

# How Language Works

ENGL 3371 (Fall 2022)  
Texas Tech University

**Instructor:** Dr. Aaron Braver  
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*Office* English & Philosophy Building, Room 312C

**Class meetings:** T/Th, 12:30pm–1:50pm  
*Section 001* English & Philosophy Building, Room 103  
*Section D01* Via Zoom at <https://texastech.zoom.us/j/93548299588> (password on Blackboard)

**Office Hours:** T/Th, 2:00pm–2:50pm, and by appointment  
Be sure to reserve a slot: <http://www.aaronbraver.com/officehours>  
In person in ENGL/PHIL 312C *or*  
via zoom at <https://texastech.zoom.us/j/93807137900> (password on Blackboard)

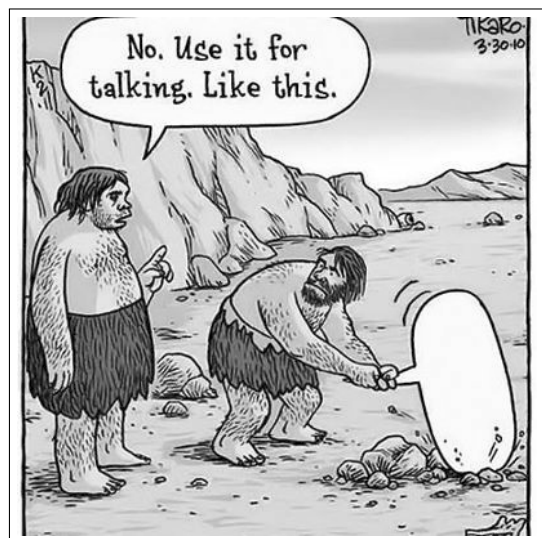
**Course website:** On Blackboard (<http://ttu.blackboard.com>)

## About this course

Human languages are complicated and diverse—but also highly systematic. This course provides a basic introduction to these systematic, structural properties of human language, as illuminated by modern linguistic theory. We will examine the methods employed by linguists, as well as some of the key results from this work. We will also consider some of the social, philosophical, and cognitive aspects of human language.

**By the end of this course, you should be able to...**

- Explain the properties that make human language unique
- Find patterns and regularities in linguistic data
- Infer from these patterns what kind of knowledge all language-speakers must share
- Understand the basics of linguistic theory and how this theory explains the fundamental properties of human language



This course is *not* about ‘proper’ grammar or how to learn hundreds of languages (in fact, we’ll see that *linguistics* is not about these things at all).

## Materials

### Required Course Textbook

*Language Files: Materials for an Introduction to Language and Linguistics*, 12th Edition. Ohio State University Press. ISBN: 0814252702.

- Please be sure to get the 12th edition (it has a big ‘12’ on it).

### Handouts

Handouts for each unit will be posted on Blackboard. It is your responsibility to bring the appropriate handouts with you to every class meeting, either in digital or dead tree format.

## Assignments and Grading

### Homework

There will be approximately one homework assignment per unit.

Work must be typed and submitted ***as a single PDF file*** via the course Blackboard site (too many linguistic fonts go wrong in Word documents). Work submitted in another format or as multiple files will receive a zero.

Collaboration is permitted on homework assignments under the following conditions:

Each person must write up and hand in their own assignment.

Any answers, explanations, or reasoning in the assignment must be written in *your own words*.

If you and another person hand in nearly identical assignments (as judged by me), I reserve the right to require you to work alone from then on.

You must clearly indicate at the top of the assignment who you collaborated with.

A guiding principle: You must always do your own work—this means that you must state things in your own words and show that you understand any ideas that you got from another source.

## In-class exercises

We will occasionally have in-class exercises and problem sets. These cannot be made up if you are absent.

## Final exam

We will have a take-home final exam, due on Friday 12/9 at 11:59pm. Collaboration is not permitted on the exam.

## Grade breakdown

Category	Percent	Percentage	Letter grade
Homework	60%	95–100%	A+
In-class assignments	10%	90–94.99%	A
Take-home final	30%	85–89.99%	B+
		80–84.99%	B
		75–79.99%	C+
		70–74.99%	C
		65–69.99%	D+
		60–64.99%	D
		< 60%	F

Final course grades will be rounded to two decimal places (e.g., 94.991% rounds down to 94.99% and is an A, while 94.995% rounds up to 95.00% is an A+).

## Keeping track of grades

Your assignments will be returned to you via Blackboard. You can see your assignment scores via the My Grades section of the course Blackboard page. A running calculation of your course grade is available in the 'weighted grade' entry.

## Policies and expectations

### Expectations for online participants in hybrid courses

The online section of this course is *synchronous*. That means that both the on-site and online sections will meet at the same time—on-site students in person, and online students via Zoom.

