

Winter 2010
Linguistics 651: Topics in Historical Linguistics
Time: MW 14:00–15:30¹

Instructor: Dr. Robert W. Murray
Office: SS 824
Office Hours: Friday, 1300–1400 (and by appointment)
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Course Materials

- 1) **Readings:** A selection of readings will be made available on Blackboard, via the web, or as photocopies.
- 2) **Instructor Handouts** (on Blackboard).

Course Description

This course surveys attempts to describe and explain language change.

Course Focus

Part I.

The instructor will focus on approaches to sound change developed since the mid 19th century. We discuss theoretical approaches to questions such as the following:

- why do languages change?
- in the case of sound change, what actually changes (phonemes, allophones, systems, constraints, grammatical “rules”, exemplars)?
- what is the role of child language acquisition in language change?
- what is the role of linguistic variation in sound change?
- what is the role of the phonological system in sound change?
- how does a sound change spread through a population?
- how/why do sound changes generalize from one environment to another?
- can markedness theory “explain” language change?
- can the Regularity Hypothesis be reconciled with the facts of lexical diffusion?

Our discussion will include some of the frameworks below. We will attempt to gain an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each, and focus on issues that remain relevant to present-day research:

- the neogrammarians vs. Schuchardt (Regularity Hypothesis vs. lexical diffusion)
- American and European structuralism (phonemic theory and sound change)
- preference (markedness) theory (“language change as language improvement”)
- classical and post-classical generative phonology (grammar change and language acquisition)
- Evolutionary Phonology (the return of phonology as a historical science)
- Exemplar-based phonology and lexical diffusion
- Labovian sociolinguistics, structuralism, and lexical diffusion

¹ Some time adjustments might be required in cases where Departmental meetings begin at 1500 on Wednesdays.

Part 2.

Depending on student interest, a portion of the course can be dedicated to other types of language change besides sound change. We will discuss possibilities in class and organize the course appropriately. For example, if someone is interested in grammaticalization a week or two of the course can be dedicated to general and specific readings in the topic area.

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 an 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. Normally this presentation will be in the area of Part 1 above.

b) **Presentation/Paper:** 5%/60%

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. This presentation can be in the area of Part 1 or 2 above.

c) **One Test:** 15%

There will be one test scheduled on the material presented by the instructor.

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): 45 minutes plus discussion

Presentation (b): 45 minutes plus 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 Graduate Co-ordinator for Linguistics is Dr. Amanda Pounder, SS 838 (apounder@ucalgary.ca).

3. 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.