

LIN 2004 Languages of the world

Spring 2025

when: T 4, R 4-5 Tuesday 10:40 AM - 11:30 AM, Thursday 10:40 AM - 12:35 PM where: AND 0019 course website: elearning.ufl.edu on Canvas

instructor: Irina Burukina e-mail: irinaburukina@ufl.edu phone: TBA office: TBA office hours (in person & Zoom): Tuesdays 3 PM - 5 PM and by appointment

1 Course description

This course invites you to explore the remarkable diversity of human language across the globe. It surveys the world's estimated 7,000+ languages, examining their relationships, structures, and social contexts. We will discover why languages are so different and yet all have something in common, discuss the difference between a language and a dialect, and explore typological classification systems. We will also analyze how political, historical, and social factors shape language use within communities, and talk about the importance of language documentation, preservation, and revitalization.

2 Learning objectives

After completing the course the students will be able to:

- describe the ways in which human languages are alike and how they differ,
- identify most language families, language areas, and linguistic features that characterize them,
- understand basic linguistic terminology and concepts,
- use these concepts to analyze novel linguistic data.

3 Prerequisites

This course has **no prerequisites** and is designed to be accessible to anyone regardless of their major.

4 Course materials

Required textbook: Pereltsvaig, Asya. 2023. *Languages of the World: An Introduction*, 4th edition. Cambridge University Press.

Additional readings and lecture notes will be available on Canvas.

Instructional materials for this course consist of only those materials specifically reviewed, selected, and assigned by the instructor. The instructor is only responsible for these instructional materials.

5 Course requirements

- attendance & participation – 10%
- Tuesday Test Question – 10%
- homework – 20% (10% for each HW)
- interim reports – 20%
- final in-class presentation – 15%
- final essay – 25%

Late assignments are not accepted without valid proof of an emergency situation.

You are encouraged to discuss your project with other students. However, you should write your texts individually; see also the Academic Honesty section below. Identical or nearly identical answers/essays will get '0' points. Texts copied from the internet or generated by the AI tools will get '0' points.

5.1 Tuesday Test Question

After each Thursday class (**starting on January 16**), you should prepare one Test Question based on the material discussed on that Thursday and the preceding Tuesday. Don't show the question to your classmates. Bring it **to the next class**. We will start every Tuesday session by going through your (plural) questions: one student asks their question and another student answers it.

A good Test Question: (i) is a question about the material discussed in class and presented in the readings, (ii) has a clear unambiguous short answer. Yes-no questions and multiple-choice questions do not count.

5.2 Homework

There will be **two** homework assignments. These will be mainly problem sets focusing on applying the concept and principles discussed in class to new linguistic data. All homework assignments are due by Thursday morning (9 AM). Please type your answers and submit the assignments on Canvas (as a pdf or doc file). The homework assignments will be graded on a satisfactory-unsatisfactory basis. We will discuss them in class.

5.3 The Project

Each student is expected to complete a research project on an understudied language consisting of four components: two interim reports, an in-class presentation, and a short essay.

By **January 30**, you should choose a lesser known understudied language to work on, and let me know about your choice. After that, start researching all available information about this language: grammars, scientific articles, linguistic databases, etc.

Your **interim report 1** should present the following information about the language:

- its speakers and where it is spoken
- its genetic affiliation, its major dialects
- its social and political status and level of endangerment

- the language contact situation

Your **interim report 2** should discuss the basic grammatical properties of the language and one or two interesting linguistic phenomena. You should consider:

- word order,
- morphological type,
- morphosyntactic alignment (ergative/nominative/etc.),
- 2 different phonology features,
- 2 features related to verbal categories and/or clause structure,
- 1 feature related to the lexicon

You may include additional linguistic features or phenomena, up to a maximum of 10; do not forget to provide examples. When discussing a certain feature, pay attention to whether it aligns with or deviates from typical patterns found in the language family or the geographical area ([consult the World Atlas of Language Structures](#)); if so, mention that in your text.

Length requirements: interim report 1 2-4 pages; interim report 2 4-6 pages.

At the end of the course, you will give a **presentation** (12-15 min) about the language you have been working on. The material in the presentation should be mainly based on the report 1 and report 2. You will not have time to talk about everything you learned about the language, so focus on the most significant/unique properties.