To ensure that you are fully engaged in class discussions, you are expected to do the following:

- Maintain the same level of civility and professionalism that would be expected in a face-to-face classroom setting

- Attend all class meetings
- Log in to the video conference on time, and remain logged in for the duration of the class period
- Keep your camera on so that you are visible to the instructor and other students in the class. If you have concerns about leaving your camera on (such as childcare obligations, privacy issues, or a particular circumstance during a class period), please talk to the instructor
- Refrain from engaging in non-class related activities during class time, especially those that create a distraction for other students and/or limit your ability to engage in the course (e.g., cooking, driving, etc.)

Failure to meet these expectations may result in the following consequences being counted as absent for the class meeting.

Repeated violations of these expectations will may result in the following consequences

- Referral to the appropriate Associate Dean
- Academic penalty, ranging from a warning to failure of the course

### **If (when) technology goes wrong...**

If the University network, Zoom, or Blackboard goes down, I will send you instructions via your TTU email address. If TTU email is down, check the course Blackboard site. If that is down too, visit <http://www.aaronbraver.com/courses/3371> for further instructions.

### **Attendance and punctuality**

You are expected to come to (every) class and to participate fully in class discussions and exercises. Please make an effort to arrive on time.

If you know you will be absent, *email me ahead of time.*

### **Absences due to illness**

In case of an illness that will require an absence from class for more than one week, the student should notify her/his academic dean. The dean's office will inform the student's instructors through the departmental office. In case of class absences because of a brief illness, the student should inform the instructor directly.

### **Absences due to religious holy days**

Texas law requires institutions of higher education to excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day. The student shall also be excused for time necessary to travel.

An institution may not penalize the student for the absence and allows for the student to take an exam or complete an assignment from which the student is excused. The student should make up any missed work.

TTU policy indicates that a student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known to the instructor prior to the absence.

See OP 34.19 at <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/opmanual/OP34.19.pdf> for more information.

### **Absences due to officially approved trips**

Any student absent because of university business must be allowed to make up missed work within a reasonable span of time, or have alternate grades substituted for work due to an absence. In order to receive these privileges, the faculty or staff member responsible for the officially approved trip must notify me of the departure and return schedules. Students will not be penalized for these absences, but are responsible for all material missed.

### **Late work**

Assignments must be submitted on time—this is at 11:59pm, unless otherwise specified. *Assignments turned in after the deadline will receive zero points.* There is no partial credit for late work.

This course has a one-time no-questions-asked pass on this policy applicable only to homework assignments (and not to in-class assignments or exams). To use it, you must email the instructor *before* the original deadline, and turn in the assignment no later than one class meeting after the original deadline.

### **Extraordinary circumstances**

Life is complicated—illnesses and injuries happen. If these or other life events are interfering with your ability to meet course requirements, please *let me know as soon as possible*.

### **Email**

Some course-related announcements will be made over email. These messages will be sent to your TTU address, which you should check at least daily. Failure to check your TTU email will not excuse you from any requirements assigned via email.

Please include the course number in the subject line of any emails you send me (as well as an actual subject). If you are sending from an account other than your TTU address, please include your full name in the message body.

### **Civility in the classroom and electronic devices**

Students are expected to maintain a polite, civil environment that is conducive to learning for everyone. This includes refraining from non-approved uses of electronic devices, or use of such devices that becomes distracting for other students.

Breaches of decorum may result in expulsion from the classroom or consequences for your final grade.
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## **Accommodations for students with disabilities**

Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements, should contact the instructor as soon possible to make the necessary arrangements. Students should present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor's office hours. Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodation to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, please contact the Student Disability Services office in 335 West Hall or call (806) 742-2405.

## **Academic integrity**

Cheating and plagiarism will be treated very seriously. As a general policy, all such cases will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct with a recommendation for the fullest sanctions, including failure for the course. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with TTU's policies on academic integrity, which can be found in the student handbook at <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/dos/handbook.php>, especially Part I, Section B, Subsection 1 and Part I, Section C. Additional information is available via the Office of Student Conduct at <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/studentconduct/>.

You are encouraged to form study groups outside of class to help you understand the course material and discuss readings, however you may not collaborate on homework assignments other than as described above.

If you have any questions, please consult the instructor, a dean, or the University's academic integrity policy.

## **Diversity, inclusion, and resources for a safe campus**

Texas Tech University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from gender and/or sex discrimination of any kind. Sexual assault, discrimination, harassment, and other Title IX violations are not tolerated by the University. Report any incidents to the Office for Student Rights & Resolution, (806)-742-SAFE (7233) or file a report online at <http://titleix.ttu.edu/students>.

It is my intent that students from a variety of diverse backgrounds and perspectives participate in this course, that their learning needs be addressed, and that we see this diversity as a beneficial resource. I aim to include materials and activities that are respectful of all forms of diversity, including racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, disability, age, cultural, and socioeconomic. Please let me know if you see ways to improve the effectiveness of this course for you personally, or for other groups of students.

