Linguistics

At Washington University, Linguistics is a special interdepartmental program that offers an undergraduate major and minor. The core of the Linguistics program is the study of the form language takes. We examine how words are built from sounds, how sentences are built from words, and how all this structure manages to communicate meaning. With a good understanding of these formal properties, we can pursue other questions about language. How does language change over time? Do diverse languages have more in common than meets the eye? What functions does language play in society? What is its relation to thought? What are its biological and psychological underpinnings? And just how do children manage to acquire language so well in the first place?

Linguistics takes a scientific approach to the study of language and develops skills in data analysis and scientific experimental methods. Linguistics students may or may not speak many languages, but they definitely will learn how to collect and analyze data about languages in an effort to answer these questions.

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The Major in Linguistics

Total units required: 30, of which 18 must be in courses numbered 300 or higher
Required courses:

Ling 170D Introduction to Linguistics 3
Ling 309 Syntactic Analysis 3
Ling 313 Phonological Analysis 3
Ling 317 Introduction to Computational Linguistics 3

Elective courses: 18 units. At least 6 units must come from this list:

Ling 311 Introduction to Semantics 3
Ling 312 Phonetics 3
Ling 320 Historical and Comparative Linguistics 3
Ling 339 Introduction to Sociolinguistics 3
Phil 306G Philosophy of Language 3
Psych 358 Language Acquisition 3
Psych 433 Psychology of Language 3

The remaining electives may be drawn from either the above list or the following:

Ling 341 Linguistic Diversity in the United States 3
Ling 396 Linguistics Seminar 3
Ling 466 Second-Language Acquisition 3
Ling 495 Senior Seminar in Linguistics 3
Ling 499 Independent Work For Senior Honors 6 max

Ling 500 Independent Work in Linguistics 3
AFAS 210 The Linguistic Legacy of the African Slave Trade in Interdisciplinary Perspective 3
Anthro 3386 Language, Culture and Society 3
Classics 225D Latin and Greek in Current English 3
Educ 234 Introduction to Speech and Hearing Disorders 3
Phil 301G Symbolic Logic 3
Psych 4351 Reading and Reading Development 3
Span 370 Introduction to Hispanic Linguistics 3

Under certain circumstances, students may count toward their major a limited number of relevant classes not listed here. Such circumstances include study abroad and preparation for a specialized capstone. A specific plan of study must be worked out in advance with advisers in the Linguistics Program.

Language requirement: Majors should normally have foreign language competency equivalent to one year of study at the college level. Classes taken to fulfill this requirement do not normally count toward the 30 total units required for the major.

Additional Information

Capstone: A senior project is required of primary majors. This normally will be done while taking Ling 495 or 500, or by completing the Senior Honors program (Ling 499).

Senior Honors: Students with a university GPA of 3.65 and a Linguistics GPA of 3.65 at the end of their junior year may apply to enter the honors program by submitting a proposal for a senior thesis. If admitted into the program, the student registers for 3 units of Ling 499 in each semester of the senior year. The student must complete the thesis and pass an oral defense by the middle of March.

The Minor in Linguistics

Units required: 15, of which 9 must be in courses numbered 300 or higher

Required course:

Ling 170D Introduction to Linguistics 3

Elective courses: 12 units. At least 6 units must come from this list:

Ling 309 Syntactic Analysis 3
Ling 311 Introduction to Semantics 3
Ling 312 Phonetics 3
Ling 313 Phonological Analysis 3
Ling 317 Introduction to Computational Linguistics 3
Ling 320 Historical and Comparative Linguistics 3
Ling 339 Introduction to Sociolinguistics 3

Remaining units may come from any course acceptable as an elective for the major.

L44 Ling 170D Introduction to Linguistics
Language is one of the fundamental capacities of the human species, and there are many interesting and meaningful ways in which it can be studied. This course explores the core components of linguistic theory: speech sounds (phonetics and phonology), word formation (morphology), sentence structure (syntax) and meaning (semantics). It also provides an overview of interdisciplinary ideas and research on how language is acquired and processed, its relation to the mind-brain and to society, and the question of whether the essential properties of language can be replicated outside the human mind (specifically, in chimpanzees or computer programs).

Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S: IQ, SSC BU: BA, HUM EN: H, S

L44 Ling 225D Latin and Greek in Current English

This course provides a study of the impact of Latin and Greek on the English language through intensive study of the Latin and Greek roots, prefixes and suffixes that are most commonly found in English technical and non-technical vocabulary. Some attention is also paid to the linguistic principles by which these elements have entered the English language.

