

**English 303 Grammar and Linguistics  
(for Future Teachers)**

**Syllabus & Course Outline**

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**Textbook (required):**

*Minimum of English Grammar, vol.1 (Cognella Publishing, San Diego)*

<http://www.cognella.com>

**Description:**

*An introductory linguistics practicum—for future teachers—on the role and nature of grammar and its implications to larger questions regarding language in general:*

*Designed for students in the Liberal Studies Freshman ITEP Program, this course surveys current linguistic theories and focuses on those aspects of grammar expected to be taught as part of the English-Language Arts Content Standards for Grades K-5 as mandated by the California State Board of Education.*

*Topics include language processing, the brain-to-language corrolary, phonology, morphology and syntax, as well as an overall regard to how linguistics can contribute to language issues in the “early school-age years” (including issues of normal language development and abnormal language impairment). The question ‘What is grammar and how does it interphase with the other subcomponents of language such as language processing (parsing) and phonology?’ will be the central focus of the course. In addition to questions surrounding language and grammar, ‘maturational hypotheses’ about how certain grammars incrementally come online a certain stages of development will also be examined.*

**Background:**

A new synthesis is now emerging as to how we should properly think about human behavior, the lower/higher cognitive systems (in general) and their roles in bringing about language (in particular). The synthesis is referred to as consilience—“the jumping together of ideas to create a unified body of knowledge” (E.O Wilson). Regarding questions on language, the synthesis holds in combining traditional *philosophy* (behaviorism/nativism) with *biology* (the brain-to-language correlary) and *evolution* (ontogeny/phylogeny of species). This triad suggests that in order to understand what language is, its design and function, we must apply this synthesis in ways which lead us to ask a different set of questions from that which was typically asked, say, a generation ago. The clearest case of this new synthesis is embodied in the now ubiquitous linguistic

slogan “The Biological Basis of Language”. In addition to examining fine-grained grammar and its sub-features (phonology/morphology/syntax) all of which contribute in non-trivial ways to the ultimate design and function of language, we will also be asking larger questions which have pedagogical implications, both for normal developing children (e.g., child language development, language in the early-school years) as well as with speakers of special populations (e.g., autisms). The “biological basis” will be framed in terms of what makes language unique amongst other non-human communication systems. The notion of a “species-specific” computational system of which grammar could be said to play a distinct role, is crucial, but it only captures a part of what it means to be able to carry out language. The sub-systems of language themselves will have to be studied.

This introductory language course is primarily designed (*i*) to allow students (future teachers) to gain a sufficient amount of ‘Explicit’ (conscious) Knowledge of Language and Linguistics and (*ii*) to provide students with the tools necessary for understanding language structure and its application to early child education. The course is divided into four basic lectures—these subdisciplines of linguistics will be studied within the larger framework of grammar.

I. Introduction: What is language, its origins and design? What is the ‘brain-to-language’ corollary and which areas of the brain impact language processing? Historical accounts of linguistic theory are traced from earlier models of Behaviorism (Skinner) to the more recent Generative framework (Chomsky). Maturation of the child’s mind is discussed (theory of mind/processing).

II. Sound (Phonology): How are languages organized as sound systems and how do these features transfer over to writing systems? Phonology as a rule-based grammar and categorical system is presented along with a brief introduction of IPA. Child language phonological development is discussed as well as phonology in the early school-age years.

III. Word (Morphology): What shapes do languages take regarding their internal formation? How do different language types differ with regards to their morphological structure? Some cross-linguistic data are examined (first/second language grammars).

IV. Sentence (Structure, Syntax and Transformations): How do words form phrases, clauses, and sentences and how does one define these constituencies? Syntactic structures are examined with a note on cross-linguistic parameter distinctions. A note on normal and abnormal syntactic development is presented.

### **Course Objectives:**

- understand and discuss the nature of human language and its place among other systems of communication;
- understand the general nature, assumptions, and goals of linguistic theory;
- ask questions and be able to analyze linguistic data;
- recognize a linguistic argument;
- apply discovered linguistic insights to teaching pedagogy.

**Student Learning Outcomes (for all Liberal Studies majors):**

Students will:

- (i) acquire a breathe of knowledge across a range of disciplines;
- (ii) explore how knowledge across disciplines can be connected;
- (iii) develop the ability to formulate their own goals for continued learning;
- (iv) understand and appreciate the positive role of diversity;
- (v) think critically and creatively, write clearly and coherently; and read and understand all forms of text.

**Assignments:**

- Readings (based on Lectures)
- Four 'in-class' Exams (one after each of the four lectures: bluebook) on relevant lecture topics
- One Paper based on selected topic (3,000 words max).

**Method of Instruction:**

The four lectures are based on material taken from the text. Regular attendance is essential. Absences and missed exams must be discussed directly with the instructor.

**Grading:** All evaluated work is based on a five point scale:

5 (=A, 90%+), 4 (A/B, 85%+), 3 (B/C, 75%+), 2 (C/D, 65%+), 1(F, failed)

Paper = 10% of final grade

## Lecture outline

### Lecture I: Weeks 1-4 What is Language? Processing & Theory

Chapters 1-3

**Introduction:** What is language? How to think about 'what we do' when we 'do' language. A brief outline of language philosophy: Nativism (Chomsky) vs. conditioning/Behaviourism (Skinner). Linguistic perspectives, What is language and why is it special? The 'biological basis' of language (Language and Brain). Child Language Development: Lexical vs. Functional Grammar (Galasso's 'Sally Experiment' & Berko's 'Wugs Test').

→ Exam 1

### Lecture II: Weeks 5-8

#### **Grammars of Sound: Phonology and The English Sound System**

Chapter 13

- Phonology and the English Sound System (p. 277)
  - Vocal Tract
  - IPA: Place & Manner of Articulation
- Phonological Processes (p. 281)
  - Phonological Rules/Assimilation
  - Minimal Pair (p. 289)
- Phonemic Representations and The Dual Mechanim Model (p. 293)
  - L1 vs. L2 Phonological Interferences (p. 233)
  - Categorical Perception
- A brief note on Child Phonology (p. 292)
  - Phonemic Development
  - Syllabic Development
- A brief note on Phonological Change (p. 284)
  - The Great Vowel Shift
  - irregular formation

→ Exam 2

### Lecture III Weeks 9-12

#### **Grammars of Word: Morphology**

#### **Chapter 3**

- Word Classes (p. 35)
  - Sally Exp. (revisited)
  - Lexical vs. Functional words (p. 40)
  - Morphological properties of English Verbs (p. 42)
  
- Morphemes (p. 61)
  - Derivational & Inflectional
  - Distinct processing and Teaching implications
  
- Morphology across languages (p. 235)
  - Isolating, Agglutinating, Inflectional
  
- A brief note on Early Child Morphology: (p. 59)
  - First words: Lexical vs. Functional

→ **Exam 3**

### Lecture IV Weeks 13...

#### **Grammars of Sentence: Syntax**

#### **Chapters 4-8, 10-11**

- Basic Terminology
- Sentence Structure (p. 67)
  - Syntax, Tree Diagrams (Ex. Chapters 4-7)
  - Heads and Complements (p. 85)
  - Transformations & Movement (Chapter. 8)
  
- A brief note on Syntactic differences across languages (Chapter 10)
  - Parameters of Language (p. 240)
  
- A brief note on Language Impairment (p. 243)
  
- A brief note on L1, L2 Syntactic Development (Chapter 11)
  - Is there a Critical Period?

→ **Exam 4**