Linguistics

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http://ling.yale.edu
M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

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FIELDS OF STUDY
Fields include phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, neuro- and psycholinguistics, computational linguistics, historical linguistics, and descriptive study of a variety of languages.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE

Program Vision
Linguistics at Yale has a long and storied history in traditional approaches to the study of language. Today the department takes a distinctively integrative and interdisciplinary approach in investigating the systems of knowledge that comprise our linguistic competence. We are convinced that an understanding of the human language faculty will arise only through the mutually informing relationship between formally explicit theories and insights from wide-ranging descriptive and experimental work. Thus at Yale, theoretical inquiry grounded in introspection proceeds in partnership with historical and comparative studies, fieldwork, experimental investigations of normal and impaired language processing, cognitive neuroscience, laboratory phonetic analysis, and computational and mathematical modeling. Students in the Ph.D. program are exposed to these methodological approaches, while receiving firm grounding in the traditional domains of linguistics. Ph.D. students participate in research in phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and historical linguistics, and explore data from a wide variety of languages, both well studied and less well documented, with particular faculty expertise in the Romance, Australian, and Mayan languages.

Course Work
The conception of linguistics embraced by the Yale Ph.D. program requires that students receive training that is both deep in its coverage of areas of linguistic inquiry and broad in the range of methodological approaches. The course work requirements are designed to accomplish these complementary goals. This course work must include a set of core courses, designed to expose students to core theoretical ideas, together with courses exposing students to a range of methodologies in linguistic research.

During their first six terms, students must complete a minimum of fourteen term courses at the graduate level, of which seven must be completed during the first two terms, and twelve during the first four terms. During the initial two years of course work, students must receive at least three grades of H (= Honors). Two grades of F, or three of P or F, during the initial two-year period constitute grounds for dismissal from the Ph.D. program.

Core courses The core requirement ensures that students achieve expertise at the level of the following courses: LING 612, Linguistic Change; LING 620, General Phonetics; LING 635, Phonological Theory; LING 654, Syntax II; LING 664, Semantics I; LING 680, Morphology.

The usual way to demonstrate this expertise will be to take all of these courses. Because several of these courses have prerequisites, students will typically need to take more basic courses in order to prepare themselves for the courses listed here. For example, LING 632, Introduction to Phonological Analysis, serves as a prerequisite for LING 635; and LING 653, Syntax I, is a prerequisite for LING 654; entering students usually take both of these prerequisite courses in the first term. However, students entering the Ph.D. program with sufficient background will be able to place out of antecedent courses. To facilitate placement, reading lists covering the material in the following basic courses will be provided, and students may request to take placement exams in areas in which their previous preparation
is such that they could proceed directly to more advanced course work: LING 512, Historical Linguistics; LING 620, General Phonetics; LING 632, Introduction to Phonological Analysis; LING 653, Syntax I; LING 663, Semantics I.

By August 1, entering students may send a request to the DGS for a placement exam in any of these five areas. The exams will be given during the week prior to the fall term. Passing an exam allows the student to place out of the corresponding course. Students placing out of courses are nonetheless expected to complete the same requirement of a minimum of fourteen term courses in the first three years.

**Methodology courses** For the methodology requirement, students must take three relevant courses. The following courses, which are offered regularly by the department, qualify, but other courses may as well, to be determined in consultation with the adviser and DGS: LING 600, Experimentation in Linguistics; LING 624, Formal Foundations of Linguistic Theories; LING 627, Language and Computation I; LING 630, Techniques in Neurolinguistics; LING 631, Neurolinguistics; LING 641, Field Methods.

One of the methodology courses must be taken during the first year of the program, and two must be completed by the end of the second year.

**Seminar courses** Starting in year three and continuing until the prospectus is approved, students are expected to enroll in one seminar course for credit each term. Students should use such seminars as opportunities both for exploring new research areas and, especially, for pushing current research interests in novel directions.

**Research**

The primary focus of a Ph.D. program is independent research. In the course of our Ph.D. program, students will learn to carry out cutting-edge linguistic research, culminating in the completion of a dissertation. To help students in the transition from “consuming” to also “producing” linguistic research, there are a number of structures and requirements in place.

