

## English/Linguistics 400 Syllabus

### *Introduction to English Linguistics*

Spring 2021, Online Synchronous, MW 4:45-6 pm

Patricia Mayes ([mayes@uwm.edu](mailto:mayes@uwm.edu))

### **Course Description**

Have you ever wanted to know more about how language works? What do speakers know and not know about their language? And how is that language structured in systematic ways? This course, which can be taken through either the English or Linguistics Department, is an introduction to the field of linguistics. It provides students with a broad overview of linguistics and has a primary aim of showing how language is structured as a system at all levels. In order to accomplish this aim, we will study how systematic and predictable language is. For example, not only can words be broken down into one or more units of meaning (morphemes) that combine in predictable ways, those morphemes can be broken down into individual units of sound (phonemes) that also combine in systematic ways. Similarly, syntactic structures such as phrases and sentences are units that combine in predictable ways to convey semantic (referential or denotational) meanings as well as what is sometimes referred to as indexical (connotational) meaning. The latter type of meaning is often associated with discourse, which can also be understood as highly structured and predictable, especially in terms of sequencing of linguistic forms within larger activities such as conversations. Breaking language into these component systems and studying how they interact in predictable ways will give students a deeper understanding of how language works. Although many of our examples will be drawn from English, examples will also come from other languages with different structures. This will help students gain a broader understanding of English, as one of many languages in the world.

### **Required Texts**

The required course materials are listed below.

- *Language: Its structure and use, 7<sup>th</sup> edition* (2015), by Edward Finegan. Cengage Learning.
- Course handouts and assignment sheets posted on Canvas

### **Course Learning Outcomes**

Successful students will be able to

1. Articulate how language is structured as a system
2. Explain the idea that structural change is inherent in language
3. Identify how linguistic systems can be broken down into their component parts
4. Analyze how languages vary with respect to sound systems
5. Analyze how languages vary with respect to morphological systems
6. Analyze how languages vary with respect to grammatical systems
7. Analyze lexical variation and change
8. Explain the relationship between language change and linguistic varieties
9. Explain the relationship between spoken and written language
10. Apply their understanding of linguistic structure to varied contexts of language use

Please contact Pat Mayes ([mayes@uwm.edu](mailto:mayes@uwm.edu)) if you have questions or would like additional information before the syllabus is ready.