

4.41478 – Survey of Linguistic Theories – Course Outline

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Course Description

This is not a course in Historical Linguistics – this class is on the *history of human study of language*. So, we'll be looking at how our *ideas about* language have changed, not at how languages change in time.

We shall start our survey of human understanding of language over the past three thousand years with an overview of Ancient Indian, Chinese and Greek thought on language and its role in society. We will then travel through the ages, focusing mainly on European and American linguistic thought.

Objective

This course seeks to provide a three-dimensional view the history of linguistic enquiry. It is hoped that upon the completion of this course the mature students will be able to formulate their own understanding (approach to) the study of language.

Outcomes

You will gain an in-depth understanding of the history of linguistic theory; these insights should enable you to formulate your own informed approach to the study of language.

Contact 45 hrs (2 lectures and 1 tutorial per week)

Prerequisites Introduction to Linguistics

Assessment

Tutorial assignments - 60 %

Final examination - 40 %

Recommended Texts

Handouts from the Internet and lecture notes will be provided

Program

Week 1	Student Registration / Organizational matters
Week 2	A Short Review of the Scope of Modern Linguistics: Non-Western Linguistic Traditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pānini: <i>Astadhyāyī</i> (literally 'eight books'), a grammar of Sanskrit (btw. 600 B.C. - 300 B.C.) • <i>Tolkāppiyam</i>: early grammar of Tamil (~ the 2nd century B.C.) • Bhartrhari: <i>Vākyapadīya</i> (5th-7th Century A.D.)
Week 3	Ancient Greeks - The Sophists: Protagoras, Gorgias, etc. Ancient Greeks - Plato's Cratylus
Week 4	Aristotle
Week 5	The Romans
Week 6	The Middle Ages
Week 7	The Renaissance
Week 8	18th Century Europe The 19th Century – Philology
Week 9	Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 – 1913)
Week 10	De Saussure: The Linguistic Sign
Week 11	The 20th Century - American Structuralism Roman Jakobson, Leonard Bloomfield Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, Whorf
Week 12	The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis & Its Implications
Week 13	The 20th Century – Formalism Noam Chomsky George Lakoff John Searle
Week 14	Chomsky's Transformational & Generative Grammars Trouble with Transformations Universal Grammar Government and Binding
Week 15	Revision