

The Languages of Africa

LIN 4930/6932 . SSA 4930 . Spring 2012. T 7 T 7-8. WEIM 1084

Dr. Frank Seidel
Office: 496 Grinter Hall
Phone: 850-339-6337

Hours: Tuesday, 3:00-3:50
& by appointment
e-mail: fseidel@ufl.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

There are close to two thousand indigenous languages, or one third of the world's languages, spoken on the African continent, making for an extremely rich and complex linguistic environment. This course is intended as an introduction to the four main language families of Africa, and will present an overview of their component sub-groups, their history and geographical distribution, their characteristic linguistic features, including phonetic, phonological, morphological and syntactic features, keeping in mind the role of African languages in their respective societies.

READINGS

The main textbooks for this course are:

- 1) Childs, G. Tucker (2003). *An introduction to African languages*. John Benjamins Publishers.
- 2) Heine, Bernd & Derek Nurse (2000). *African languages: an introduction*. Cambridge University Press.

GRADES

Grades will be based on the following work:	%
Pop quizzes (5)	10
Assignments & projects:	
Homework problems	15
Short papers (3)	30
Test 1	15
Test 2	20
Participation (see below)	10
Total	100

The assignment of a final letter grade will be based on the following scale:

A 92-100	B 81-84.9	C 71-74.9	D 61-64.9
A- 88-91.9	B- 78-80.9	C- 68-70.9	D- 58-60.9
B+ 85-87.9	C+ 75-77.9	D+ 65-67.9	E Below 58

You may consult the following website to see how the final letter grade is weighted with regard to overall GPA: www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html

A note on participation, class involvement, and classroom culture

The classroom is where we will accomplish much of our work this semester and you are expected to be a contributing member of our classroom community. This means that attendance and preparation are of paramount importance. Unexcused absences or repeated tardiness will result in a lowered

grade. You must complete all assignments and readings in a timely fashion, ie: by the beginning of the week for which readings are assigned, and come to class informed and prepared to discuss the topic of the day. Please make sure that your cellphones are turned off before class starts. Assignments must be handed in in hard copy. No electronic versions of assignments will be accepted, unless in emergencies and with prior approval by the professor. Mutual respect for class members is expected at all times in order to ensure a positive learning environment for a productive and enjoyable semester.

Academic dishonesty

Academic dishonesty, including cheating on tests and plagiarism, will not be tolerated. Any student engaging in such activities will be dealt with in accordance with University policy and receive a failing grade for the course (www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/academicguide.php) It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes plagiarism. If you have any questions about it, please consult the professor.

Students with disabilities

If you have a disability that may affect your performance in this class, you should contact the dean of Students Office (www.dso.ufl.edu/drp/) so that special arrangements can be made to accommodate you.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Adopt a language, become the resident expert

By the end of the second week of class (January 17) you should have chosen an African language that you will report on throughout the course of the semester. The language you choose will be constrained by the availability of a good descriptive grammar. The grammar will be subject to approval by the professor. During the second week of class the course will visit the library together and you will choose a grammar under the guidance of the professor. You will be the resident expert on the language you choose, providing relevant information about it over the course of the semester. For example, if your language has noun classes, you will tell us about its noun class system when we get to that topic during the semester. By the end of the semester you will have a good understanding of the grammar of the language you choose.

Homework assignments

There will be five homework assignments over the course of the semester. These will focus on problem solving in the areas of phonology, morphology and syntax. Generally, each homework assignment will consist of two problems.

Tests

There are two tests scheduled for this class (February 29 and April 11). They will cover factual material on African languages and linguistic phenomena; in other words, they will not involve problem solving.

Pop quizzes

Throughout the course there will be five unannounced pop quizzes which will cover factual material from the assigned readings for that week.

Short papers

You will write three short (3-4 page) papers on some aspect of the phonetics or phonology, the morphology, and the syntax of your language over the course of the semester. These will be both descriptive and analytical in nature, and give you practice in describing certain aspects of African

languages, analyzing them within a theoretical framework learned in class where appropriate, and providing sufficient data to support your description and analysis. The due dates for these papers are February 12, March 14, and April 4.

Graduate student presentations

Each graduate student will be expected to prepare a presentation on one of the following articles. Acquiring the relevant article or book through the University Library or Interlibrary Loan will be part of the responsibilities of this presentation. You will be expected to present this article in a way that is understandable for undergraduate students. The quality of the presentation will count towards your participation grade.