Same as Classics 225D

Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S: IQ, HUM BU: HUM
L44 Ling 234 Introduction to Speech and Hearing Sciences and Disorders
Introduction to the fields of speech-language pathology, audiology, education of hearing-impaired children, and speech and hearing sciences. Normal speech and hearing processes are discussed, as well as communication disorders. Selected research topics in speech and hearing sciences are presented. Same as Educ 234
Credit 3 units.

L44 Ling 301G Symbolic Logic
In the first half of the course we study some features of truth-functional and first-order classical logics, including studying the model theory and metatheory for first-order logic in much greater depth than in Phil 100. In the second half of the course we go on to study three different styles of proof-system: tableau, axiomatic, and natural deduction. This course continues on where Phil 100: An Introduction to Logic and Critical Analysis leaves off. It is recommended for students who have already taken that introductory course, or for students who already have a strong background in mathematics. Priority given to majors in Philosophy & PNP.
Same as Phil 301G
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S: IQ, NSM, AN BU: HUM FA: SSP

L44 Ling 306G Philosophy of Language
A survey of major philosophical problems concerning meaning, reference and truth as they have been addressed within the analytic tradition. Readings that represent diverse positions on these focal issues are selected from the work of leading philosophers in the field, for example: Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Davidson, Quine, Kripke, and Putnam. Students are encouraged to engage critically the ideas and arguments presented and to develop and defend their own views on the core topics. Prerequisites: one course in Philosophy at the 100- or 200-level, or permission of the instructor. Priority given to majors in Philosophy and PNP.
Same as Phil 306G
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S: IQ, HUM BU: HUM FA: SSP

L44 Ling 313 Phonological Analysis
There are several important abilities involved in the use of human language, one of these being the ability to organize speech sounds. The system that the brain uses to accomplish this task is the subject matter of phonology. This course explores phonology from several perspectives within generative linguistics, including both traditional rule-based and current Optimality Theoretic approaches. Topics discussed include phonological features, lexical phonology, prosodic morphology, tone and metrical stress. Assignments help students learn to analyze phonological problems in a variety of languages and to evaluate the consequences of using different analytic approaches. Prerequisite: Ling 170D or 440, or permission of instructor.
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S: IQ, SSC BU: BA EN: H, S

L44 Ling 311 Introduction to Semantics
Semantics is the branch of linguistics that studies how speakers assign meaning to words, sentences and larger units of discourse. We combine perspectives from both linguistics and philosophy to explore a variety of topics including polysemy, compositionality, quantification, anaphora, definite descriptions, attitude reports, presupposition and implicature. Prerequisite: Ling 170D or Phil 301G or permission of instructor.
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S: IQ, SSC EN: S

L44 Ling 312 Phonetics
Phonetics is the study of the sounds of the languages of the world. The primary goal of the course is to learn how speech sounds are produced, so that the student can describe them in articulatory terms, write them out in a standard notational system, and produce them accurately. Other topics include a basic introduction to the acoustics of speech and the use of personal computers to display, analyze and synthesize human speech. The course should prove useful to students desiring a deeper understanding of one of the fundamental underpinnings of linguistics, but also has practical applications in such fields as foreign language learning and the appreciation and acquisition of new dialects and accents. Prerequisite: Ling 170D or permission of instructor.
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S: IQ, SSC EN: S

L44 Ling 309 Syntactic Analysis
The ability to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences is perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the human language faculty. Syntax is the study of how the brain organizes sentences from smaller phrases and words. This course explores syntactic analysis from several perspectives within generative linguistics, focusing primarily on the Government and Binding framework but also introducing Minimalist and Optimality Theoretic approaches. Topics discussed include phrase structure, transformations, case theory, thematic roles and anaphora. Assignments help students learn to construct and compare analyses of syntactic problems in English and other languages. Prerequisite: Ling 170D or 440, or permission of instructor.
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S: IQ, SSC EN: H, S

L44 Ling 315 Morphology
Concepts covered: morphemic analysis and investigation of morphological processes. Additional topics may include relationship of morphology to language-typology and to syntax. Prerequisite: Ling 170D, or permission of instructor.
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S: IQ, SSC EN: S
with respect to regional differences, racial and ethnic differences, as we examine diverse studies of language across the nation. The emphasis of this course is linguistic research, Native American languages that existed prior to European colonization. The course begins with a survey of many of the indigenous languages presented during lectures to demonstrate linguistic diversity has always existed within the United States, and this course focuses on each of the major linguistic subsystems, including the sound system (phonetics and phonology), word formation (morphology), and the use of the language to convey meaning (semantics and pragmatics). Each level of analysis, selected comparisons are made between Spanish and English and between Spanish and other languages. The course also examines different historical, regional and social varieties of Spanish and situations of Spanish in contact with other languages.