1. **Research adviser and first-year directed readings.** By the end of the first term of the program, students will need to find a department faculty member who is willing to serve as their research adviser. This choice should be made on the basis of compatibility of research interests and discussions between the student and faculty member. Starting from the spring term of the first year, students will, with the help of their adviser, define a topic of research interest, meeting regularly (minimally once every three weeks) and carrying out a series of readings on this topic. Students are required to keep a research journal, describing their readings and how they fit in with work in the area, and chronicling the development of their thinking about the research topic. It is the faculty’s expectation that this exploration will form the foundation for the research reported in the student’s first qualifying paper (on which see below). Note however that the initial choice of research adviser is not set in stone: students who want to change their choice of topic or adviser for whatever reason may do so, so long as they are able to find a faculty member who is willing to serve as their adviser on a new topic. It is the student’s responsibility to find a suitable adviser, and students are expected to have a faculty adviser at all times during their enrollment in the program.

2. **Portfolio.** At the conclusion of the first year of the program, students must submit to the faculty a portfolio of two research papers, in two distinct subfields. These papers should demonstrate a student’s mastery of the material in these fields to the level covered in the core courses in the area, as well as the ability to identify a significant research question and argue for a possible solution. In short, such papers should be at the level of an excellent term paper, representative of a student’s best work during the first year of course work. The faculty do not expect students to write papers expressly for the portfolio. Rather, the portfolio will typically consist of versions of term papers from classes taken during the first year in the program, which are then lightly revised on the basis of comments received from the course instructors. The deadline for the submission of these papers is June 15.

3. **Annotated bibliography/research plan.** On the basis of the research journal begun during the first year in the program, students will prepare an annotated bibliography and research plan (ABRP) for their first qualifying paper. The ABRP, which should be approximately twenty pages in length, should lay out the question that the student wants to explore, motivating its importance through a presentation and synthesis of relevant past literature on the topic. The deadline for submission of the ABRP is the beginning of the third week of the fall term.

4. **Qualifying papers.** Once the ABRP has been completed, the student will proceed to work on the qualifying papers (QPs). The goal of the QPs is to develop a student’s ability to conduct independent research in linguistics at the level of current scholarship in two different areas of linguistics. The faculty expect a QP to report on the results of a substantial project, which are written up in a manner consistent with the standards of the field. Because the transition from student to scholar can be a difficult one, we have broken the process of writing the first QP into a number of smaller steps with specific deadlines for each (all during the second year of the program): (a) Students are required to make a presentation of their preliminary results in an appropriate venue (lab meeting, reading group, seminar, etc.) by no later than the end of the fall term. (b) Also by the end of the fall term, the student will send a request for a QP reader to the DGS. This request must include a title and abstract of the project, and may also request specific faculty members to be involved. On the basis of research area and faculty availability, the DGS will identify a faculty member other than the adviser to serve as a QP reader. This reader will be involved in the ultimate evaluation of the QP once it is completed. Because it is useful to get a range of feedback on one’s work, we encourage students to make the best use of their QP reader by meeting with them and keeping them up to date on the progress of the project. (c) Students must submit a first draft of their QP to their adviser and reader no later than February 1. (d) Students must make an oral presentation of their work. This oral presentation may take place in the department (typically at a Friday Lunch Talk). Alternatively, the oral presentation requirement may be satisfied via a presentation at a professional conference, provided at least one member of the department faculty is in attendance. (e) Once the QP has been orally
presented, students must submit the final version of the paper to their adviser and reader no later than three weeks from the date of presentation.

Toward the end of the spring term of the second year, the student should begin to explore possible areas and advisers for the second QP, and must have identified an area and adviser by the beginning of the fall term of the third year. Students must follow the same steps and deadlines listed above for the second QP, this time during the third year.

5. Prospectus. No later than the beginning of the seventh term, students must choose a dissertation topic and find a faculty member who is willing to serve as dissertation adviser. By the end of the seventh term, students will present a dissertation prospectus to the entire faculty. The prospectus should lay out clearly the student’s proposed dissertation topic. It should motivate the importance of the topic, present the core idea of the proposed work together with its promise and viability, and demonstrate how this work fits into past research in the area. The prospectus should also identify a dissertation committee. The committee must include at least three faculty members (including the adviser), two of whom must be members of the Linguistics department. The prospectus document should be fifteen to twenty pages in length. After the document is submitted, the prospectus must be defended orally in front of the faculty. Upon successful completion of the prospectus defense, students advance to Ph.D. candidacy.

