

# **XL 5 “LANGUAGES OF THE WORLD”**

**(ONLINE)**

(January, 17 – March, 28)

Instructor: Dr. Natalie Operstein

Email: [nao10@pitt.edu](mailto:nao10@pitt.edu)

## **Course Description**

This course is an introduction to the linguistic diversity of the world through an exploration of similarities and distinctive features of the world’s languages. We will discuss a range of questions about the world’s languages, including their sound and structural features, writing systems, areal characteristics, and methods of classifying languages into families and types. We will also see how contact between languages may lead to language endangerment and death, but may also result in the birth of new languages: pidgins, creoles, and mixed languages.

## **Course Grade**

Term Paper:	20%
Homework Assignments:	60%
Participation in Online Discussions:	20%

## **Course Texts**

- Comrie, B., Matthews, S., & Polinsky, M. 2003. *The Atlas of Languages*. New York: Facts on File, Inc.
- Lyovin, Anatole V. 1997. *An Introduction to the Languages of the World*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## **Course Outline**

“C” refers to Comrie et al. (2003), “L” refers to Lyovin (1997),  
“BB” refers to additional readings on Blackboard, “Ch.” is ‘chapter’

Week	Dates	Topics	Readings	Due Dates
1	1/17 - 1/23	Introduction to the study of languages. Describing the sounds of languages.	C “Introduction”; BB “English Consonants and Vowels” & “Phonological Processes”.	
2	1/24 - 1/30	Classifying languages into families and types.	C Ch. 1; L Ch. 1.	Homework 1 is due on 1/30.
3	1/31 - 2/6	Languages of Europe. Sketch of Russian.	C Ch. 2; L pp. 45-54, 61-78	
4	2/7 - 2/13	Languages of Asia. Sketch of Mandarin Chinese.	C Ch. 3; L pp. 127-46.	Homework 2 is due on 2/13.
5	2/14 - 2/20	Languages of Africa and the Middle East. Sketch of Modern Literary Arabic.	C Ch. 4; L pp. 201-17.	
6	2/21 - 2/27	Languages of the Pacific. Sketch of Hawaiian.	C Ch. 5; L pp. 257-82	Homework 3 is due on 2/27.
7	2/28 - 3/6	Languages of Australia. Sketch of Dyrbal.	C Ch. 6; L pp. 282-302.	
8	3/7 - 3/13	Languages of the Americas. Sketch of Yup’ik Eskimo.	C Ch. 7; L pp. 354-64.	Homework 4 is due on 3/13.
9	3/13 - 3/20	Pidgins and Creoles. Sketch of Tok Pisin.	C Ch. 8; L p. 416-34.	
10	3/21 - 3/28	Writing Systems.	C Ch. 9; L Ch. 2.	Homework 5 and Term Paper are due on 3/28.