

SPRING 2012

MESOAMERICAN LANGUAGES AND
LINGUISTICS: A SURVEY COURSE
LING 560



Professor: David Mora Marín
Office: 307 Smith Building CB #3155
Email: davidmm@unc.edu

Call Number: 10647
Schedule: MWF 12-1250 pm
Room: Dey 304



COURSE DESCRIPTION: This is a survey of the languages of Mesoamerica (Mexico and Central America) and the peoples who speak them. Topics: linguistic structure (sound system, word formation, sentence formation, etc), linguistic typology (how the languages in question compare with languages the world over in terms of their structure), linguistic history (history of changes in their respective structures and the use of such changes as evidence for language relationships, history of contacts with other languages and their speakers, and the history of cultural changes and migrations), literacy and literature (traditions of oral and written literacy, continuity, contemporary contexts of indigenous and non-indigenous education and literacy), linguistic rights and vitality (numbers of speakers, numbers of children acquiring the language, political and legal status of the language, efforts to revitalize and maintain the language, socioeconomic factors that preclude or promote such efforts, and the roles of linguists and linguistic activists in the process). **This installment will also feature *Chibchan* (non-Mesoamerican) languages.**

STUDENT WORK: Each student will be assigned a specific language from the 11 language families of the region (e.g. Mayan, Mixe-Zoquean, Oto-Manguean, Nawán, Xincan) or from *Chibchan* (non-Mesoamerican). Over the course of the semester each student will prepare a series of Short Essays (4-7 pages) and accompanying Short Presentations (5-10 minutes), each one on a specific aspect of the language and its speakers (see Course Description); the instructor will then provide feedback. An Essay Prospectus and Bibliography Prospectus will be required prior to the last two topics of the course (linguistic rights and vitality). Based on the instructor's feedback of the Short Essays, students will turn in a Final Paper that will constitute a sketch of the grammatical structure, history, and social and cultural context of the language and its speakers.