6. Dissertation. By the end of the eighth term, students must complete a chapter of the dissertation, together with a detailed outline of the dissertation and comprehensive bibliography. At this point (and at one-term intervals thereafter until the completion of the dissertation), the student will meet with the entire dissertation committee, to evaluate progress toward the dissertation. When this committee approves the chapter and dissertation outline, students are eligible for a University Dissertation Fellowship, which will support them in their fifth year of graduate study.

Students are expected to complete their dissertations by the end of the fifth year. At least one month prior to the dissertation filing date, the completed dissertation must be orally defended. This defense will typically involve a public presentation of the main results of the dissertation and oral examination by the members of the dissertation committee. Committee members must be given the completed dissertation no less than two weeks prior to the date of the defense.

Feedback and Evaluation

At the conclusion of each academic year, all Ph.D. students will receive a written evaluation of their performance in the program, highlighting their strengths and accomplishments, as well as mentioning areas for improvement. Because of the fundamental role played by research in the Ph.D. program, we expect the completion of the research requirements to take highest priority. It is particularly important that students make satisfactory progress toward the first QP and complete all work by the deadlines given above. Failure to do so may result in being asked to leave the program.

Language Requirement

Students are expected to exhibit some breadth in their knowledge of the languages of the world beyond those most commonly studied (including but not confined to Romance, Germanic, and Slavic languages) and those most similar in structure to the student’s first language. LING 641, Field Methods, fulfills this requirement; alternatively, with the permission of the DGS, the student may instead take an appropriate language structure class, or one or more classes characterized as L3 or higher at Yale or the equivalent elsewhere. This requirement must be completed before the prospectus defense, when the student advances to Ph.D. candidacy.

Teaching Fellow/Research Assistant Requirements

The faculty regard teaching experience as an integral part of the graduate training program in Linguistics. All students are required to serve as Teaching Fellows for a minimum of two terms, usually beginning in the first term of the third year. In addition, students must complete two additional terms of assistantship. These may be either as a Teaching Fellow, or through participation in externally supported, supervised research as a Research Fellow. Research assistantships may be provided by the Linguistics faculty and by various Yale and Yale-affiliated units. Before accepting a research assistantship in fulfillment of this requirement, students must receive approval from the DGS. To be approved, a research assistantship must meet the following criteria:

1. It must be supervised by a Linguistics department faculty member or a faculty member from an affiliated unit, such as Haskins Laboratories or the Yale School of Medicine.
2. It must provide research experience that complements the student’s academic plan of study.
3. It must provide at least ten hours of experience per week.

If an approved research assistantship is accepted that does not provide a stipend equal to the standard departmental stipend, a University Fellowship will be provided to augment the stipend so as to bring it up to the departmental standard.

MASTER’S DEGREES

M.Phil. Students in the doctoral program who complete all requirements for the Ph.D. apart from the submission of a completed dissertation (but including the presentation and successful defense of a dissertation prospectus) may petition for the M.Phil. degree.

M.A. (en route to the Ph.D.) Students in the doctoral program who successfully complete the course work, examinations, and work samples required by the end of the second year of graduate study (see above) may petition for the M.A. degree.
Program materials are available online at http://ling.yale.edu.

COURSES

LING 510a, Introduction to Linguistics  Jim Wood
The goals and methods of linguistics. Basic concepts in phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Techniques of linguistic analysis and construction of linguistic models. Trends in modern linguistics. The relations of linguistics to psychology, logic, and other disciplines.

LING 512a, Historical Linguistics  Staff
Introduction to language change and language history. Types of change that a language undergoes over time: sound change, analogy, syntactic and semantic change, borrowing. Techniques for recovering earlier linguistic stages: philology, internal reconstruction, the comparative method. The role of language contact in language change. Evidence from language in prehistory.

LING 513a / CLSS 607a / NELC 562a, Indo-European Linguistics  Kevin Van Bladel
An introduction to the inner workings and prehistory of the Indo-European languages both as a language family and in individual branches. It is a course in historical linguistics devoted to the best understood of language families, Indo-European. The emphasis is on using the theoretical framework obtained by this knowledge, especially through practical applications for readers of ancient languages such as Greek, Latin, Hittite, Sanskrit, Avestan, and Middle Persian.