I support the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) community, and I am available to listen and support you in an affirming manner. I can assist in connecting you with resources on campus to address problems you may face pertaining to sexual orientation and/or gender identity that could interfere with your success at Texas Tech.

Please note that additional resources are available through the Office of LGBTQIA within the Center for Campus Life, Student Union Building Room 201, <http://www.lgbtqia.ttu.edu>, (806) 742-5433.

If you have a preferred set of pronouns that you would like me to use when referring to you, please make them known to me.

Faculty and staff members at TTU are committed to connecting you to resources on campus. Some of these available resources are:

- TTU Student Counseling Center, (806) 742-3674, <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/scc/> (provides confidential support on campus)
- TTU 24-hour Crisis Helpline, (806) 742-5555 (assists students who are experiencing a mental health or interpersonal violence crisis. If you call the helpline, you will speak with a mental health counselor)
- Voice of Hope Lubbock Rape Crisis Center, (806) 763-7273, <http://voiceofhopelubbock.org> (24-hour hotline that provides support for survivors of sexual violence)
- The Risk, Intervention, Safety and Education (RISE) Office, (806) 742-2110, <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/rise/> (provides a range of resources and support options focused on prevention education and student wellness)
- Texas Tech Police Department, (806) 742-3931, <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/tttd/> (to report criminal activity that occurs on or near Texas Tech campus)
- Raider Red's Food Pantry provides students with short-term access to supplemental food, <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/dos/foodpantry.php>, (806) 742-2984

## **Mandatory reporting of sex/gender-based discrimination and violence**

Please be aware that employees of Texas Tech University are “mandatory reporters.” This means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, stalking, or sex/gender-based discrimination, I am required by law to report this information to the TTU Title IX office. Reports to the Title IX office are private, and will not be shared with other students, faculty, non-Title IX staff, or parents, without your express consent.

After a report is submitted, a Title IX Case Manager will send you an email to discuss the ways the University can assist you, but you are not obligated to respond. In almost every situation, you are in control of whether or not to move forward with an investigation, and any action taken in response to the situation will be up to you. Our main goal is to provide you with immediate support and protect all students and employees from a hostile or discriminatory environment.

## **Schedule**

This schedule is subject to change. Please pay attention for announcements in class and via email.

## Introduction

Th	08/25	Syllabus What is linguistics? What do you already know?	
T	08/30	Design features of language	·LF 1.0–1.5
Th	09/01	Modality Animal communication	·LF 17.0–17.2 ·LF 17.4–17.6 ·LF 14.0–14.3

## Phonetics

T	09/06	What is phonetics? The vocal tract	·LF 2.0–2.1
Th	09/08	Consonants of English Vowels of English	·HW 1 (Introduction) due ·LF 2.2–2.3
T	09/13	Sounds not in English Suprasegmental features	·LF 2.4–2.5
Th	09/15	Acoustic phonetics Transcription	·LF 2.6
T	09/20	TBD	

## Phonology

Th	09/22	What is phonology? Phonotactic constraints Phonemes and allophones	·HW 2 (Phonetics) due ·LF 3.0–3.2
T	09/27	Phonemes and allophones cont'd Phonological rules and processes	·LF 3.3



Th	09/29	Phonological rules and processes cont'd Syllables	
T	10/04	Tackling phonological puzzles	·LF 3.5
Th	10/06	TBD	
<b>Morphology</b>			
T	10/11	What is morphology? How do words work? Morphemes	·HW 3 (Phonology) due ·LF 4.0–4.1
Th	10/13	Morphological processes	·LF 4.2
T	10/18	Morphological systems Hierarchical structure of words	·LF 4.3–4.5
Th	10/20	TBD	
<b>Syntax</b>			
T	10/25	What is syntax? The basics of syntax Syntactic properties	·HW 4 (Morphology) due ·LF 5.0–5.1
Th	10/27	Syntactic properties cont'd Constituency Syntactic categories	·LF 5.2–5.4
T	11/01	Building phrases	·LF 5.5
Th	11/03	Building phrases cont'd Ambiguity	
T	11/08	TBD	

## Semantics

Th	11/10	What is semantics? Lexical semantics The truth	·HW 5 (Syntax) due ·LF 6.0–6.3
T	11/15	Compositional semantics Assertion and presupposition Scope relations	·LF 6.4
Th	11/17	TBD	

## Other areas of linguistics

T	11/22	Writing systems	·HW6 (Semantics) due
Th	11/24	No class—Thanksgiving	
T	11/29	Writing systems	
Th	12/01	Historical linguistics	
T	12/06	Final exam review	
F	12/09		·Final exam due at 11:59pm