

Field Methods (LING404): Syllabus



(Photo of renowned linguist Ken Hale with a Warlpiri language consultant.)

Linguistics 404
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:10 – 11:00
Room: Hasbrouck Lab Add, 104B
Course Instructor: Seth Cable
Language Consultant: Andrey Boskhomdzhev

Course Website:
<http://people.umass.edu/scable/LING404-SP16/>

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1. General Overview (Course Description)

The goal of this course is to 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 (Kalmyk; Mongolic), and will develop original analyses of those data.

The class as a whole will also work towards the creation of a publicly available language archive housing (i) the recordings collected during the semester and their transcriptions, (ii) an English-Kalmyk dictionary, and (iii) the students' final course projects.

As an Integrative Experience course, this class will draw upon all aspects of students' linguistic training to date – phonology, phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics – and the success of the course will depend upon 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 project.

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 reinforcing facts and patterns that have been discovered in class. Depending on how things progress, I may administer assignments relating to the phonology, morphology, and/or syntax 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 equal sections (each about 15 min.), and post them to the class language page.

For each class session, there will be four 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 language page.

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 (see Section 2.5), the class as a whole will be continuously engaged the creation of a publicly available website for the language of study (Kalmyk). One of the main features of this language page will be an English-Kalmyk dictionary, collecting together the vocabulary learned in the course of the semester.

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 and Paper

Each student will be required to complete a final project, analyzing some aspect of the language's structure (phonology, phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics). **This analysis must incorporate data obtained from the class's language consultant.**

Students should meet with the instructor to discuss their ideas for the final project no later than **March 11th**. Shortly thereafter, individual students will begin to lead the in-class interviews, focusing on questions related to their chosen topic. Students will also meet regularly with the instructor to discuss the development of their topic and their final paper. The final paper must be submitted by email no later than 11:59PM, **May 3rd**.

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.

3. Overview of the Course Schedule

The 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 and endangered 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 20:

Review syllabus
Review 'Workflow'
Quick tour of the dictionary & the language page
Assignments: Short Transcription Assignment
Short Dictionary Assignment
Read Matthewson (2004)

January 22:

Some basics on the methodology of elicitation
Assignments: Read Newman & Ratliff (2001) and Rice (2001)

January 25:

Introduction to language & language consultant (Andrey Boskhomdzhiev)
Basics of the language: Socio-linguistic facts
Recording and transcribing a short, introductory narrative.

Instructor-lead investigation of language structure...

March 11: Last date to meet with instructor to discuss final project ideas

March 21: Student-lead interviews with language consultant begin

Most in-class interviews are lead by students and focus on student projects

May 3: Final papers due, by 11:59PM

4. Requirements Satisfied by This Course

Within the linguistics major, this course can count as either:

- 1/2 of the ‘Cross-Linguistic’ requirement
- Departmental elective

This course also satisfies the University’s ‘Integrative Experience’ requirement. This course provides the context for an integrative experience by providing an opportunity for students to

- Apply what they have learned in other linguistics courses to the ‘real world problem’ of describing and analyzing an unfamiliar language
- Learn about another culture and reflect on the student’s own relationships to it
- Develop writing and speaking skills
- Work together in a collaborative way to develop a (partial) grammar for the language
- Reflect on and integrate their learning and experience and to reflect on themselves as life-long learners.
 - “The IE asks that students consider their college learning as a whole and identify how their varied experiences connect with each other and help shape the student as a lifelong learner, a member of a profession or disciplinary community, and/or as a citizen and member of the larger society.”

The course assignments and activities, described above, will support students in achieving these goals and objectives. Regarding the final goal, there will be a special assignment where students reflect upon their learning experience and on themselves as life-long learners.

5. Some Other Dates of Interest

February 1:	Last add/drop date
February 15:	No Class (Presidents' Day)
February 16:	CLASS (Monday Schedule)
February 19:	No Class (I'll be away)
March 3:	Last date to withdraw with a 'W'
March 14 – 18:	No Class (Spring Break)
April 18:	No Class (Patriot's Day)
April 27:	Last Day of Class
May 10:	Final Grades Due