

**Instructor:** Marjorie Pak, Program in Linguistics. Call me **Dr. Pak** [pak]; pronouns *she/her*.

- Preferred contact: [mgpak@emory.edu](mailto:mgpak@emory.edu). I try to respond to course-related questions within 24 hours. If you don't get a response within 48 hours, email again and/or leave a voicemail at 404-727-8077.
- Don't be shy about emailing me right before a deadline. I may not be able to respond in time to help, but I won't be annoyed at you for trying.

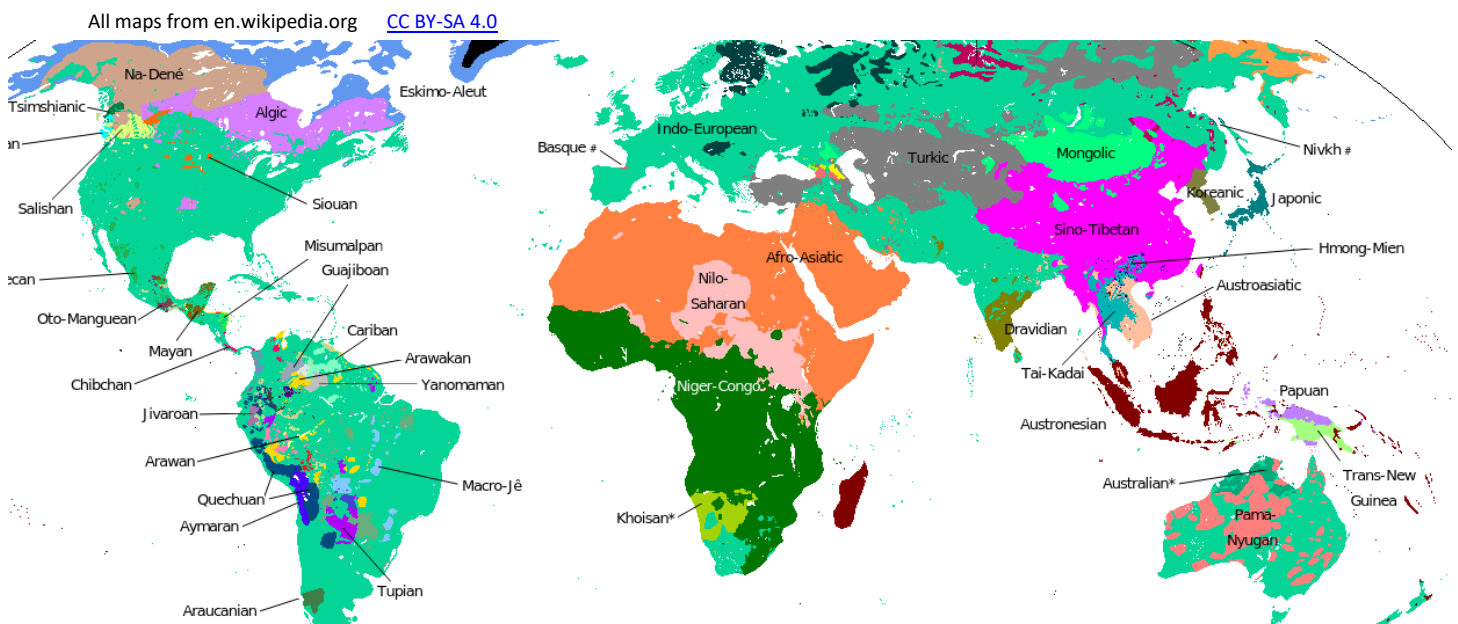
**Class meetings:** TuTh 11:30am-12:45pm, Callaway Center C101. Occasional classes may be held on Zoom; see the link at the top of our Canvas homepage.

**Office hours:** See Canvas Announcements for times and locations.

**Course description:** Students in this course will be exposed to a diverse range of the world's languages, and will acquire the tools and vocabulary to analyze them. We will study language classification and historical relationships, typology and universals, sound and structural features, and writing systems, covering the major geographic regions of the world. Students will find out about such non-English phenomena as vowel harmony, click consonants, noun incorporation, and ergative-absolutive case. There will also be readings and discussions on related issues, including the theory of universal grammar, the relationship between language and culture, and the ethics of research on understudied languages.

**Learning goals:** My primary goal in *all* of my classes is to help students fall a little more in love with a life of intellectual curiosity! In this class, I hope you'll gain an appreciation for linguistic diversity *and* commonality, while also becoming better equipped to recognize and confront some popular misconceptions about language. We'll be working on specific goals in three intertwined areas:

- Readily demonstrate a general **fact-based knowledge** of the world's major languages and language families, their geographic and population distributions, and basic typological properties.
- Recognize and analyze **diverse structural linguistic systems** (phonology, morphology, syntax) with an increased level of rigor and precision.
- Knowledgeably and sensitively discuss **issues related to linguistic diversity**, including: language endangerment; the (non-)exceptionalism of creole languages; the complex interplay of language, culture and identity; Whorfian hypotheses; and universal grammar.



