

## Course information and policies

<b>Contact information</b>	Jennifer Smith ( <a href="mailto:j1smith@email.unc.edu">j1smith@email.unc.edu</a> ), Smith Building 309 <i>Office hours:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M &amp; W 12:15-12:45, Global Ed Center café patio</li> <li>• Also by appointment, either in person or on Zoom</li> </ul>
<b>Class meets</b>	MWF 2:30-3:20, Phillips 265
<b>Textbooks</b>	<i>Women Talk More Than Men...And Other Myths About Language Explained</i> (A. Kaplan, 2016) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the campus bookstore. Additional readings may be distributed in class or online.</li> </ul>
<b>Web site</b>	<a href="http://users.castle.unc.edu/~j1smith/ling225.html">http://users.castle.unc.edu/~j1smith/ling225.html</a> Web site includes announcements, relevant links, assigned preparation, and a detailed course syllabus (updated after every class).

### I. Overview and goals

*“Women talk more than men! Texting means the end of literacy! The language you speak limits the thoughts you can think!”* We often hear claims like these, but are they true? And what kind of information would show us the answer? This course examines some lively debates about language while developing skills in reading and interpreting research results, media reports, basic statistics, and data graphics.

In this course, you will:

- Critically examine some widely held beliefs about language and languages
- Develop skills as an informed consumer of research results
- Become familiar with fundamental topics and methods in experiment-based linguistics, and in cognitive science more generally

There are **no prerequisites** for this course.

### II. Why take this course?

- This course is for anyone who is interested in human language and wants to learn to think more critically about it. (If you would like to know more about the linguistics major, minor, or BA/MA program, please visit us at <https://linguistics.unc.edu/>!)
- This course emphasizes how to read and understand quantitative (numerical) research results—a skill that is useful in any social, physical, or natural science, and more generally helps us interpret and evaluate news stories and media reports in daily life.

### III. Course requirements and grading information

Final grades for the course are calculated as follows:

A. Participation	<i>recommended!</i>
B. Check-in assignments	30%
C. Case-study presentation	10%
D. Midterm exam	30%
E. Final project	30%

Grading scale (or convert letter→ number)

A	93–100 (95)	C+	77–79 (78)
A–	90–92 (91)	C	73–76 (75)
B+	87–89 (88)	C–	70–72 (71)
B	83–86 (85)	D+	67–69 (68)
B–	80–82 (81)	D	60–66 (65)
		F	0–59

## A. Participation

You will get the most out of this course if you are actively engaged. In particular:

- Attend class (in person or by livestream—see [Daily syllabus](#) web page or Sakai “[Overview](#)” tool for livestream Zoom link)
- Complete readings, check-in questions, and assignments on time
- Participate in class discussion

**READINGS AND ONLINE MATERIALS:** Most days, readings and/or online materials will be assigned as preparation for class. In class, we will not simply repeat this information—we will use it and build on it. In order to keep up, you need to be prepared. The check-in assignments (see below) are designed to help you with this, but remember that it is your responsibility to actively think about the assigned readings and other class preparation activities.

If accessing web sites or audio or video files will be difficult for you for any reason, please contact me soon so that we can confer and can devise alternative assignments if necessary.

## B. Check-in assignments

These are short, open-book assignments completed on Sakai that check for basic understanding of the assigned reading or other course preparation and/or ask you to apply ideas from the reading or course preparation in new ways. They are graded on a scale of A/B/zero, and any legitimate attempt at an answer will earn at least a B. Check-in assignments will typically be assigned once or twice a week, and will be **due at 1pm** the day of class. **Late** check-in assignments will be accepted until the day after the last day of class, Th Dec 2, for a one-grade late penalty. The lowest two check-in scores will be dropped, so you can miss one or two without penalty. (Note on check-in grading: We first give your answers on Sakai a numerical score, then assign the total scores to letter grades. This process takes a day or two, so don't worry if you see a *score* of “0” at first. Your actual check-in assignment *grades* will be posted to the Sakai gradebook.)

