

Winter 2009
Linguistics 651: Topics in Historical Linguistics
Time: MWF 13:00–13:50 (plus additional seminars)

Instructor: Dr. Robert W. Murray
Office: SS 824
Office Hours: Wednesday, 1400–1500
(and by appointment)
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Course Materials

- 1) **Text:** Robins, Robert Henry. 1997. *A short history of linguistics*. 4th edn. London/New York: Longman.
- 2) **Readings:** A selection of readings will be made available on Blackboard or via the web. You have been given access to Ling 451 Blackboard.
- 3) **Instructor Handouts** (on Blackboard).

Course Description

A survey of major schools of linguistic thought. Focus on the origin and development of concepts central to contemporary linguistic theory.

Course Format and Focus

The course is divided into two complementary streams.

- (i) The textbook presents a superficial overview of more or less the entire history of western linguistics. You are responsible for reading the textbook material, and a set of questions on two or three chapters will be on each test. We do not treat the textbook material directly in class, but you can always ask questions about the text in class or in the tutorials. Each review class can also deal with textbook topics. A study guide consisting of potential test questions is provided.
- (ii) The lectures treat **theoretical attempts to describe and explain sound change**, beginning in the mid 19th century. We focus on topics such as the following, attempting to gain an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each approach and also tracing various themes (for example, lexical diffusion) from their 19th century origins into the present.
 - the neogrammarians vs. Schuchardt (Regularity Hypothesis vs. lexical diffusion)
 - American structuralism (phonemic theory and sound change)
 - classical generative phonology (grammar change and language acquisition)
 - preference (markedness) theory (“language change as language improvement”)
 - Evolutionary Phonology (the return of phonology as a historical science)
 - Labovian sociolinguistics and lexical diffusion à la Bybee (the neogrammarians and Schuchardt, revisited)

Grading (a and b cannot be on same topic)a) **Presentation/Overview:** 5%/15%

An overview of a school or the work of an individual scholar such as Schuchardt; or overview of a particular theme, e.g. a short history of the role of sonority in phonological theory. An important goal of the Overview is to make sure that you can properly follow a Style Sheet.

b) **Presentation/Paper:** 5%/55%

An in-depth treatment of a particular topic; e.g. attempts by Kiparsky, Labov, etc. to reconcile the regularity hypothesis with the facts of lexical diffusion.

c) **Two Tests** (@ 10% each): 20%

You have to write two of the undergraduate course tests. If you write all three, your two best scores will count.

Grade Scale: 98%, A+; 95%, A; 90%, A-; 86%, B+; 80%, B; 75%, B-; 68%, C+; 62%, C; 58%, C-; 55%, D+; 50%, D; < 50%, F.

Format

Presentation (a): 35 minutes plus 15 minutes for discussion

Presentation (b): 35 minutes plus 15 minutes for discussion

Overview: 5 to 8 pages.

Paper: 20 to 30 pages

The *Style Sheet* of the Linguistic Society of America should be carefully followed when preparing any written work. This topic will be discussed in class and a version of the *Style Sheet* will be provided. A proper handout is essential for presentations, and is constitutes part of the grading process. The preparation of a handout will also be discussed.

Fine Print.

1. It will not be possible to make up a missed Test. In the case of an excused absence from a Test, the item will not be counted and the weighting of the item will be moved to the Final. Valid excuses for Test absence are birth, death, and serious illness involving yourself or members of your immediate family on the day of the Test. All excuses must be substantiated by the appropriate documentation. An unexcused absence from a Test will result in a grade of zero for that item. There are no make-up Tests.
2. The prerequisite for this course is Linguistics 353 or equivalent. A student may not register in any linguistics course unless a grade of at least 'C-' has been achieved in all prerequisites for that course.
3. The Graduate Co-ordinator for Linguistics is Dr. Amanda Pounder, SS 838 (apounder@ucalgary.ca).
4. **Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct**
Students should be aware that there are severe penalties for cheating and other forms of academic misconduct. Please read the section in The University of Calgary Calendar entitled 'Student Misconduct'. Plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

- a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
- b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
- c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
- d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved. While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted. Some course assignments call for students to work in groups. Unless noted otherwise in writing, students must write up their own answers for submission of the assignment. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is an extremely serious academic offence. Possible penalties for plagiarism include: failing the assignment, failing the course, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion. Any student who voluntarily and consciously aids another student in the commission of plagiarism is also guilty of academic misconduct.