax. Journal of Linguistics*, Vol. 48 (609-652).

IV. Current Controversies
Week 13-16

15. Everett, Daniel. 2005. Culture constraints on grammar in Pirahã: Another look at the design features of human language. *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 46 (621-646).

16. Nevins, Andrew et. al. 2009. Pirahã Exceptionality: A Reassessment. *Language*, Vol. 85:2 (355-404)

17. Everett, Daniel. 2009. Pirahã Culture and Grammar: A Response to Some Criticisms. *Language*, Vol. 85:2 (405-4442)

Class Policies

The following "class policies" are intended to help foster a friendly and collegial environment in the classroom so that we can focus on learning. Please respect these policies throughout the semester.

- Show up to class on time. (Inform me in advance if you are going to be absent).

- Be collegial towards the instructor and towards your classmates (don't derail the conversation, monopolize too much time speaking, etc.).

- Put your cell phone away.

University Policies

Drop Policy: Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (http://wweb.uta.edu/aao/fao/).

Disability Accommodations: UT Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a letter certified by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting: The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD) www.uta.edu/disability or calling 817-272-3364. Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS) www.uta.edu/caps/ or calling 817-272-3671.

Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at

www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Title IX: The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, **sexual orientation**, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit uta.edu/eos. For information regarding Title IX, visit www.uta.edu/titleIX.

Academic Integrity: Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence. I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System Regents' Rule 50101, Section 2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

Electronic Communication: UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php.

Student Feedback Survey: At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as "lecture," "seminar," or "laboratory" shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit http://www.uta.edu/sfs.

Final Review Week: A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose

of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week unless specified in the class syllabus. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

Emergency Exit Procedures: Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.