## C. Case-study presentation

The case-study presentation is a small-group presentation related to one of the language myths we cover in the course. Groups will be formed based on student co-working requests and interest in the available topics. (See the preliminary schedule of case-study topics on the [Schedule of topics](#) page on the course web site.) Each group will present the findings of one research paper on their chosen topic, modeled after the “case study” sections in our textbook. The case-study presentation will be given a letter grade, A–F, and the grading criteria will reflect individual contributions as well as the group's overall achievement. Detailed information will be provided separately. Remote presentation options will be made available if necessary.

## D. Midterm exam

One midterm exam will take place on, or over a time-span including, **F Oct 8**. The midterm will have a significant open-book or pre-preparation component, and may be all or partially in-class, online, or take-home; I will finalize these details based on the COVID situation in early October.

## E. Final project

There is a final project rather than a traditional final exam in this course. This project includes a final paper and presentation, in which you will identify a potential language myth and search the research literature for evidence that can debunk or confirm it; more information will be provided

later in the semester. For now, please note that attendance during the final exam period (**F Dec 3**, 4:00–7:00pm) is considered a mandatory part of the course, and changes to your final-exam time can only be made through the office of your dean.

#### IV. Course policies

Mask policy: This semester, during the global pandemic, all enrolled students are required to wear a mask covering mouth and nose at all times in our classrooms (lecture and recitation). This requirement is to protect us all—you, your classmates, and your instructors. If you choose not to wear a mask, or wear it improperly, we will ask you to leave immediately, and we will submit a report to the Office of Student Conduct. At that point you will be disenrolled from this course for the protection of our educational community. Students who have an authorized accommodation from Accessibility Resources and Service have an exception. For additional information, see the [Carolina Together](#) web site.

COVID-19 symptom screening: Each time prior to coming to campus, all members of the Carolina community should self-assess whether they are experiencing any symptoms using the [COVID-19 symptom list](#) on the Carolina Together website. **If you have any of these symptoms, you should stay home.** You should not enter any campus building, attend any class or report to work.

UNC-CH attendance policy: (*For the LING 225 policy, see section III.A. “Participation” above.*)

No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for the following University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities.
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).
3. Significant **health condition** and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC). | ***Stay home if you have COVID-19 symptoms.***

Collaboration/citation policy for submitted assignments:

- You are encouraged to discuss check-in assignments with other students in this course, but you must write up and submit your responses independently.
- If any reference materials other than course readings, handouts, the course web pages, or in-class notes are consulted, you are required to list such outside references in your assignment.

Make-up exam policy: If you find that you have a conflict with the midterm, please let me know ***in advance*** so that we can schedule a make-up. If you miss the midterm with no advance warning, I cannot guarantee that you will be allowed to make it up, unless you have a University Approved Excused Absence (due to illness, family caregiving, etc.).

Honor Code statement: All students are expected to follow the guidelines of the UNC Honor Code. In particular, students are expected to refrain from “lying, cheating, or stealing” in the academic context. More information is available at <https://studentconduct.unc.edu/>. If you have any questions about what constitutes acceptable collaboration or acceptable use of reference material on assignments, please feel free to talk with us at any time.

Changes to the syllabus: I, as your instructor, reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus, including exam dates (excluding the officially scheduled final examination), if unforeseen circumstances occur. Any changes will be announced as early as possible so that you can

adjust your schedules. **If our course shifts to remote learning temporarily or permanently, course requirements and expectations will be adjusted appropriately.**

Respect and diversity: I value the perspectives of individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students. I broadly define diversity to include race, gender identity, national origin, native language variety, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, and physical and learning ability. I strive to make this course an inclusive space for all. Please let me know if there is anything I can improve.

For new or updated course policies, see the [Course policies](#) page on the course web site.

## **V. Schedule of course topics**

The schedule of course topics is available on the course web site, at:

<https://users.castle.unc.edu/~jlsmith/ling225/schedule.html>

## **VI. More about linguistics: Additional readings**

The following books are useful general resources for linguistics. They are on reserve in the Undergraduate Library, as is our course textbook (as an ebook).

- *Patterns in the Mind*, by Ray Jackendoff                      UNC Libraries P37.J33 1994
- *Language Matters*, by Napoli & Lee-Schoenfeld              UNC Libraries P107.N37 2010
- *The Language Instinct*, by Steven Pinker                      UNC Libraries P106.P476 1994