## Schedule *(subject to change; see Canvas for the up-to-date version)*

- Th 1/18 Course overview; the role of languages in the study of Language
- Tu 1/23 Word and sentence structures of the world's languages (what even is a word?)
- Th 1/25 *No in-person class*. Intro to speech sounds (for newbies) on Zoom, time TBA
- Tu 1/30 Syllables and phonotactics; non-pulmonic sounds.
- Th 2/1 Classifying languages; some language myths.
- Tu 2/6 Practice with language reconstruction; limits.
- Th 2/8 Some understudied European languages
- Tu 2/13 Writing systems (intro)
- Th 2/15 *Discussion*: DeGraff on creole (non-)exceptionalism
- Tu 2/20 Chinese languages. Writing systems (continued).
- Th 2/22 Tone. Korean and Japanese.
- Tu 2/27 *Snapshot*: South and Southeast Asia. Jedek and language identity.
- Th 2/29 *Discussion*: [Sound and Fury](#) and the interplay of culture, family, body and language
- Tu 3/5 *Snapshot*: Northern and Central Asia. Interim review.
- Th 3/7 **Midterm**
- Tu 3/19 *Snapshot*: Northern Africa and the Middle East. Non-concatenative morphology.
- Th 3/21 Noun class, gender, pronouns, agreement and negative concord
- Tu 3/26 Linguistic universals; intro to universal grammar.
- Th 3/28 *Snapshot*: Sub-Saharan Africa. Background on Whorfianism.
- Tu 4/2 *Discussion*: Kaplan 2016 and [Lieberman 2015](#) on the Whorfian hypothesis
- Th 4/4 *Snapshot*: Languages of Oceania and the Pacific. Dyirbal noun class and taboo languages.
- Tu 4/9 *Discussion*: [Mufwene 2017](#) on language vitality and preservation
- Th 4/11 *Snapshot*: North and Central America. Huave. Evidentials and noun incorporation.
- Tu 4/16 *Snapshot*: South America. Background on Pirahã.
- Th 4/18 Language universals and universal grammar. Film: *The Grammar of Happiness* (excerpts).
- Tu 4/23 *Discussion*: [Nevins et al. 2009](#) on Pirahã and Universal Grammar
- Th 4/25 Languages of Atlanta. Wrap-up and review.
- Th 5/2 **Final exam** at 11:30am

ASSIGNED READINGS AND FILMS (available on Course Reserves or elsewhere online; see Canvas for links)

DeGraff, Michel. 2003. Against creole exceptionalism. *Language*, 79(2).

Kaplan, Abby. 2016. 'My language limits my thoughts.' In *Women talk more than men...and other myths about language explained* (pp. 235-264). Cambridge University Press.

Lieberman, Mark. 2015. Himba color perception. *The Language Log*, <https://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=18237>

Mufwene, Salikoko. 2017. Language vitality. *Language*, 93(4), e202-223.

Nevins, A., D. Pesetsky & C. Rodrigues. 2009. Pirahã exceptionality: A reassessment. *Language*, 85(2), 355-404.

O'Neill, M. (Producer) & R. Wood (Director). 2013. *The Grammar of Happiness* [Motion Picture]. Screen Australia.

Weisberg, R. (Producer) & J. Aronson (Director). 2000. *Sound and fury* [Motion Picture]. Public Policy Productions.

## Assignments and Grading

Your final grade will be based on the following work:

**Problem sets (24%):** *These will help you reach Learning Goal (ii).* There will be four problem sets assigned during the first part of the semester, each graded on a 6-point scale. Some may be tiered, with less difficult exercises available for students who are new to linguistics. You are encouraged to discuss problems with other students, but you must write the other students' names at the top of your paper, and you must write up all your answers independently (e.g., no word-for-word identical responses). See [Honor Code](#).

**Snapshot presentation (6%):** *This will help you reach Learning Goals (i) and (ii).* You're invited to present a 5-minute snapshot of an understudied language, focusing on a specific grammatical feature. See Canvas Assignments for more instructions and sign-up sheet. This presentation is encouraged but optional; if you don't do one, your Problem Set average will be scaled up to compensate.

**Reading quizzes and discussions (20%):** *These will help you reach Learning Goal (iii).* On five designated days, we will be discussing an assigned reading or video. You are expected to complete the reading or video before class; take a 2-pt. quiz during the first 5 minutes of class; and actively participate in our discussion (2 pts.). See Canvas for specifics about how to earn participation credit. If you must be absent on a discussion day, email me and we'll figure out what to do.

**Midterm (20%):** *This will help you reach Learning Goals (i) and (ii).* There will be a midterm exam during our last class before Spring Break. It will cover facts about language families, geography, populations and classifications, as well as key terms and concepts in the analysis of linguistic structures covered so far.