LING 515a / SKRT 510a, Introductory Sanskrit I  David Brick
An introduction to Sanskrit language and grammar. Focus on learning to read and translate basic Sanskrit sentences in the Indian Devanagari script. No prior background in Sanskrit assumed. Credit only on completion of LING 515/SKRT 510.

LING 517a, Language and Mind  Maria Piñango
Knowledge of language as a component of the mind: mental grammars, the nature and subdivisions of linguistic knowledge in connection with the brain. The logical problem of language acquisition. The "universal grammar hypothesis" according to which all humans have an innate ability to acquire language. The connection between language acquisition and general cognitive abilities.

LING 518a, The Mohegan Language  Staff
Introduction to the Mohegan language, one of the Algonquian (Native American) languages of Connecticut. Emphasis on acquiring speaking competence. How to put words together, sound system, sentences. Regular speaking, writing, and reading practice, interspersed with cultural and historical information.

LING 525b / SKRT 520b, Introductory Sanskrit II  David Brick
Continuation of LING 515/SKRT 510. Focus on the basics of Sanskrit grammar; readings from classical Sanskrit texts written in the Indian Devanagari script. Prerequisite: LING 515/SKRT 510.

LING 538a / SKRT 530a, Intermediate Sanskrit I  David Brick
The first half of a two-term sequence aimed at helping students develop the skills necessary to read texts written in Sanskrit. Readings include selections from the Hitopadesa, Kathasaritsagara, Mahabharata, and Bhagavadgita. Prerequisite: LING 525 or equivalent.

LING 548b / SKRT 540b, Intermediate Sanskrit II  David Brick
Continuation of LING 538, focusing on Sanskrit literature from the kavya genre. Readings include selections from the Jatakamala of Aryasura and the opening verses of Kalidasa’s Kumarasambhava. Prerequisite: LING 538/SKRT 530 or equivalent.

LING 602b, The Linguistics of the Voynich Manuscript  Claire Bowern
Introduction to basic ideas of linguistics and cryptography through study of the Voynich Manuscript (MS 408), a mysterious medieval manuscript held in the Beinecke Library. Review of major hypotheses about the manuscript, ranging from the fake, to code, to undeciphered language.

LING 611b, Grammatical Diversity in U.S. English  Raffaella Zanuttini
Language as a system of mental rules, governing the sound, form, and meaning system. The (impossible) distinction between language and dialect. The scientific study of standard and nonstandard varieties. Social attitudes toward prestige and other varieties; linguistic prejudice. Focus on morpho-syntactic variation in North American English: alternative passives ("The car needs washed"), personal datives ("I need me a new printer"), negative inversion ("Don't nobody want to ride the bus"), "drama SO" ("I am SO not going to study tonight").

LING 612b, Linguistic Change  Claire Bowern
Principles governing linguistic change in phonology and morphology. Status and independence of proposed mechanisms of change. Relations between the principles of historical change and universals of language. Systematic change as the basis of linguistic comparison; assessment of other attempts at establishing linguistic relatedness. Prerequisites: LING 512, 632, and 653.

LING 620b, General Phonetics  Staff
Investigation of possible ways of describing the speech sounds of human languages. Tools to be developed: acoustics and physiology of speech; computer synthesis of speech; practical exercises in producing and transcribing sounds.
LING 627a, Language and Computation I  Robert Frank
Design and analysis of computational models of language. Topics include finite state tools, computational morphology and phonology, grammar and parsing, lexical semantics, and the use of linguistic models in applied problems. Prerequisite: prior programming experience or permission of the instructor.

LING 632a, Introduction to Phonological Analysis  Staff
The structure of sound systems in particular languages. Phonemic and morphophonemic analysis, distinctive-feature theory, formulation of rules, and problems of rule interpretation. Emphasis on problem solving. Prerequisite: LING 510 or 620.

LING 634a, Quantitative Linguistics using Corpora  Staff
Introduction to the basics of corpus linguistics. Students learn to compile and process corpora and conduct statistical tests to better understand linguistic patterns and are provided with the background and tools necessary to pursue further research in this area. Digital humanities students from other departments are welcome. Prerequisite: one entry-level linguistics course (e.g., phonetics, phonology, syntax, and psycholinguistics) or permission of the instructor.

LING 635b, Phonological Theory  Staff
Topics in the architecture of a theory of sound structure. Motivations for replacing a system of ordered rules with a system of ranked constraints. Optimality theory: universals, violability, constraint types, and their interactions. Interaction of phonology and morphology, as well as relationship of phonological theory to language acquisition and learnability. Opacity, lexical phonology, and serial versions of optimality theory. Prerequisite: LING 632 or permission of the instructor.

