

Field Methods (LING404): Syllabus



Linguistics 404
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 11:15 – 12:05
Room: TBA
Course Instructor: Seth Cable

Course Website:
<http://people.umass.edu/scable/LING404-SP09/>
E-mail: scable@linguist.umass.edu

1. General Overview (Course Description)

The goal of this course is provide students with hands-on experience in the general task of investigating a language through one-on-one interviews with its speakers.

Students will elicit, record and transcribe language data from the speaker of an unfamiliar language (Dholuo; Nilo-Saharan), and will develop original, theoretically-informed analyses of those data.

The class as a whole will also work towards the creation of (i) an on-line, searchable dictionary for the language, and (ii) a publicly available archive (wiki) of the language data collected during the course of the semester.

This course will draw upon all aspects of students' linguistic training to date – phonology, phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics – and the success of the course will depend partly on the ability of students with complementary skill sets to work collaboratively and cooperatively.

2. Course Requirements

This will be a very time-intensive course. Most of the work will consist of (i) transcription of class interview sessions, (ii) contributing to the class dictionary, and (iii) the final paper.

2.1 Active Attendance

This is very much a ‘learn-by-doing’ class; it is essentially a ‘lab practicum’ in linguistics. Outside of the first week, there will be very few readings and very few lectures. All the content of the course will be in what we do and what we learn during the interview sessions in class.

For this reason, mere attendance alone is not sufficient. Students must be *actively* engaged in and contribute to the class interview sessions.

2.2 Special Assignments

From time-to-time, you may receive some short assignments emphasizing certain ideas or themes that came up in class. Depending on how things progress, I may also administer assignments relating to the phonology/grammar of the language (*e.g.* quizzes on agreement paradigms, basic sentence construction, *etc.*)

2.3 Transcription Assignments

Each interview session in class will be digitally recorded. I will then divide that recording into four approximately equal sections (each about 10-15 min.), and post them to the class wiki.

For each class-session, there will be four (enrolled) students whose task will be to transcribe one of those four sections. (Instructions regarding transcription are included in the document titled “Workflow”.) I will then pair these transcriptions with their accompanying sound-file on the course wiki.

In the absence of any objections, assignment of a student to a given session will be determined alphabetically (*i.e.*, we start with the first four students in the roster, and cycle through).

2.4 Contributions to Dictionary

In addition to students’ individual final projects, the class as a whole will be continuously engaged in two over-arching projects:

- (a) The creation of an on-line, searchable dictionary for the language
- (b) The creation of a permanent archive (wiki) for the language data obtained in class.

A link to the on-line dictionary for the course appears on the course website. In addition, the URL is: <http://web.linguist.umass.edu/~cable/2009/ling404/dict/>

Students who are transcribing class-sessions are expected to contribute any new vocabulary encountered during the session to the class dictionary. (Instructions on how to do this appear in the document titled “Workflow”.)

2.5 Final Project

Each student will be required to submit a final paper, analyzing some aspect of the language's structure (phonology, phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics). This analysis must:

- (a) Be based solely upon data obtained from the class's language consultant
- (b) Be informed by (or 'make contact with') some area of linguistic theory.

Each of the students' final papers will be posted to the course wiki, and will form a permanent component of the publicly available archive for the course.

Depending on the needs of the class and the availability of the consultant, students might later be permitted to schedule individual sessions with the class language consultant. If so, special rules will apply regarding the data obtained in such sessions.

3. The Structure of The Course: An Overview

A Perspective to Adopt:

- This is a 'lab practicum' in linguistics, and so is essentially an extended, semester-long project, which your work – individually and collectively – contributes towards.
- As participants in this project, you are contributing to a serious, lasting piece of linguistic scholarship concerning an understudied language (*i.e.* dictionary, grammatical description, corpus/archive of recordings), a resource that will be of value to both students and professionals in the field.

January 26th:	Review syllabus Review 'workflow' Quick tour of the dictionary & the wiki <u>Assignments:</u> Short Transcription Assignment Short Dictionary Assignment Read Matthewson (2004)
January 28th:	Some basics of elicitation <u>Assignment:</u> Explaining What Went Wrong
January 29th:	Introduction to language & language consultant Basics of the language: Phonological Inventory Orthography Common phonological processes Begin investigation of language structure...
April 17th:	Submit idea for final paper
May 14th:	Final papers due

4. Some Dates of Interest

February 16: No Class (President's Day)

March 16 - 20: No Class (Spring Break)

April 20: No Class (Patriot's Day)

Tuesday, April 21: CLASS (Monday Schedule)

May 12: Last day of class

May 26: Grades due