

LANGUAGES OF THE WORLD

Instructor: Dr. Natalie Operstein
 Email: natacha@ucla.edu

Office hours: TTh 2:20-3:20pm

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the key elements of modern linguistics and the scientific study of languages through an exploration of similarities and distinctive features of the world’s languages. We will discuss elements of the study of sound production and patterning, word formation, sentence formation, and methods of classifying languages into families and types. We will also see how contact between languages may lead to language endangerment and death, but may also result in the birth of new languages (= pidgins and creoles). The course grade will be calculated as follows:

Homework Assignments:	30%	Term Paper:	20%
Midterm:	20%	Final Exam (Cumulative):	30%

Course Texts

- Comrie, B., Matthews, S., & Polinsky, M. (2003). *The Atlas of Languages*. New York: Facts on File, Inc.
- Diamond, J. (1997). *Guns, Germs and Steel*. New York: Norton.

Approximate Course Outline (timing to be adjusted as needed)

“CMP” refers to pages in Comrie et al. & “D” refers to chapters in Diamond

Week		Date	Topics	Readings	Important Dates
1	T	08/28	Introduction to the study of languages.	CMP 8-15, D 1	
	Th	08/30	Classifying languages into types.	CMP 16-35, D 2-3	
2	T	09/4	Classifying languages into families.	CMP 16-35, D 4-5	
	Th	09/6			
3	T	09/11	Languages of Western Europe.	CMP 36-43, 45 (Basque), D 6-7	Homework 1 is due.
	Th	09/13			
4	T	09/18	Languages of East & Central Europe.	CMP 43-45, 50-52, D 8	
	Th	09/20			
5	T	09/25	Languages of Northern Eurasia.	CMP 45-50, 52-55, D 9	Homework 2 is due.
	Th	09/27			
6	T	10/2	Languages of South and South East Asia.	CMP 56-71, D 10	
	Th	10/4			
7	T	10/9	Languages of Africa and the Middle East.	CMP 72-89, D 11-12	Homework 3 is due.
	Th	10/11			
8	T	10/16	Review.		
	Th	10/18	Midterm.		
9	T	10/23	Languages of the Pacific.	CMP 90-107, D 13	Homework 4 is due.
	Th	10/25			
10	T	10/30	Languages of Australia.	CMP 108-23, D 14	Paper prospectus is due.
	Th	11/1			
11	T	11/6	Languages of the Americas.	CMP 124-41, D 15-16	Homework 5 is due.
	Th	11/8			
12	T	11/13	Pidgins and Creoles.	CMP 142-59, D 17-18	
	Th	11/15			
13	T	11/20			
	Th	11/22	Thanksgiving Recess: No Class		
14	T	11/27	Language endangerment and linguistic fieldwork. Review.	D 19	Homework 6 is due.
	Th	11/29			
15	T	12/4	Student presentations.		
	Th	12/6			Term paper is due.