LING 636a, Articulatory Phonology  Staff
Introduction to phonology as a system for combining units of speech (constriction gestures of the vocal organs) into larger structures. Analysis of articulatory movement data; modeling using techniques of dynamical systems. Emphasis on universal vs. language-particular aspects of gestural combination and coordination. Prerequisite: LING 520 or permission of the instructor.

LING 641a, Field Methods  Staff
Principles of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics applied to the collection and interpretation of novel linguistic data. Data are collected and analyzed by the class as a group, working directly with a speaker of a relatively undocumented language.

LING 643b, Topics in Language Comparison: Mohegan and Delaware  Staff
Advanced practical use of techniques in historical linguistics and language documentation to further the available language revitalization materials for Mohegan, an Algonquian language of Connecticut.

LING 643a, Syntax I  Raffaella Zanuttini
An introduction to the syntax (sentence structure) of natural language. Introduction to generative syntactic theory and key theoretical concepts. Syntactic description and argumentation. Topics include phrase structure, transformations, and the role of the lexicon.

LING 644b, Syntax II  Jim Wood
Recent developments in syntactic theory: government and binding, principles and parameters, and minimalist frameworks. In-depth examination of the basic modules of grammar (lexicon, X-bar theory, theta-theory, case theory, movement theory). Comparison and critical evaluation of specific syntactic analyses. Prerequisite: LING 653.

LING 653a, Semantics I  Matthew Barros
Introduction to truth-conditional compositional semantics. Set theory, first- and higher-order logic, and the lambda calculus as they relate to the study of natural language meaning. Some attention to analyzing the meanings of tense/aspect markers, adverbs, and modals.

LING 652b, Formal Pragmatics  Matthew Barros
The function of definite and indefinite noun phrases in discourse, the notions of topic and focus, discourse representation theory, presupposition, and implicature. Formal tools necessary to do original research in pragmatics, the subfield of linguistics concerned with language use in context.

LING 655a, Pragmatics  Laurence Horn
Context-dependent aspects of meaning and inference. Speech act theory, presupposition, implicature. Role of pragmatics in the lexicon and in meaning change. The semantics-pragmatics distinction from different perspectives; the position of pragmatics in linguistic theory.

LING 680a, Morphology  Jim Wood
The theory of word structure within a formal grammar. Relation to other areas of grammar (syntax, phonology); basic units of word structure; types of morphology (inflection, derivation, compounding). Prerequisites: LING 632 and 653, or permission of the instructor.

LING 733a, Information Structure and Linguistic Communication  Maria Piñango
Language use is serial and local (occurs in real time), yet it is able to convey information which by definition is multidimensional and atemporal. What is the structure of the human cognitive system, including the reasoning system, such that it can support this multilayered parsing task? The seminar investigates models of how information is structured in real time and how such structure serves communication building on two hypotheses: (1) that the constrained nature of linguistic meaning composition (including information structural constraints) is intimately connected to the organizational properties of the human cognitive system, and (2) that such a connection is rooted in the dynamics of contextual relevance and perspective. Readings are drawn from a variety of perspectives including functional and formal pragmatics, cognitive psychology, and model-theoretic and lexico-conceptual semantics.
LING 760a, Copular Clauses: Meaning, Structure, and Use  Matthew Barros
The proper analysis of copular clause structure, interpretation, and usage in discourse. Comparison between English and other languages. Focus on current open questions in the field surrounding different types of copular clauses: existentials (There’s a dog in the garden), locatives (A dog is in the garden), presentatives (Here’s Jack), and different kinds of clauses in Higgins’ taxonomy.

LING 779b, Morphology and Syntax Interface  Jim Wood
A research seminar in which original research is surveyed and discussed critically. The course is appropriate for advanced undergraduates with some training in linguistics (and/or who are conducting research for senior theses), and graduate students who are conducting original research.

LING 790a, Research Methods  Raffaella Zanuttini
An introduction to research methods in linguistics. Observational and experimental approaches to research in the field. Topics include collection and organization of linguistic data, basic field methods, and use of language corpora and databases. Introduction to research in language acquisition and language change. Prerequisites: one course in syntax and one course in phonology.