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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS</b><br/><b>DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS</b></p> |
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**Language Typology and Universals – LING 5350/6800**  
**Spring Semester 2023**

**General Information:**

Instructor: Dorian Roehrs  
Email: roehrs@unt.edu  
Main office: (940) 565-4552

Office hours: **W/R 5:00 – 5:30 (LANG 409L) and by appointment**

Class meets: **R 5:30 – 8:20 (GAB 406)**

**Important Dates:**

Final project: **Thursday, May 11**

**Course Description and Objectives:**

The purpose of this course is to help students acquire formal tools for linguistic theory, and to help them make their first steps toward applying those tools to natural language typology, the comparative study of how languages differ and how they are alike in terms of morpho-syntactic properties. The focus will be on the exploration and description of different languages and language families, and on the formulation of possible language universals. Identifying major morphological and syntactic properties, we will be studying how languages can be classified on the basis of these structural similarities (rather than shared linguistic ancestry).

The goals of this course are twofold:

- 1) to identify major morphological and syntactic structures by reading and analyzing linguistic grammars of more “exotic” languages
- 2) to get acquainted with a number of issues in typology (e.g., language samples and the logic of language types and implicational universals)

While the point of departure will be the Germanic languages, the main focus will be on less well-studied languages. More generally, the course aims at further developing analytical linguistic skills and a deeper understanding of language. The class is participatory (this is not a lecture course); that means, students should take notes on their readings at home.

**Required Text:**

Comrie, Bernard. 1989. *Language Universals & Linguistic Typology. Syntax and Morphology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. University of Chicago Press.

*The World Atlas of Language Structures Online 2013*: <http://wals.info>

Instructor-generated handouts

## General Course Policies:

1. Attendance: Repeated unexcused absences and tardiness will affect your grade significantly. Three tardies are the equivalent of one absence. You are allowed a maximum of one (1) absence without penalty. After one absence, your attendance grade will suffer in percent. After the fourth absence, you will receive a failing grade for the entire class. Under certain circumstances, special accommodations can be made at the instructor's discretion.

2. Participation: Careful preparation for class and regular, active participation are the foundation of this course!

3. Homework: There are reading assignments due for each class period. These assignments will consist of taking notes. In addition, students will adopt a grammar of an "exotic" language *unfamiliar* to them, and be prepared to present and explain relevant aspects of its linguistic structure. This will culminate in the writing of three short reports.

4. Discussion of Classic Research Paper: In teams, students will present the main findings of a research paper.

5. Final Project: The Final Project will consist of a longer paper involving the first three reports and an additional component. It will be due on **May 11**.

### 6. Length and Formatting of Write-ups:

|                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Reports (3):   | 2 - max. 3 pages  |
| Final Project: | 7 - max. 10 pages |

12-point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins all around

COLLECTIVE WORK. Students are allowed (in fact, encouraged) to work together on the homework assignments. However, every student will turn in their own write-up (and not a copy of somebody else's).

All class communication will be sent to your official UNT email address.

## Evaluation:

## Grade Distribution:

|  |     |                |
|--|-----|----------------|
| Attendance, Preparation, <b>Active</b> Participation | 10% | A = 100 – 90%  |
| Individual Write-up of Reports (3 x 15 points)       | 45% | B = 89.9 – 80% |
| Team Discussions of Classic Research Paper           | 10% | C = 79.9 – 70% |
| Individual Presentation of Final Project             | 10% | D = 69.9 – 60% |
| Individual Write-up of Final Project                 | 25% | F = 59.9 – 0%  |

## Religious Holidays:

In accordance with Section 51.911 of the Texas Education Code, UNT will allow a student who is absent from class for observance of a religious holy day to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time. Students are required to file a written request with each professor within the first 15 days of the semester to qualify for an excused absence. A copy of the state rules and procedures regarding holy days and the form for notification of absence from each class under this provision are available from the Registrar's Office.

## **American with Disabilities Act Compliance:**

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

## **Acceptable Student Behavior:**

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012>

## **Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, & Assault**

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs: <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources>.

The UNT Survivor Advocates can be reached by emailing [SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu](mailto:SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu) or calling 940-565-2648. The UNT Survivor Advocates connect students who have been impacted by violence to resources (counseling, health, safety, academics, legal, etc.), and act as their advocate. They can assist a student by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change (if needed), and connecting students to the many other resources that are available, both on and off campus. They are here to help! For more information see <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/sexual-misconduct/reporting-sexual-misconduct>

## **Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT):**

The student evaluation of teaching effectiveness is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. A short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how

this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider SPOT to be an important part of your participation in this class.

