

Linguistics

LING S-120. Introduction to Historical Linguistics (CRN: 31367)

Jeffrey G. Bourns PhD, Instructor in Linguistics, Harvard University

The first part of this course will address language change at all levels of grammar--phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and lexical. Such topics as the role of child language acquisition in language change, what changes are and are not possible in natural language, and what constitutes "language change" in the first place will be considered, along with an evaluation of theories trying to account for the source of change. The second part of the course will treat the subject of language relatedness: the scientific establishment of language families and the comparative method, the reconstruction of ancestral languages, etymology, and philology, with an overview of Indo-European historical linguistics and the Indo-European roots of English. Last but not least, an exploration of language variation, pidgins, and creoles will round things off. No prior experience with linguistics or Indo-European is required or assumed.

LING S-110. Introduction to Linguistics (CRN: 31578)

Nigar Gulsat Aygen PhD

This course is intended as an introduction to the study of human language--its nature and its relationship to other aspects of human culture. Questions to be addressed include the following: How does language differ from other forms of communication? Can chimpanzees and parrots learn language? How different are languages around the world? Does language influence thought? How do children learn to talk? Emphasis will be placed on basic skills--the techniques that professional linguists use to analyze language data into sound structures (phonology) and sentence structures (syntax). The relationship of linguistics to other social and natural sciences, such as psychology, anthropology, and biology, will also be examined.