

Linguistics 103: Language structure and verbal art fall 2009

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Office hours	M 12:30-2:00 & Th 11:00-12:30 or by appointment
Class time & place	MW 3:30-5:00 Meyerson Hall B4
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- ☛ **Readings, Discussion Problems and Essay Instructions**
will be available on-line through the course home page.

Course Requirements

- 📖 5 short written homework problems.
- ☞ 3 essays (about 8 pages each)
- “” Class participation in *discussion problems*.

Generally speaking I will call on students randomly to answer discussion problem questions. If you are absent on a day when your name comes up, your grade is decremented by one-half a grade (e.g. A goes to A-). So not coming to class means that not only you miss material but you run the risk of not being there when called upon. *If you need to be absent from class for some reason and need to be excused, simply email me in advance of class with an explanation of your situation.*

Final Grade

- 📖 Short problems: 45 %
- ☞ Essays: 45 %
- “” Participation and discussion: 10 %

Policies

Collaboration. You may work together in preparing for class discussion problems.

However, written assignments that you turn in must be your own work.

Extensions. With the exception of documented illness or family emergency, extensions will not normally be given for any written work. However, if you contact me (preferably by e-mail) at least 24 hours in advance of a due date, I will grant each student at most *one* extension for at most two days. Please do not abuse this privilege.

Holidays. Please notify me by the end of the second week of class if you plan to be absent in observance of a religious holiday.

Syllabus

Introduction: Language Structure and Verbal Art.

0 9 Sept W Sense and nonsense. Form and meaning.

PART I. Meter: the tradition of temporally measured verse.

1 14 Sept M “” Discussion Problem: Hypotheses about Iambic Pentameter.
Introduction to Shakespearean meter.

16 Sept W ☉ Reading: short excerpts from Shakespearean plays.
“” Discussion Problem: Analysis of Shakespearean verse.
A phonological approach to meter.

2 21 Sept M 📄 [Short problem 1 due: Shakespeare](#)
Detecting variations in metrical style: Pope, Milton, Shelley.
Wyatt and the Tudor poets. Wyatt and the Tudor poets.

23 Sept W ☉ Reading: Poems or excerpts from Pope, Milton, Shelley, Wyatt.
“” Discussion Problem: Metrical variation.
Pronunciation of Chaucer's Middle English.
The provenance of texts: manuscripts and their genealogy.

3 28 Sept M 📄 [Short problem 2 due: Metrical variation.](#)
Chaucer's verse forms.

30 Sept W ☉ Reading: Excerpts from manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*
“” Discussion Problem: pronouncing Chaucer.
Other meters: trochaic, anapestic and loose iambic verse;
Blake, Yeats, Frost.

4 5 Oct M 📄 [Short problem 3 due: Chaucerian scansion](#)
Form vs. meaning in the translation of poetry.

7 Oct W ☉ Reading: Excerpts from Dante's *Inferno*.
“” Discussion Problem: Identifying meters of poems by Thomas Hardy.
Translating Dante's *Inferno*.

PART II. Rhythm and rhyme: sounds and syllables.

5 12 Oct M ☉ Reading: Excerpts from the *Song of Roland*.
The sounds of English. Syllables and transcription.

14 Oct W “” Discussion Problem: Transcribing English.
The history of rhyme in Europe.

6 19 Oct M *Fall term break: no class held.*

21 Oct W Imperfect rhyme in American popular music.

7 26 Oct M ☞ [Essay 1 due: Comparing translations of the Song of Roland.](#)
Text-Tune Alignment: Word stress and musical rhythm.

28 Oct W ☉ Reading: Excerpts from *Psalms, Proverbs*. Excerpts from Hindu Scriptures. Poems by Walt Whitman.
Non-rhyming parallelism. Paratactic structures.

PART III. Verbal art and performance in oral cultures.

8 2 Nov M ☉ Reading: Papers by Grice and Austin.
Speech Act Theory: How to do things with words. How to have a conversation.

4 Nov W Jokes and the rules of conversation.

9 9 Nov M ☞ **Essay 2 due: Collection and analysis of popular music rhymes and structures.**
The 'Homeric Question.' Formulaic verse. Techniques of the Bosnian epic singers. The Oral Theory.

11 Nov W ☉ Reading: Excerpts from *Beowulf*. Excerpts from *The Singer of Tales*.
Beowulf: Old English pronunciation and poetic technique.

10 16 Nov M 📄 **Short Problem 4 due: Analysis of jokes.**
Formulaic composition in Old French and Old English epic.

18 Nov W ☉ Reading: Papers by Creed and Magoun.
Linguistic 'carbon-dating'. Formulas that stop fitting, rhymes that stop rhyming, changes in sentence structure.

PART IV. Story and narrative structure

11 23 Nov M 📄 **Short Problem 5 due: Analysis of formulaic language.**
Structure of simple narratives. Folktales.

25 Nov W *Wednesday before Thanksgiving*.

12 30 Nov M Narratives of ordinary experience: how do people tell stories about their lives?

2 Dec W “” Discussion Problem: Rage Narratives.
Formal analysis of narratives of ordinary experience.

13 7 Dec M ☉ Reading: Paper by Labov & Waletzky.
Tense and aspect: points and intervals of time.

9 Dec W “” Discussion Problem: Reportability vs. Credibility in Narratives.
Narratives of ordinary experience (cont.)

An optional review session will be held some time after classes end.

☞ **Essay 3: Collection and analysis of a narrative of ordinary experience.**