**Final exam (30%):** *This will help you reach all three Learning Goals.* A final exam will be given during our [assigned time block](#). I expect it to take you 1.5-2 hours to complete. The first part (20 pts., ~60-75 mins.) will be similar to the midterm in format and will emphasize content from the second half of the semester. The second part (10 pts., ~30-45 mins.) will be short essays; I'll give you the prompts ahead of time so you have time to reflect and organize your thoughts.

**Feedback.** You can expect grades for on-time submissions to be posted in Canvas within one week (late submissions may take longer). Feedback will be provided in the Canvas SpeedGrader, announced in class, written directly on the assignment, or posted on Canvas as an answer key or video.

**Late work.** If you start falling behind in this class, please **email me for help right away!** No need for a doctor's note or lengthy excuse (but do feel free to share what you want). For Problem Sets, I will usually grant a 24-hour extension with no penalty, as long as you request it before the deadline. Other assignments are more time-sensitive, but often there will be a way for you to earn at least partial credit. If I don't hear from you, late work is lowered up to 20% a day—so **please email me!**

**Extra-credit** questions will be included on some quizzes, tests and problem sets. There may also be opportunities

to earn extra credit by attending and writing about Linguistics Program events. Extra-credit assignments are not created *ad hoc* for individual students.

**Final grades** are assigned as follows: 93+ **A**, 90-92 **A-**, 87-89 **B+**, 83-86 **B**, 80-82 **B-**, 77-79 **C+**, 73-76 **C**, 70-72 **C-**, 67-69 **D+**, 60-66 **D**, 0-59 **F**. If you have selected the S/U grading option, a grade of 60 or above will count as **S**.

**For anyone who needs to hear this:** Grades in my classes are *not* a reflection of how much I like you as a person, or of how smart, interesting or competent I think you are generally. They simply reflect the completeness, quality and timeliness of the assignments you do for this class. If you'd like to improve your grades and don't know how, or if you're having trouble getting your work done for personal reasons, email me and we'll meet to discuss your situation. No need for embarrassment!

## Class expectations, policies and resources

I expect people to attend regularly, participate appropriately in activities and discussions, stay focused and allow others to stay focused to the best of your ability. I also expect you to be **respectful, honest and clear in your interactions with other students, me, and our assigned texts**. I will strive to model this kind of behavior myself. We *can* challenge one another's ideas—but let's do so thoughtfully and sensitively, after *careful* listening and reading.

On days when we discuss assigned readings (see Canvas), you'll need to **bring the reading with you to class**. I strongly recommend hard copies and will provide them upon request. If you prefer to read on-screen, though, the device you bring to class needs to be at least tablet-sized ( $\geq 10''$ ), and you need to download the paper ahead of time so that it's immediately available.

**Absences.** Do not come to class if you are feeling sick or have a fever. See [this page](#) for guidance. If you must miss part or all of a class, for illness or any other reason, it's courteous to let me know. You don't need to tell me your reasons (although you're welcome to). I'll be posting handouts, slides and other materials on Canvas, and I'll be happy to address specific questions after you've reviewed those. For prolonged absences, missed tests/quizzes, or more serious situations, email me ASAP so we can figure out what to do.

**Department of Accessibility Services (DAS)** works with students who have disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations. To be considered, you must contact and register with DAS (404-727-9877, [accessibility@emory.edu](mailto:accessibility@emory.edu), <https://accessibility.emory.edu>). Once I hear from DAS that you have been provided accommodations, I will email you to arrange a specific plan for my class. If you don't hear from me, please reach out! Accommodations are not retroactive and will not be provided until an accommodation letter has been processed.

Recordings and other materials are for the sole purpose of educating students enrolled in the course. The release of such information (including but not limited to directly sharing, screen capturing, or recording content) is strictly prohibited, unless I state otherwise. Doing so without my permission will be considered an Honor Code violation and may also be a violation of other state and federal laws, such as the Copyright Act.

The **Honor Code** is in effect throughout the semester. By taking this course, you affirm that it is a violation of the code to cheat on exams, to plagiarize, to deviate from the teacher's instructions about collaboration on work that is submitted for grades, to give false information to a faculty member, and to undertake any other form of academic misconduct. You also affirm that if you witness others violating the code you have a duty to report them to the honor council. Unless I explicitly state otherwise, using an artificial intelligence (AI) program to generate any content for any assignment in this course constitutes plagiarism and is a violation of the honor code. Using AI without my permission may also violate other parts of the honor code. [catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html](https://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html)

### Voting

2024 is a big election year! Sign up for reminders at [emory.turbovote.org](https://emory.turbovote.org), and please **contact me any time with questions** about eligibility, registration, absentee voting, early voting, volunteer opportunities, etc. I have forms, materials and voting swag, and I have lots of experience helping students and others. You can send your friends to me too!

