Investigations Into an Unfamiliar Language  
01:615:431, Spring 2023

Lecture Time: Wednesdays, 8:30am–11:30am  
Lecture Location: Campbell Hall, room A1  
Course Website: Canvas

Instructor: Dr. Carly Dickerson  
E-mail: carly.dickerson@rutgers.edu  
Office: room 225, 1 Spring Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
Support Hours: Wednesdays, 12:30pm–2 pm or via Zoom by appointment (www.calendly.com/ling431)

About the course
In most other linguistics courses, you are presented data from some language(s) and asked to analyze some aspect of it. In this course, however, it is our collaborative task to collect, organize, analyze, and store data from a language that none of us know. This task is traditionally associated with travel to some distant locale, often called ‘fieldwork.’ Our field site is here at Rutgers, which allows us to explore linguistic field methods without some of the complications and barriers that fieldworkers often face (e.g. funding issues, health concerns, lack of a local support system, etc.). Our investigation is thus a shared journey of discovery in partnership with a native speaker, who will lead us into the beauty of their language as we learn about its phonetics and phonology, morphology and syntax, and discourse structure.

Prerequisites
At least one of the following:  
01:615:305 Syntax  
01:615:315 Phonology  
01:615:325 Semantics  
01:615:350 Pragmatics

Readings
You do not need to purchase a textbook this course. Instead, there will be assigned readings available as PDFs on Canvas. Most of our readings will come from Claire Bowern’s (2015) book, Linguistic Fieldwork: A Practical Guide. It is also available online through Rutgers Libraries.

Learning outcomes
• Discover the structure of an unfamiliar language through interaction with a native speaker  
• Develop the skills and sensibilities of a fieldworker:
  • Engage language holistically – you’re no longer looking at just the syntax of relative clauses, or the phonology of stop consonants, but rather the system as a whole  
  • Develop skills in the linguistic software application ELAN, which is useful for fieldwork  
  • Learn how to plan for, execute, and critique data collection
• Collaboratively manage a diverse array of data to create a single corpus
• Grow your awareness and appreciation of linguistic diversity
• Contextualize language within society and culture
• Understand the ethical issues related to fieldwork
• Sharpen analytical skills developed in previous linguistics courses through analysis of primary data

Evaluation & Required work

Grading scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90 – 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>85 – 89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80 – 84.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>75 – 79.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70 – 74.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60 – 69.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 60</td>
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This course will be graded using the standard Rutgers undergraduate grading scale.

Graded course components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation &amp; Participation</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elicitation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data management</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HW assignments (4 total)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group presentation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final write-up</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
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Preparation & Participation

This course requires an above-average level of engagement from everyone involved in order for it to work. In addition to showing up on time for each class, I expect you to complete all assigned readings ahead of time and come prepared to discuss them. During class, you are expected to be attentive to and respectful towards your classmates and the consultant. This means active listening, taking turns, patience, and encouraging each other.

You will receive a preparation and participation score (letter grade) three times throughout the semester: once in February, once in March, and once at the end of the semester. The score will be based on how frequently and consistently you participate in class (during elicitations, in discussions, in small groups, etc.) and how evident it is that you are prepared for class. You are expected to speak up at least 2 times in each class period (but hopefully a whole lot more!). Points will not be taken off for late arrivals or missed classes. However, missing some or all of a class will likely make it much harder to keep up and make sense of what we
are working in class. You should let me know if you will be late or unable to attend a class. Do NOT write to me asking what we went over in class. You are encouraged to have a “buddy” that you can contact for any notes or important information that you may have missed. If I see that you are missing lots of class or are not engaged with the material, I will reach out to you to check in and see what is going on.

Elicitation

In-class elicitation sessions will make up the bulk of our class time. We are going to try out a lot of techniques and materials, and some of them are bound to fail – that’s the point! There are guaranteed to be many frustrating moments, but keep in mind that they are a necessary and formative part of course. You are not being assessed simply on how successful you are at getting information from the consultant; that is only one small part of this grade. I will be assessing: (a) how well you respond to setbacks and can adapt your approach accordingly; (b) evidence that you are employing techniques and concepts from our readings and lectures; (c) your organization and methodology when working with the consultant.

You will receive feedback from me 3 times throughout the semester regarding your performance during elicitation (each worth 2.5% of total grade). Each time I will give you a letter grade so that you can have a concrete idea of where things stand, and I will also leave comments about what you are doing well and what could be improved. You are encouraged to come meet with me if you have any questions or need extra practice outside of our regular class time.

In addition, you will all take turns uploading elicitation notes to the shared Box folder. Everyone will look over the notes and make suggestions/comments on the document and we will discuss in the following class. You will receive points (worth 2.5% of total grade) for posting the notes on time and for engaging with them when someone else has posted.

Data Management

Each elicitation session will be recorded and I will upload the audio file to our shared Box folder. We will be using ELAN, a free transcription and annotation tool, to organize and manage the data that we collect during elicitation, ultimately building a small corpus. We will periodically divvy up the transcription work amongst the class and post ELAN files in the shared Box. You will be assessed on the completeness of transcriptions (including glosses) and mastery of basic skills in ELAN.

Please note: Our language consultant has requested that none of the recording done in class can be posted on social media without the permission of the person being recorded. This is an important boundary to respect and I believe that it will allow everyone to interact more freely with each other.

