

LING 2041-001, Spring 2023

Language In Native America

Syllabus

See original page on Canvas: <https://canvas.upenn.edu/courses/1689490>

This course is an introduction to linguistic perspectives on the languages native to the Americas (their nature and distribution, typological similarities and differences), with an emphasis on North America. The diverse languages of this region will be examined from the point of view of particular linguistic phenomena, such as phonology, morphology, and syntax; and in addition we will study their historical development and their place in culture and society.

Instructor: Gene Buckley

Time: Mondays & Wednesdays, 1:45–3:15

Location: TBA

For topics and readings, see the Modules for each week. These will be finalized before the start of the relevant week.

Requirements

There are four components to the course grade.

Participation (10%)

You should do the assigned readings given in the course outline before each meeting, and regular attendance is required. Questions and discussion will be encouraged in class. Each student will present two readings in class.

Language description (25%)

Each student will "adopt" a particular language to examine from various perspectives throughout the semester. Rather than writing up a report for the professor to read, students will instead edit a Wikipedia page about the language so that the fruits of these efforts will be shared by others. As you can see by following a few of the links

from [this page], a great many Wiki pages on Native American languages need such work. Each revision is due by midnight on a Wednesday, and for some you are also required to make comments as part of peer review.

Homework assignments (25%)

There will be frequent homework assignments (made available on Monday, due the following Monday by midnight). They give practice in applying the principles studied in class and in analyzing particular languages. They are graded on a scale of 0–10. The lowest-scoring homework assignment for each student will automatically be dropped from the grade calculation, and as a result no extra credit assignments will be offered.

You are permitted to discuss the assignments with other students in the class, but you must write up independent answers and indicate the name(s) of the other student(s) you worked with on your assignment.

Final paper (40%)

Every student will write a term paper on an approved topic germane to the course. It is due at the end of the semester. We'll talk more about topics later in the term, but you can see suggestions for getting started [here].