The final part of the project is an **essay**. It should summarize what you have learned about the language that you have been investigating and must include the information from your interim report 1 and report 2, incorporating the feedback that you have received. The essay should be 10-15 pages in length (including examples and references).

6 Grading

The course follows UF grading policies; [see the official webpage](#).

	B+	84-86	C+	74-76	D+	64-66	E	56 and below
A	90-100	B	80-83	C	70-73	D	60-63	
A-	87-89	B-	77-79	C-	67-69	D-	57-59	

7 Attendance

Attendance and participation **is** a part of your grade. The attendance is obligatory (5% of the grade). You can miss up to three classes to get the full attendance credit. If you miss more than 3 classes, you get 0% for attendance. You will also receive participation credit (5% out of the total 10% for Participation) for answering and asking questions in class and taking part in in-class practice and discussions.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in the course are consistent with university policies. [See UF Academic Regulations and Policies for more information regarding the University Attendance Policies](#).

8 Exams

There is no separate exam for this course. Your interim reports, in-class presentation, and essay constitute the final project.

9 Academic honesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [See the UF Conduct Code website for more information.](#) If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

10 Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. [See the “Get Started With the DRC” webpage on the Disability Resource Center site.](#) It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

11 Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

12 Recording policy

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal education use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and deliver by an instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentation such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless, of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

13 Campus resources

13.1 Health and Wellness

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or [visit U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).
- *University Police Department*: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608. [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).
- *GatorWell Health Promotion Services*: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, [visit the GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

13.2 Academic resources

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu. [Visit the UF Computing Help Desk website](#).
- *Career Connections Center*: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. [Visit the website of Career assistance and counseling services](#).
- *Library Support*: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources. Call 866-281-6309 or email ask@ufl.libanswers.com for more information. [Visit the library support website](#).
- *Teaching Center*: 1317 Turlington Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. [Visit the Teaching Center website](#).
- *Writing Studio*: Daytime (9:30am-3:30pm): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138 | Evening (5:00pm-7:00pm): 1545 W University Avenue (Library West, Rm. 339). Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. [Visit the Writing Studio website](#).
- *Academic Complaints*: Office of the Ombuds. [Visit the Complaint Portal webpage](#).
- *Enrollment Management Complaints (Registrar, Financial Aid, Admissions)*: [Visit the Student Complaint Procedure webpage](#).

14 Tentative schedule

This is a preliminary schedule of the course. Changes to it will be announced in class in advance.

You have to read all of the assigned readings (indicated in the schedule) **before** the class.

Date	Topic	Reading	Extra
Jan. 14	syllabus		
16	introduction	Pereltsvaig ch. 1	
21	language preservation & endangered languages	Harrison 2007 ch. 1	
23	language documentation		
28	languages of Europe, endangered languages of Europe	Pereltsvaig ch. 2	
30	Europe		choose a project language
Feb. 4	languages of Iran and South Asia, Universals and Parameters	Pereltsvaig ch. 3	
6	Iran and South Asia		HW1 discussion
11	languages of Northern Eurasia, language policy	Pereltsvaig ch. 4	
13	Northern Eurasia		
18	languages of the Caucasus, polysynthetic languages	Pereltsvaig ch. 5	
20	Caucasus		
25	languages of the Greater Middle East, language contact	Pereltsvaig ch. 6	
27	Greater Middle East		interim report 1 due
March 4	languages of sub-Saharan Africa; official languages, trade languages, creoles	Pereltsvaig ch. 7	
6	sub-Saharan Africa		
11	languages of Eastern Asia, isolating morphology and language change	Pereltsvaig ch. 8	
13	Eastern Asia		HW2 discussion
18 20	spring break		
25	Languages of the Pacific, the mystery of Malagasy	Pereltsvaig ch. 9	interim report 2 due
27	Pacific		
April 1	Aboriginal languages of New Guinea and Australia, unusual counting systems	Pereltsvaig ch. 10	
3	New Guinea and Australia		
8	Native languages of the Americas, the Pirahã controversy	Pereltsvaig ch. 11-12	
10	Americas		
15	final presentations		
17	final presentations		
22	final presentations		
April 26	final essay due		