

Syllabus: Language Change

Linguistics 202, UNC-Chapel Hill
Elliott Moreton

January 11, 2009

<i>Time:</i>	MWF 11:00–11:50	<i>Instructor:</i>	Elliott Moreton
<i>Place:</i>	Greenlaw 318	<i>Office:</i>	Smith 101
<i>Textbook:</i>	Terry Crowley, <u>An Introduction to Historical Linguistics</u> , 3rd ed.	<i>Office hours:</i>	MW 12–1
<i>Blackboard:</i>	https://blackboard.unc.edu	<i>Email:</i>	moreton@unc.edu
<i>Website:</i>	http://www.unc.edu/moreton/Ling202/202main.html		

1 Description

This course is an introduction to the study of how languages change over time. We will begin with a survey of the typical patterns of change in the various modules of language—syntax, phonetics, the lexicon, etc. This knowledge will then be applied to the problem of using descendant languages to reconstruct ancestral languages and historical relationships among them. Finally, we will consider the physiological, psychological, and social factors which promote and direct language change.

The only prerequisite for LING 202 is LING 101, Introduction to Linguistics.

2 Requirements

Final grades for this course will be calculated as follows:

- 60% Homework. There will be about 7 problem sets during the semester. As is often the case in linguistics courses, the homework may be meant as preparation for the class, rather than the other way around; i.e., you may have to figure out how to do things which you have not yet been shown how to do. No homework grades will be dropped.
- 30% Exams. There will be a midterm and a final. Both will be in-class and cumulative from the beginning of the course.
- 10% Attendance and participation. The class will involve a lot of in-class discussion, which everyone should contribute to over the course of the semester. Multiple unexcused absences will have a direct negative effect on the attendance and participation grade (as well as an indirect one on the other components). The same applies to a pattern of coming late or being unprepared for class discussion.

Numeric grades will be converted to UNC's letter-grade system by mapping the numeric range from 60 to 100 onto the 10 passing letter grades from D to A, with four numeric points per step (except that A has 5 points, 95 to 100).

In addition to the graded work, participation is also required in the class experiment. This involves meeting with me once for about 15 minutes between now and Spring Break. The meetings need to be spaced out, so there will be four to six available slots per week. I will pass around a sign-up sheet once everyone has been notified of their "nationality".

3 Policies

Attendance. If you must miss class because of a medical or family emergency, you should let me know beforehand by emailing, phoning, slipping a note under my door, or buttonholing me in person. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get missed materials from me or other students. Always check the website if you have been absent.

Reading. You are expected to come to class having done the reading and thought about it until either (a) it makes sense, or (b) you can express precisely what about it doesn't make sense; either way, you'll have something to talk about in class. The textbook provides helpful "Reading Guide Questions" at the end of every chapter to serve as stimuli to thought.

If I start getting the impression that people aren't doing the readings, I'm going to institute pop quizzes. These are annoying because they waste class time, but coming to class without having done the reading wastes even more class time.

Homework. You'll get detailed information about each one when it's assigned, but there are some general points that apply to all of them. When you hand in homework, it can be handwritten, word-processed, or even typewritten, but it will not be accepted unless it is

- on time
- on paper
- honor-pledged.

Homework meeting these criteria will be graded on a scale from 1 to 3 in a way that will be explained along with each assignment using a device called a grading rubric. The 1–3 scale will map approximately onto a 60–100 scale in computation of the final grade. Hence, a 0 is much worse than a 1! Homework that does not meet the criteria, or is not handed in, will receive a 0.

Late assignments. Homework solutions will normally be discussed in class the day the assignment is due. Therefore, as a general rule, NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR CREDIT. Exceptions may be made if

- You got advance permission (by asking me before the due date) to hand in an assignment late, or
- You couldn't come to campus on the day the assignment is due because of a serious illness or other unexpected emergency. You need to get the assignment in at the earliest possible opportunity with a written explanation of the situation. Email is best.

Collaboration and citation. It is a really good idea to discuss assignments with others in the class and solve the problems together. However, each person should write up their

solution alone. If you work with others, or look up information in sources that aren't officially part of this course, you are required to acknowledge them in the writeup. (There is no shame in collaborating, or in digging out information independently, but you need to give credit where it is due.)

Recording. Permission to make audio or video recordings of class will be given only in special circumstances (e.g., to students with hearing impairments).

Dates are still tentative at this point (except for the final exam). I'll give at least two weeks' notice of the midterm, and will hand out a midterm syllabus (a study guide) one week before the midterm.

The Carolina Honor Code is in effect in this class, and I will treat violations seriously. You should review it at <http://instrument.unc.edu>. If you have questions about interpretation, you should bring them to me. **Every assignment you hand in must be accompanied by a signed statement that you have complied with the Code requirements in everything related to that work,** e.g., "I completed this assignment in full compliance with the Honor Code."

4 Tentative schedule

Week	Date	Topics	Assignments	
1	1/12 1/14 1/16	M W F	Introduction. Language change in general.	Crowley Ch. 1
2	— 1/21 1/23	— W F	Phonetic change	Crowley Chs. 2 and 3
3	1/26 1/28 1/30	M W F	Phonological change.	Crowley Ch. 4.
4	2/2 2/4 2/6	M W F	Morphosyntactic change	Crowley Ch. 7.1–7.3
5	2/9 2/11 2/13	M W F	Lexical change	Crowley Ch. 7.5.
6	2/16 2/18 2/20	M W F	Semantic change.	Crowley Ch. 7.4
7	2/23 2/25 2/27	M W F	Relatedness between languages.	MIDTERM 2/27.
8	3/2 3/4 3/6	M W F	The comparative method.	Crowley Ch. 5.
SPRING BREAK				
9	3/16 3/18 3/20	M W F	Subgrouping	Crowley Ch. 8.
10	3/23 3/25 3/27	M W F	Internal reconstruction.	Crowley Ch. 6.
11	3/30 4/1 4/3	M W F	Causes of language change.	Crowley Ch. 9.
12	4/6 4/8 —	M W —	Language change in progress.	Crowley Ch. 10
13	4/13 4/15 4/17	M W F	Unresolved problems.	Crowley Ch. 11
14	4/20 4/22 4/24	M W F	Language contact.	Crowley Ch. 12
15	4/27	M	Wrap-up	—
16	5/4	M	FINAL EXAM	