L44 Ling 3701 Introduction to Hispanic Linguistics
An introduction to the scientific study of the Spanish language, this course focuses on each of the major linguistic subsystems, including the sound system (phonetics and phonology), word formation (morphology), and the use of the language to convey meaning (semantics and pragmatics). At each level of analysis, selected comparisons are made between Spanish and English and between Spanish and other languages. The course also examines different historical, regional and social varieties of Spanish and situations of Spanish in contact with other languages. Same as Span 370
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S: IQ, LCD EN: H

L44 Ling 396 Linguistics Seminar
Readings on a selected topic in theoretical linguistics with an emphasis on discussion, presentation and writing. Prerequisite: varies with topic.
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH A&S: IQ, SSC EN: S

L44 Ling 408 Psychology of Language
This course surveys current research and theory in psycholinguistics, covering the biological bases, cognitive bases and learning of language. We consider studies of normal children and adults, the performance of individuals with various types of language disorders, and computer simulations of language processes. Topics range from the perception and production of speech sounds to the management of conversations. Each student carries out an original research project on some aspect of psycholinguistics. Prerequisites: Ling 170D and Psych 100B. Same as Psych 433
Credit 3 units. A&S: SS A&S: IQ, SSC FA: SSP

L44 Ling 466 Second-Language Acquisition
There are many ways in which a second language can be learned: from infancy as the child of bilingual parents, or later through formal instruction, immersion in a new culture, or in a particular work or social situation. This class is an inquiry into the processes by which acquisition occurs. Topics include the nature of language learning within the scope of other
types of human learning; the relationship between first- and second-language acquisition; the role of linguistic, cognitive and sociocultural factors; insights gained from analyzing learners’ errors; key concepts such as interlanguage and communicative competence; bilingualism; the optimal age for second-language acquisition; and a critical appraisal of different theories of second-language acquisition. Both theoretical and instructional implications of second-language acquisition research are considered. This course can be used toward certification in TESOL and is a required course for the Graduate Certificate in Language Instruction. Prerequisite: Ling 170D or equivalent is recommended, especially for undergraduates, but is not required.
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S: IQ, HUM EN: H

L44 Ling 4691 Second Language Reading and Writing: Theory, Research and Practice
This course, taught in English, extends issues in second language literacy beyond pedagogy by examining the wide range of theoretical and research issues, both historical and current. Literacy acquisition among second language learners involves a number of variables including both cognitive and social factors. Topics discussed in class include literacy and social power, universal cognitive operations, individual learner differences, text types and literary forms, and the extent to which reading and writing are interrelated. Students discuss how to bridge research and practice, and they create reading and writing activities driven by theory and empirical investigations. This course is a required course for the undergraduate minor in Applied Linguistics and an elective for the Graduate Certificate in Language Instruction. This course carries the Social and Behavioral Sciences attribute.
Same as Span 4691
Credit 3 units. A&S: SS A&S: IQ, SSC EN: S

L44 Ling 478 Topics in Linguistics
Meets with designated linguistics course, but with additional writing and research required for graduate credit and certification.
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S: IQ, SSC EN: H, S

L44 Ling 495 Senior Seminar in Linguistics
The Senior Seminar affords students an opportunity to integrate the various fields of linguistics. Readings, discussions and presentations let students address issues that combine the content and the research methods of areas such as phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, diachrony and semantics. Students have individual projects within the scope of the semester’s particular topic, but the class as a whole helps in choosing, developing and refining the treatment. This course fulfills the requirement for a senior capstone for primary majors in Linguistics. It is the normal option for students who wish to take the capstone as a regular class rather than as sponsored independent study.
Credit 3 units. A&S SS A&S: IQ, SSC EN: S

L44 Ling 499 Independent Work For Senior Honors
Prerequisites: senior standing and permission of the Linguistics program.
Credit variable, maximum 6 units.