

LING 1951-1200: Languages of the World

Fall 2025, TuTh 9:30–10:45am, 203 Lawrence Hall

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. [REDACTED]

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Office Hours: Tu 11am–12pm; Th 8–9am

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a survey of language classification, language structures, and language contact. It concentrates on two main questions: First, how do languages resemble, and differ from, each other in sounds, forms, and syntax? And second, what are some linguistic and sociopolitical results of situations in which two or more languages come into contact? By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- Identify characteristics of the major language families of the world and where they are spoken.
- Understand how we know about present day language families from historical evidence.
- Apply some basic theoretical concepts concerning human languages to the identification of language types.
- Associate major languages and language families with the people who speak them and some of their customs.
- Acquire some specialist knowledge about one language family.

COURSE WEBSITE

You can find lecture slides (after lectures are delivered), assignments, resources, announcements, and the latest version of this syllabus on Canvas.

TEXTBOOK

The textbook for this course is Asya Pereltsvaig, *Languages of the World: An Introduction*, 4th (2024) edition, Cambridge University Press. It is available in the University Store on Fifth. Any additional readings will be posted on Canvas in full.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation	10%
Reading Quizzes (12 @ 2% each)	22%
Assignments (6 @ 4% each)	24%
Final Project	20%
Midterm	10%
Final Exam	14%

Participation: This portion of your grade is based primarily on regular attendance in class meetings, but it can also benefit from active contributions to class activities and discussions or suffer from unwillingness to contribute/participate. After three absences, any additional absences count proportionally against your participation grade. Please reach out to me if exceptional circumstances (will) cause you to miss more than three classes.

Reading Quizzes: There are twelve short reading quizzes based on chapters of the textbook, and two attempts are allowed for each quiz. Each is worth 2% of your final grade. Because these reading quizzes are worth 22% of your grade, you can earn extra credit by completing all of the quizzes or you can miss one and still receive up to full credit.

Assignments: A substantial portion of your grade comes from the completion of six assignments based on the material covered in readings and lectures. Students may discuss assignments with each other, but each student must submit their own work (e.g., write-up, analysis, etc.) and the submission must indicate the names of all collaborators. If you are not present the day an assignment is due, you may email me a photo/scan the assignment by the start of class so that it is considered on time. However, *you must bring in a hard copy at the next available opportunity so that I can grade your submission.*

Exams: There will be a midterm worth 10% of your final grade, and a final exam worth 14% of your final grade. The final exam will be cumulative.

Final Project: Each student will write a paper exploring a specific language family. More details will be provided at a later date.

LATE POLICY

Late assignments will incur a penalty of 10% (i.e., one letter grade) for each day past the due date down to 50%. Assignments submitted 5 days or more after the deadline will be capped at 50%. Students can submit overdue assignments from anytime during the semester for up to 50% credit until the final regular class meeting. Brief, unpenalized extensions may be granted in exceptional circumstances when requested *before* the due date. Reading quizzes will *not* be accepted after the due date, as the answers are revealed after the deadline. Missed exams can only be made up in exceptional circumstances if documentation is provided.

GRADING

Grades will be assigned as follows: A+ = 97-100%, A = 93-96%, A- = 90-92%, B+ = 87-89%, B = 83-86%, B- = 80-82%, C+ = 77-79%, C = 73-76%, C- = 70-72%, D+ = 67-69%, D = 63-66%, D- = 60-62%, F < 60%. Grading may be done on a curve (to your benefit).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators. To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit the [Academic Integrity Guide](#) for an overview of the topic.

DISABILITY SERVICES

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and [Disability Resources and Services](#) (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as

early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

WELL-BEING

There are many resources available to support your well-being while you are at Pitt. You are encouraged to visit [Thrive@Pitt](#) to learn more about well-being and the many campus resources available to help you thrive. If you or anyone you know experiences overwhelming academic stress, persistent difficult feelings, and/or challenging life events, you are strongly encouraged to seek support. In addition to reaching out to friends and loved ones, consider connecting with a faculty member you trust for assistance connecting to helpful resources. The [University Counseling Center](#) is also here for you. You can call 412-648-7930 at any time to connect with a clinician. If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal, please call the University Counseling Center at any time at 412-648-7930. You can also contact Resolve Crisis Network at 888-796-8226. If the situation is life threatening, call Pitt Police at 412-624-2121 or dial 911.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The University of Pittsburgh does not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, genetic information, marital status, familial status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, gender identity, or other factors as stated in the University's Title IX policy. The University is committed to taking prompt action to end a hostile environment that interferes with the University's mission. For more information about policies, procedures, and practices, visit the [Civil Rights & Title IX Compliance web page](#). To report issues, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, by calling 412-648-7860, or e-mailing titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu. Reports can also be [filed online](#). You may also choose to report this to a faculty/staff member; they are required to communicate this to the University's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. If you wish to maintain complete confidentiality, you may also contact the University Counseling Center (412-648-7930).

GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender, affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, REQUIRED REPORTING, & TITLE IX

The University is committed to combating sexual misconduct. As a result, you should know that University faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct, including harassment and sexual violence, to the University's Title IX office. What this means is that as your professor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly reported to me, or of which I am somehow made aware. After a report is made, you will be contacted by the Title IX Office for opportunities for support and options for proceeding. For additional information, please visit the [full syllabus statement](#) on the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion webpage.

ATTRIBUTION

I am grateful to many for their contributions to the content and materials used in this course, especially Dr. [REDACTED] and Dr. [REDACTED].

COURSE SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE!)

	Date	Topic	Required Reading	Assessments
Week 1	8/26 8/28	Introduction		
Week 2	9/2 9/4	Europe	Ch. 1 RQ Ch. 2 RQ	
Week 3	9/9 9/11	Iran & South Asia	Ch. 3 RQ	
Week 4	9/16 9/18	Northern Eurasia	Ch. 4 RQ	HW 1
Week 5	9/23 9/25	Caucasus	Ch. 5 RQ	
Week 6	9/30 10/2	Greater Middle East	Ch. 6 RQ	HW 2 FP Proposal
Week 7	10/7 10/9	Sub-Saharan Africa	Ch. 7 RQ	Midterm
Week 8	10/14 10/16	Eastern Asia	Ch. 8 RQ	HW 3
Week 9	10/21 10/23	Pacific	Ch. 9 RQ	FP Outline
Week 10	10/28 10/30	Australia & New Guinea	Ch. 10 RQ	HW 4
Week 11	11/4 11/6	<i>No class – Election day</i>		
Week 12	11/11 11/13	North America	Ch. 11 RQ	HW 5 FP Due
Week 13	11/18 11/20	Latin America & Caribbean	Ch. 12 RQ	HW 6
Week 14	11/25 11/27	<i>No class – Thanksgiving break</i> <i>No class – Thanksgiving break</i>		
Week 15	12/2 12/4	Brief project presentations Brief project presentations		
Week 16	TBD			Final Exam