You may sign up for one of the following readings:

1. Güldemann, Tom. 2008. The Macro-Sudan belt: towards identifying a linguistic area in northern sub-Saharan Africa. In B. Heine & D. Nurse, eds. *A linguistic geography of Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. **January 24.**
2. Dell, François & Mohamed Elmedlaoui. 1985. Syllabic consonants and syllabification in Imdlawn Tachelhiyt Berber. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics*. 7:105-130. **February 14.**
3. Odden, David. 1995. Tone: African languages. In J.A. Goldsmith, ed. *The handbook of phonological theory*. 444-475, and Yip, Moira. 2002. *Tone*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. Chapter 6: African languages. **February 21.**
4. Childs, G. Tucker. 1994. African ideophones. In L. Hinton, J. Nichols & J.J. Ohala, eds. *Sound symbolism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, and Dingemans, Mark. 2011. Ideophones and the aesthetics of everyday life in a West-African society. *Senses & Society* 6:77-85. **March 19.**
5. Mc Laughlin, Fiona. 2004. Is there an adjective class in Wolof? In R.M.W. Dixon & A.Y. Aikhenvald, eds. *Adjective classes: a cross-linguistic typology*. Oxford: Oxford UP. 242-262. **March 21.**
6. Ameka, Felix. 2006. Ewe serial verb constructions in their grammatical context. In A.Y. Aikhenvald & R.M.W. Dixon, eds. *Serial verb constructions: a cross-linguistic typology*. Oxford: Oxford UP. 124-143. **March 28.**

Schedule of topics, readings and assignments (may be modified by the instructor to suit the needs of the class) *Indicates the reading for the graduate student presentation.

	Topic	Readings
Week 1 1/7-11	Introduction to the languages of Africa	Ch.1, Childs Ch.1, Heine & Nurse
	CLASSIFICATION	
Week 2 1/14-18	African language classification	Ch. 2, Childs H&N Ch. 10, Newman
	Niger-Congo	H&N Ch. 2, Williamson & Blench
	Nilo-Saharan	H&N Ch. 3, Bender
Week 3 1/21-25	African language classification 1/24 Graduate student presentation #1	H&N Ch. 4, Hayward H&N Ch.5, Güldemann & Vossen *Güldemann (2008)

PHONETICS & PHONOLOGY

Week 4 1/29-2/1	The phonetics of African languages	pp.55-66, Childs H&N, pp.123-134, Clements
Week 5 2/4-8	The phonology of African languages: an overview	pp.66-96, Childs H&N, pp.134-158, Clements
Week 6 2/11-15	Berber syllable structure ATR systems and ATR harmony 2/12 Short paper #1 due 2/14 Graduate student presentation #2	*Dell & Elmedlaoui (1987)
Week 7 2/18-22	Consonant mutation in Atlantic African tonal systems 2/21 Graduate student presentation #3	*Handout *Odden (1995); *Yip (2002)

MORPHOLOGY

Week 8 2/25-3/1	The morphology of African languages Non-concatenative morphology in Afro-Asiatic languages 2/29 Test # 1	H&N, Ch.7, Dimmendaal pp.97-99, Childs
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Week 9
2/4-8
SPRING BREAK

Week 10 3/4-8	Noun classes in Bantu languages Noun classes in Atlantic	pp.97-103, Childs *Handout
Week 11 3/11-15	Verbal morphology Verbal extensions and argument structure 3/14 Short paper #2 due	pp.103-115, Childs

SYNTAX

Week 12 3/18-22	Word classes, ideophones & adjectives 3/19 Graduate student presentation #4* 3/21 Graduate student presentation #5	H&N pp. 194-214 Watters Childs (1994) *Mc Laughlin (2004)
Week 13 3/25-29	Predicate structure and serial verbs Serial verbs in Ewe 3/28 Graduate student presentation #6	H&N pp. 217-228 Watters pp.124-132, Childs *Ameka (2006)
Week 14 4/1-5	Information structure Information structure in Wolof 4/4 Short paper #3 due	H&N pp. 214-217 pp.132-136, Childs *Handout
Week 15 4/8-12	LANGUAGE & SOCIETY African sociolinguistics 4/11 Test #2	H&N, Ch.12, Wolff

Week 16 Multilingualism, diglossia, Ch. 7, Childs
4/15-19 & language contact

Week 17 Review
4/22-24

For a map of Africa (minus South Sudan):

<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/africa.pdf>