

## **LING70200: Historical Linguistics Spring 2021 SYLLABUS**

Instructor: Professor Juliette Blevins  
Lectures: Tuesday, 2pm-4pm, via Zoom  
Location: Zoom  
Office Hours (virtual): by appointment (see below)  
Contact: [jblevins@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:jblevins@gc.cuny.edu)/ (212) 817-8808

Course Description: Historical linguistics is the study of language change. In this course we survey change at phonetic, phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic levels, present and practice methods of historical reconstruction, explore relationships between variation and change, study change in the context of language contact, language birth and language death, and explore new methods in comparative linguistics. The primary method of learning in this class is through problem sets; we will work through historical problem sets together in class, and similar problem sets will be assigned as homework throughout the semester. Though this is an introductory graduate course, students should have some background in basic descriptive linguistics.

Requirements and grading: This is a graduate course. Students are expected to attend weekly lectures, to do required readings, to complete and turn in all assignments when they are due, and to participate in class discussion and problem-solving. Assessment will be based on 9 homework assignments, each worth 10% of the final grade (9 x 10 = 90%) and on a one-hour in-class final (50%). There will be one extra-credit assignment at the end of term that you can use to replace your lowest homework grade, if you choose. Attendance and class participation will count as an additional 10% of the grade. However, given the current circumstances, if you are unable to attend/participate actively, you may fulfill this part of the course by (i) sending questions/remarks to me on readings in advance of class; (ii) sending messages in a group chat during classtime; (iii) meeting with me (by phone) the week you can not attend to discuss material; and (iv) viewing the video of the class at another time.

Readings and problem sets: The textbook for the course is: Lyle Campbell (1999). *Historical Linguistics: An Introduction*. 1st Edition. MIT Press, which will be available as a pdf. All assigned readings will be from this text, and most problem sets will also be from this textbook. Please have access to the textbook for class every week to facilitate our discussion of the readings, and to ensure that you have a copy of the problem sets with you for in-class work sessions.

Course learning goals: The learning goals of this course contribute to the Graduate Center Institutional Learning Goals and the Linguistics Program Learning Goals. In short:

*Students in this course will gain specialized knowledge of historical linguistics, and will develop oral and written communication skills appropriate to the sub-discipline of historical linguistics.*

Course Outline and Schedule. Readings should be done before each class meeting. Chapters are from the textbook. Homework problem sets are passed out on Tuesday and due the following Tuesday (by email, just before class). (See “Problem Set Guide” for advice on assignments.)

| <u>Date</u>                    | <u>wk</u> | <u>Topic</u>  | <u>Reading</u> | <u>Assignment</u> |
|--------------------------------|-----------|---|----------------|-------------------|
| 02/02                          | 1         | Intro to Historical Linguistics                               | —              | —                 |
| 02/09                          | 2         | Sound Change  | Chs 1,2        | 1 out             |
| 02/16                          | 3         | Borrowing   | Ch 3           | 1 due, 2 out      |
| 02/23                          | 4         | Analogical Change   | Ch 4           | 2 due, 3 out      |
| 03/2                           | 5         | The Comparative Method  | Ch 5           | 3 due, 4 out      |
| 03/9                           | 6         | Linguistic classification & Models of linguistic change       | Chs 6, 7       | 4 due, 5 out      |
| 03/16                          | 7         | Internal reconstruction                                       | Ch 8           | 5 due, 6 out      |
| 03/23                          | 8         | Syntactic change  | Chs 9          | 6 due             |
| <b>03/27-04/4 SPRING BREAK</b> |           |   |                |                   |
| 04/5                           | 9         | Semantic & lexical change                                     | Ch 10          | 7 out             |
| 04/12                          | 10        | Explaining linguistic change                                  | Ch 11          | 7 due, 8 out      |
| 04/19                          | 11        | Areal linguistics   | Ch 12          | 8 due, 9 out      |
| 04/26                          | 12        | Distant genetic relationships                                 | Chs 13         | 9 due             |
| 05/4                           | 13        | Linguistic prehistory   | Ch 14, 15      | EC out            |
| 05/11                          | 14        | Quantitative methods; evaluating one long-distance hypothesis | JB & RS        | EC due            |

General policies: Classroom behavior should be courteous and respectful. Cell phones should be turned off, and laptops should be used for course-related work. You should contact me with an explanation for any absence. Incompletes are generally *not available*, and will be considered only for serious health conditions or emergencies that result in unavoidable long-term absences. If you have a disability or condition that requires special accommodations, please see me as soon as possible to discuss any specific needs. Please also contact the Office of Student Affairs, Room 7301, (212) 817-7400, [disabilityservices@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@gc.cuny.edu). Finally, academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. While group work is encouraged, you are expected to turn in your own work, and to properly acknowledge the contributions of others.