

## CS 110: THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE

### SYLLABUS

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#### WHERE TO FIND ME

Class Tuesday, Thursday 10:30 – 11:50 Adele Simmons Hall (ASH) 111

E-mail kflack@hampshire.edu (e-mail is the best way to get in touch with me)

Course website <http://athena.hampshire.edu/S293688>

Office Adele Simmons Hall (ASH) 204

Office hours Tuesday 2:00 – 4:00  
Thursday 12:00 – 1:00

About my name Most people on campus know me as Kathryn Flack. But some people – and databases – know me as Kathryn Potts. Hopefully this will be straightened out someday. In any case, you should just call me Kathryn.

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#### COURSE GOALS

- Understand the goals of linguistic research.
- Develop skills for doing linguistic analyses of new data.
- Learn about how languages can vary, and what properties they share.

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#### COURSE WEBPAGE

<http://athena.hampshire.edu/S293688>

Things you'll find here:

- A summary of each day's class
- In-class activities
- Reading assignments (listed on the days that they're due)  
All course readings will be available on the webpage.

- Other homework assignments (listed on the days that they're due)  
Homework assignments will be announced in class, and also on the webpage. You are responsible for completing each assignment by its due date; late work is not accepted.
- Final paper information and due dates

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## EVALUATION CRITERIA

Your end-of-semester evaluation will be based on class participation, homework assignments, and a final research paper. These aspects will be equally important, and must be completed in order to receive an evaluation.

Everyone will turn in a final portfolio of work done in this class. **Make sure to save all of your assignments as they are handed back** for inclusion in the portfolio.

Class participation: You should come to class; you cannot participate if you don't.

Class time will usually be spent discussing issues raised in the reading assignments, or analyzing new data.

Homework assignments: Homework (both readings and written assignments) will be announced in class and on the class webpage.

Before most classes, you will be expected to complete a reading assignment, write a response to an assigned reading, and/or do a linguistic analysis of new data. The particular assignment for a given day will depend on what's happening in class. **It is your responsibility to be aware of when assignments are due.**

All assignments must be completed by the announced due dates.

If dire circumstances will keep you from completing an assignment on time, **you must let me know before the assignment is due** (or, in serious emergencies, as soon as humanly possible).

Final papers: A research paper on a topic of your choosing will be due at the end of the semester.

I will distribute a list of possible topics, but you are encouraged to choose any topic that interests you (and is relevant to the topic of this class). As the semester progresses, think about what you might like to learn more about.

A schedule of due dates for choosing topics and turning in outlines and final papers will be announced later in the semester.

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## ABOUT READING ASSIGNMENTS

Reading assignments are listed on the course webpage on the days that they're due.

When we discuss the readings in class, it is your responsibility to bring whatever you need with you that will allow you to refer to the reading appropriately.

You might want to bring a printout of the reading itself, or good notes that you've taken.

You'll usually be asked to turn in two reading responses on the day the reading itself is due.

A 'response' is a paragraph in which you discuss a question you had about the reading, or challenge a point made by the author, or describe why you agree with the author or find a particular point interesting, or generally react in some articulate fashion. These are not formal essays; still, you should make sure your spelling is correct and your ideas are presented clearly.

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## OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

No late work. All assignments must be completed by the announced due dates, as announced in class and in the schedule section of the class webpage.

If dire circumstances will keep you from completing an assignment on time, you must let me know **before** the assignment is due.

On written work. Unless I say otherwise (as for the final paper), I don't care whether written work is typed or handwritten. However, all work should be easy to understand. This means it must be:

...legible. If you have messy handwriting, you should make an effort to write clearly, or consider typing. If your printer is running out of ink and prints only in yellow and pink stripes, please find another printer.

...correctly spelled. Linguists don't care about spelling; however, readers do.

...clearly organized. Even for casual assignments like reading responses, it's important that your writing express your ideas clearly. Think about what points you want to make, and how you want to explain them, before you start writing. Even for short assignments, make a habit of proofreading to make sure your audience can understand what you're saying.

Academic honesty. You are expected to be familiar with, and to follow, the Hampshire College policy on plagiarism and its consequences. The short version: Do your own work, and cite your sources appropriately, and everyone will be happy.

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**SCHEDULE OF TOPICS**

“2Rs” = Turn in two responses to the reading.

| <b>Date</b> |          |   | <b>Assignments</b><br>(listed on the days<br>that they are <u>due</u> ) | <b>Topics</b>   |
|-------------|----------|---|---|---|
| Week 1      | Sept. 6  | R |   | What linguists are (and aren't) interested in               |
| Week 2      | Sept. 11 | T | HW: info sheet<br>R: Pinker (1995) ch. 6 (2Rs)                          |   |
|             | Sept. 13 | R | HW: expletive infixation  | English syllables   |
| Week 3      | Sept. 18 | T | R: Comrie (1981) ch. 1 (2Rs)  |   |
|             | Sept. 20 | R | R: Spencer (1996) §3.3 (2Rs)  | More syllables:<br>typology<br>acquisition                  |
| Week 4      | Sept. 25 | T | HW: Berber syllabification  |   |
|             | Sept. 27 | R | Advising day – no class   |   |
| Week 5      | Oct. 2   | T | HW: Syllable typology   |   |
|             | Oct. 4   | R | R: Levelt and van der Vijver (2004) + supplemental info (2Rs)           |   |
| Week 6      | Oct. 9   | T | October break – no class  |   |
|             | Oct. 11  | R | R: Wolkimir (1992) (2Rs)  | Syllables: acoustics, ASL                                   |
| Week 7      | Oct. 16  | T | HW: Partial rhymes  | Partial rhymes: Japanese, English                           |
|             | Oct. 18  | R | HW: Navajo YI/BI  | Animacy:<br>Navajo<br>typology                              |
| Week 8      | Oct. 23  | T |   |   |
|             | Oct. 25  | R | HW: Final paper proposal  |   |
| Week 9      | Oct. 30  | T | Class meets in the library  |   |
|             | Nov. 1   | R | R: Dewart (1979)<br>R: Comrie (2989) ch. 9<br>3Rs                       | Finish animacy: English passives                            |
| Week 10     | Nov. 6   | T | HW: Reading reactions – final paper reference                           | Subject/object marking:<br>typology<br>null subjects<br>ASL |
|             | Nov. 8   | R | HW: Nahuatl morphology  |   |
| Week 11     | Nov. 13  | T | R: Bahan et al. (2000) (2Rs)  |   |

|                        |         |   |  |  |
|------------------------|---------|---|--|--|
|                        | Nov. 15 | R | HW: Reading reactions – final paper reference              |  |
| Week 12                | Nov. 20 | T | HW: Lane et al. (1996) - optional                          | Guest lecture: Helen Stickney (UMass) – Nicaraguan Sign Language |
|                        | Nov. 22 | R | Thanksgiving – no class                                    |  |
| Week 13                | Nov. 27 | T | Pinker (1994) ch. 3 (2Rs)                                  | Language universals and thought universals                       |
|                        | Nov. 29 | R | HW: Pragmatics data gathering<br>R: Colapinto (2007) (2Rs) | Arguing against universals                                       |
| Week 14                | Dec. 4  | T |  | Guest lecture: Chris Potts (UMass) – pragmatics                  |
|                        | Dec. 6  | R | Portfolios due<br>Optional paper draft due                 | Wrap-up  |
| Wednesday, December 12 |         |   | Final papers due   |  |