Course Description

English/Linguistics 400

Introduction to English Linguistics

Spring 2019

Wed 4:30-7:10, CRT 118

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Have you ever wanted to know more about how language works? What do speakers know and not know about their language? And how is that language structured in systematic ways? This course, which can be taken through either the English or Linguistics Department, is an introduction to the field of linguistics. It provides students with a broad overview of linguistics and has a primary aim of showing how language is structured as a system at all levels. In order to accomplish this aim, we will study how systematic and predictable language is. For example, not only can words be broken down into one or more units of meaning (morphemes) that combine in predictable ways, those morphemes can be broken down into individual units of sound (phonemes) that also combine in systematic ways. Similarly, syntactic structures such as phrases and sentences are units that combine in predictable ways to convey semantic (referential or denotational) meanings as well as what is sometimes referred to as indexical (connotational) meaning. The latter type of meaning is often associated with discourse, which can also be understood as highly structured and predictable, especially in terms of sequencing of linguistic forms within larger activities such as conversations. Breaking language into these component systems and studying how they interact in predictable ways will give students a deeper understanding of how language works. Although many of our examples will be drawn from English, examples will also come from other languages with different structures. This will help students gain a broader understanding of English, as one of many languages in the world.

Possible Texts*


* These texts are under consideration. Please do not purchase them yet, as a final decision has not been made.