**Linguistics 051**  
**Proto-Indo-European Language and Society**

Professor:  
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Class meeting:  
MW 3:30-5:00, Williams Hall 219

Office hours:  
Tuesday 4:30-6:30, Wednesday 11:00-1:00

Textbooks:  


Supplementary readings will be supplied by the instructor and available through the course website.

**Prospectus**

This seminar is intended as a general introduction to Indo-European studies and linguistics. *Proto-Indo-European* refers to a reconstructed (hypothetical) language putatively spoken perhaps around 4500 BC in an area of southern Eurasia. Most of the modern languages of Europe, Iran, Afghanistan and the Indian subcontinent can be shown to be descendants of this language. The population that spoke this language is normally referred to as the Proto-Indo-Europeans. We will examine questions such as:

- How is Proto-Indo-European reconstructed and what was this language like?
- What aspects of Proto-Indo-European society can be inferred from this reconstructed language?
- What does the archaeological record contribute to the reconstruction of this lost society?
- Where did the Proto-Indo-Europeans live?
- How did descendants of Proto-Indo-European come to be spoken over such a vast area?
- What is known about the earliest written languages that descend from Proto-Indo-European, and what aspects of the societies that used these languages retain relic, prehistoric practices and beliefs?
- How was the reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European culture misunderstood and misappropriated by 19th and 20th century proponents of ‘Aryan supremacy’?
- To what extent are modern speakers of Indo-European languages actually descendants of the Proto-Indo-Europeans?

*Ling 51 fulfills both the College’s general requirement in History and Tradition and the requirement in Cultural Diversity.*
Structure of the course.
Ling 51 covers many topics and will require a substantial amount of reading. The general structure of the course will involve alternating between linguistic and sociocultural topics.

On the linguistic side we will cover: the reconstruction of the Proto-Indo-European language (PIE) and its grammatical properties and how the most immediate descendants of PIE emerged. We will focus on four of the most important PIE ‘daughter’ language families: Anatolian (Hittite), Indo-Iranian (Sanskrit and Avestan), Greek, and Germanic (Gothic, Old Norse, Old English).

On the sociocultural side we will examine aspects of the reconstruction of PIE society, including: social organization; property and law; gods, rituals and cult practices; myths, poetry and epics; material culture and technology and the archeology of southern Eurasia.

Readings from the textbooks are indicated in the syllabus by F (for Fortson) and A (for Anthony).

Requirements
- Class discussion on questions about assigned readings. 30%
- Class presentation on a sociocultural topic. 15%
- One short (6-10 page) paper based on a choice of supplementary readings. 15%
- Linguistic problems sets: short homeworks to solve linguistic problems. 20%
- Final exam. 20%

Schedule
1 9/7 Introduction. Basic Concepts of Linguistics.
3 9/14 Reconstruction of Phonology. F 53-74.
4 9/19 No class.
5 9/21 PIE Morphology and Phonology. F 75-87.
6 9/26 Geography of Europe, the Pontic-Caspian region and Central Asia. Overview of archeology and cultural reconstruction. F 18-52. A. 39-133.
7 9/28 Prehistory until the Anatolian Division.
8 10/3 Emergence of PIE society in the Pontic-Caspian. A 300-336.
9 10/5 PIE social organization: family, class, larger units; theory of tripartition PIE material culture: animals, agriculture, artifacts
10 10/10 Fall break
11 10/12 PIE Nouns. F ch. 6.
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>10/17</td>
<td>PIE Verbs. F ch. 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/19</td>
<td>Sentence structure. F ch. 8</td>
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<td>10/24</td>
<td>Anatolian prehistory; Hittite Empire and society. F. ch. 9.</td>
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<td>10/26</td>
<td>Anatolian languages</td>
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<td>10/31</td>
<td>PIE socioeconomic culture: wealth and property, exchange, hospitality; law</td>
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<td>11/2</td>
<td>Prehistory of Central Asia; the Tarim Mummies; Tocharian language. F. ch. 17.</td>
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<td>Indo-Iranian: PIE entrance into south Asia; characteristics of Indo-Iranian. F. ch.10-11.</td>
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<td>Indo-Iranian: Vedic language; Avestan language.</td>
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<td>11/14</td>
<td>IE spiritual culture: divinities and cosmic organization and creation myths</td>
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<td>11/16</td>
<td>IE rituals: horse sacrifice, magic, medicine, kingship ritual</td>
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<td>11/21</td>
<td>Greece: prehistory; Mycenean society; the Dark Age. F. ch. 12.</td>
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<td>11/23</td>
<td>Greek language: Mycenean Greek; classical Greek</td>
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<td>11/30</td>
<td>Germanic languages: Runic, Gothic, Old Norse, Old English</td>
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<td>12/5</td>
<td>IE poetics: oral composition, epics, formulas, metrics, naming conventions</td>
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<td>12/7</td>
<td>IE mythology: dragon-slaying; theft of fire; mythological animals</td>
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We will have a review session sometime before the final exam, scheduled at everyone’s convenience.

Final Exam: Wednesday December 21. 3:00-5:00 PM.