### Tentative Schedule

PLEASE NOTE THERE WILL BE NO RIGID ADHERENCE TO THIS SCHEDULE, SHOULD THE CLASS NEED MORE TIME FOR SOME LESSONS AND LESS TIME FOR OTHER LESSONS.

| week  | contents  | assignments  |
|---|---|--|
| WEEK 1<br><b>Jan. 16 MLK-Day</b><br>Jan. 17 – 20              | Introduction to course<br><b>Chapter 1: Language Universals</b><br><b>Chapter 2: Language Typology</b>      | Read Chapters 1 & 2  |
| WEEK 2<br>Jan. 23 – 27  | <b>Chapter 2: cont.</b><br><b>Chapter 3: Theoretical Prerequisites</b>                                      | Read Chapter 3, <i>Leipzig Glossing Rules</i> ; <b>Choose Language</b>                                     |
| WEEK 3<br>Jan. 30 – Feb. 3                                    | <b>Chapter 4: Word Order</b>  | Read Chapter 4; (opt: Song Chapter 2)  |
| WEEK 4<br>Feb. 6 – 10   | <b>Chapter 4: cont.</b><br>(Paper topic: <i>Sentence vs. Noun Phrase</i> )                                  | Read WALS “Determining Dominant Word Order”, 81, 86, 88-89; (opt: WALS 82-84); <b>Presentation/Paper 1</b> |
| WEEK 5<br>Feb. 13 – 17  | <b>Chapter 5: Subject</b>   | Read Chapter 5; (opt: WALS 101)  |
| WEEK 6<br>Feb. 20 – 24  | <b>Chapter 9: Animacy</b>   | Read Chapter 9; (opt: Hopper & Thompson 1980)  |
| WEEK 7<br>Feb. 27 – March 3                                   | <b>Chapter 6: Case Marking</b><br>(Paper topic: <i>Subjects/Topics vs. Possessives</i> )                    | Read Chapter 6; (opt: Song Chapter 3); <b>Presentation/Paper 2</b>   |
| WEEK 8<br>March 6 – 10  | <b>Chapter 6: cont.</b>   | Read WALS 49-51, 85, 98 (opt: WALS 28)   |
| <b>Spring Break</b>   |   |  |
| WEEK 9<br>March 20 – 24                                       | <b>Chapter 7: Relative Clauses</b>  | Read Chapter 7; (opt. Song Chapter 4)  |
| WEEK 10<br>March 27 – 31                                      | <b>Chapter 7: cont.</b><br>(Paper topic: <i>Adverbial Clauses/Adverbs vs. Relative Clauses/Adjectives</i> ) | Read WALS “Relativization Strategies”, 60, 87, 90, 96-97; (opt: WALS 122-123); <b>Presentation/Paper 3</b> |
| WEEK 11<br>April 3 – 7  | <b>Chapter 8: Causative Constructions</b>   | Read Chapter 8; (opt: Song Chapter 5; WALS 110, 111)   |
| WEEK 12<br>April 10 – 14                                      | Language Sample, Applications of Typology (Yiddish as a West Germanic Language?)                            | Choose research paper (see next week)  |
| WEEK 13<br>April 17 – 21                                      | Team discussions of classic research papers   | Talmy (1985), Mahajan (1997)   |
| WEEK 14<br>April 24 – 28                                      | Team discussions  | <b>TBD</b>   |
| WEEK 15 (Pre-final w)<br>May 1 – 4<br><b>May 5 Reading D.</b> | Presentations and feedback<br>(Presentation topic: <i>Tense vs. Case</i> )                                  | <b>Presentation of Final Project</b>   |
| Finals  | <b>May 11, 2022</b>   | <b>Write-up of Final Project</b>   |

opt: optional

Hopper, Paul J. & Thompson, Sandra A. 1980. Transitivity in grammar and discourse. *Language* 56: 251-99.

Mahajan, Anoop. 1997. Universal Grammar and the Typology of Ergative Languages. In Artemis Alexiadou and T. Alan Hall (eds) *Studies on Universal Grammar and Typological Variation*, 35-57. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Song, Jae Jung. 2001. *Linguistic Typology. Morphology and Syntax*. Routledge.



Talmy, Leonard. 1985. Lexicalization Patterns: Semantic Structure in Lexical Forms. In Timothy Shopen (ed.) *Language Typology and Syntactic Description 3: Grammatical Categories and the Lexicon*, 57-149. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.