Homework Assignments

There are a total of 4 homework assignments, each worth 10% of your final grade. Each assignment will explore a different aspect of linguistic fieldwork: Cultural context, Sound system, Morphological system, and Syntax & Discourse structure. Homework assignments are not collaborative. You are expected to complete them on your own, although you are of course encouraged to utilize any and all of the shared materials on our Canvas site and in our class’s shared Box folder. Homework assignments that are submitted late will be penalized 10% for each day late. It is still always better to submit something late than never. Reach out to me if you expect to submit something late.
Group Presentation
At the end of the semester, there will be small-group presentations on topics of your choosing. Your group will confirm the topic with me ahead of time and then work together to create a 10-minute class presentation. Time and schedule permitting, you will have the opportunity to work with our consultant separately to elicit any further information you need for the presentation. More information to follow.

Final Writeup
At the end of the semester you will submit a final writeup for the course. It will include a personal reflection as well as an opportunity to explore a topic of interest in more detail. You must complete the writeup on your own. More information to follow.

Student Support Hours
Every Wednesday from 12:30pm until 2pm, I will be available in my office for student support hours. You are highly encouraged to drop in during this time. I reserve this time specifically for this purpose! We can go over any material that you are struggling with, discuss linguistics topics that interest you, or just talk about whatever you like. I will also have my Zoom room open for a virtual drop in during this time. If you are unable to come during these dedicated support hours, you can schedule a time to meet with me via Zoom, using this scheduling site: www.calendly.com/ling431

Academic Integrity
The consequences of scholastic dishonesty are very serious. Please review the Rutgers academic integrity policy: https://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/. In addition to the obvious policies of “don’t plagiarize!” and “submit your own work!” we have some other academic integrity considerations that are unique to this course. **Avoid easy shortcuts.** Of course, pretty much anything you might want to know about the language under investigation *can* be found with an internet search. This doesn’t mean it *should* be found that way. While you are welcome to google linguistic concepts and read up on how language works, **you should not look up anything specific to the language that we are working on.** If by chance you come across information about the language, I expect that you will ignore it to the extent that you can. It is more important to me that you do the work yourself than that the work you submit is 100% accurate. I will be looking to see that your work can be backed up by the data that you gathered during the elicitation sessions. If necessary, I may ask you to show me your work if I have some concerns.

Student Services at Rutgers
Disability Services
Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. In order, to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form
Mental Health Services
As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student’s ability to participate in daily activities. A recent American College Health Survey found stress, sleep problems, anxiety, depression, interpersonal concerns, death of a significant other, and alcohol use among the top ten health impediments to academic performance. Rutgers University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. Counseling services are offered through Counseling, Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program & Psychiatric Services (CAPS), our University mental health support service. They develop an individualized action plan for each student based on your unique needs and the range of resources available at CAPS, within the University, and in the surrounding community. Services include crisis intervention, individual therapy, group therapy, a variety of workshops, alcohol and other drug assistance programs, and psychiatric care (medication management). You can contact CAPS by visiting http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/ or by calling 848-932-7884. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at https://988lifeline.org/.

Sexual Misconduct/Relationship Violence
Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at https://nbtitleix.rutgers.edu/ or by contacting the Office of Student Affairs Compliance & Title IX, at NBTitleIX@echo.rutgers.edu or 848-932-8200. Additionally, the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA) has a trained advocate on call 24/7 at 848-932-1181 who can give you information on your options so you can make an informed decision. The website is www.vpva.rutgers.edu . Your options may include: trauma-informed counseling, reporting the incident, changing your living situation and/or class schedule, medical & legal assistance. You have the option to report to the police and/or the University. You can report online, call directly, or a VPVA advocate can help.
Schedule
This is a preliminary schedule ONLY. For the most up-to-date information, refer to our Canvas course site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>CLASS ACTIVITY</th>
<th>WORK DUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | 01/18/22   | Syllabus & Course Intro| • Getting to know each other  
• Syllabus  
• Decide course policies as a group  
• Intro fieldwork lecture  
• Plan ahead for next class  
• Practice recording equipment |                                    |
| 2    | 01/25/22   | Getting to Know our Consultant & the Language | • Getting to know our consultant  
• Preliminary elicitations, including Swadesh list | • Syllabus “quiz”  
• ch. 3, Bowern (2015)  
• Mithun (2012)  
• HW #1 |
| 3    | 02/01/22   | Phonetics & Phonology  | • Elicitation  | • ch. 5, Bowern (2015)  
• ch. 8, Bowern (2015) |
| 4    | 02/08/22   | Phonetics & Phonology  | Consultant unavailable  
• Lecture & discussion  
• Elicitation debrief & troubleshooting  
• Intro to ELAN & Praat |                                    |
| 5    | 02/15/22   | Phonetics & Phonology  | • Elicitation  |                                    |
| 6    | 02/22/22   | Morphology & Syntax  | Consultant unavailable  
• Lecture & discussion  
• Prepping for elicitation | • ch. 6, Bowern (2015)  
• ch. 7, Bowern (2015) |
| 7    | 03/01/22   | Morphology & Syntax  | • Elicitation  | • HW #2 |
| 8    | 03/08/22   | Morphology & Syntax  | • Elicitation  |                                    |
|      | 03/15/22   | NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK! |                                                                                |                                    |
| 9    | 03/22/22   | Narrative  | • Elicitation  | • ch. 9, Bowern (2015) |
| 10   | 03/29/22   | Narrative  | • Elicitation  | • HW #3 |
| 11   | 04/05/22   | Fieldwork Ethics  | Consultant unavailable  
• Lecture & discussion | • ch. 11, Bowern (2015) |
| 12   | 04/12/22   | TBD  | TBD  | • HW #4 |
| 13   | 04/19/22   | Group work  | • Group work to prepare for presentations  
• Small-group elicitation |                                    |
| 14   | 04/26/22   | Group work  | • Group work to prepare for presentations  
• Small-group elicitation |                                    |
final exam slot reserved for presentations