LING 523 | Phonological Theory I
Course information and policies

Instructor	**Jennifer Smith** (`jlsmith@email.unc.edu`), 309 Smith Bldg, *she/her* • You are welcome to call me Jen, Dr. Smith, or Prof. Smith
Course meets	**TuTh 3:30-4:45, Dey 304** [F-8 on map]
Readings	Distributed online; see course website for information
Website	https://users.castle.unc.edu/~jlsmith/ling523.html • Website includes announcements, relevant links, readings, assignments, and a detailed course syllabus (updated after every class)
Office hours	W 12:15–1:15 (309 Smith Bldg) and by appointment; Zoom by request • Come if you have questions, need help, or want more information—or just to say hi!

I. Overview

This course is a graduate introduction to the theory and practice of generative phonology. You will develop first-hand experience with phonological analysis and the construction and evaluation of linguistic models through hands-on problem solving and a final project. Assigned readings include both introductory materials and articles from the primary phonology research literature.

LING 523 emphasizes hypothesis-testing and argumentation, skills that are essential in all areas of linguistics. It will help you with your thesis, whether that is on phonology or not.

II. Prerequisites

The prerequisite for this course is LING 520 (Linguistic Phonetics) or the equivalent.

- Undergraduate students who do not have significant prior background in linguistics or phonological analysis usually enroll in **Linguistics 200**, which is the phonology course for undergraduate majors.
- If you have completed LING 200, you are not eligible to apply LING 523 toward the BA major. However, if you have applied LING 200 toward your BA, you *can* apply LING 523 toward your MA.

III. Course requirements

Final grades are calculated as follows:

A. Active participation (includes SQs)	10%
B. Assignments • phonetics & distribution quiz • analysis assignments (3)	40%
C. Phonological concepts exam	15%
D. Collaborative final exam activity	5%
E. Final "squib" project • proposal: 5% • presentation: 10% • squib: 15%	30%

Grading scale *(points for letter grade)*

A+*	97–100 *(98)*	C+	77–79 *(78)*
A/**H**	93–96 *(95)*	C	73–76 *(75)*
A–	90–92 *(91)*	C–/**L**	70–72 *(71)*
B+	87–89 *(88)*	D+	67–69 *(68)*
B	83–86 *(85)*	D	60–66 *(65)*
B–	80–82 *(81)*	F	0–59

No A+ final course grades at UNC-CH

A. Active participation: Plan to attend class; complete the readings, discussion exercises, and spot-check questions on time; and participate actively in class discussion. Your participation grade is based mostly on the % of spot-check questions passed, but exceptional participation in discussion or a consistent lack of participation in discussion may be factored in as well.

- *Readings* are assigned regularly, often with a "reading guide" handout to give you guidance about what to focus on. Be prepared to discuss readings in class, sometimes along with a discussion exercise you have prepared or with new data. There may be spot-check questions for readings as well as for data sets.

- *Discussion exercises* (DEs) are phonological analysis problems that form the basis of the next day's class discussion. They are posted on the LING 523 web site as they are assigned. Plan to complete them before class and participate in discussing them.

- *Spot-check questions* (SQs) are often assigned along with a DE or a reading, usually as a Canvas "Quiz". These let me check understanding and finalize plans for class. SQs are **due by 2:00pm on the day of class** unless otherwise stated. They may cover material not yet discussed in class, but they are are graded pass/fail—just try to give the best answer you can. The two lowest SQs for the semester will be dropped, but late SQs will not be accepted for credit except in unusual circumstances.

> **Please note**: Completion of discussion exercises is one of the ***most important parts*** of this course, because phonology is best learned by actually doing it. DEs give you hands-on experience with concepts covered in readings and class discussion. Sometimes they require you to go beyond what has already been covered in order to consider the implications or shortcomings of a particular approach. DEs are ***essential preparation*** for assignments, exams, and the squib.
>
> You should expect to spend a ***significant amount of time*** on each DE, sometimes an hour or more depending on the problem. ***Prepare notes or an informal write-up*** of each DE so that you are ready to discuss your work in class.
>
> Answering spot-check questions should happen ***after*** you have worked out a ***complete analysis*** of the relevant DE. The SQs are only a quick sample of your work; actual class preparation is a thorough analysis of the full DE problem.

- *Pop quizzes:* At my discretion as your instructor, there may be occasional pass/fail pop quizzes, based on the major contents of readings or discussion exercises, whose results will be factored into the final participation grade.

- *Attendance:* While attendance is not graded directly, multiple absences may make it difficult for you to keep up with the course material. *If you miss too many classes, I will ask you to meet with me and discuss options.*

  If you have to miss class, it is your responsibility to collect any missed materials or notes from the web or from other students in the class. Always check the course website for news and assignments if you have been absent.

B. Assignments: There will be 4 assignments in total. There are two kinds:

- *Phonetics and distribution quiz:* Reviews basic phonetics concepts and complementary/contrastive distribution. Given as a take-home exam in Canvas, open for a few days around ***Thursday, January 25***.

- *Analysis assignments (3):* Involve the analysis of a phonological data set similar to those in discussion exercises, except that you support your solution systematically with organized arguments and evidence, and it is submitted for a letter grade. Analysis assignments follow up on material from readings, discussion exercises, and class discussion, and may include aspects that require creative thinking beyond what has been covered in the course. There are three analysis assignments; at least one will be presented in small groups, and at least one will be submitted individually.

  Analysis assignments must be clear, legible, and well-organized. ***Grades will depend on how clearly and carefully you present and argue for your analysis, not only on whether the analysis is "right."*** Expect to spend several hours on the problem set for an analysis assignment. It is best to work out a complete solution to the problem on scratch paper before even beginning the presentation slides or write-up.

  Analysis assignments will be evaluated as follows. (Intermediate marks also possible.)

Excellent/A:	The discussion of the data and the proposed analysis are clear, thorough, organized, and insightful, and show appropriate application of concepts from readings and class discussion. Solutions are **defended** and **exemplified** (this is important!). The work goes beyond "answering the question," showing insightful thought and connections being made among concepts from class.
Good/B:	The analysis is on the right track and mostly well organized, does a reasonably good job of "answering the question," and includes some evidence and justification.
Minimal/C:	The analysis is on time and basically complete, but it is missing significant empirical generalizations and/or argumentation, or it lacks clear presentation and evidence of thought and effort.
D or F:	The analysis is on time, but it has major empirical problems, or major organization/ presentation problems, or is not fully complete.
Missing (0):	Not presented, or significantly incomplete.

- *General expectations for assignments:* When you are a graduate student, one of your goals is to develop a mastery of the basic concepts of linguistics and also of organization and argumentation. Therefore, if your assignments consistently receive grades lower than B, I will ask you to meet with me to discuss your performance in the course. If phonology will be a significant part of your thesis, you should talk to me if you are not consistently receiving at least A– on assignments.

  Please seek help if you are feeling confused about course material, on an assignment or in general. I can't give you the specific answers to an assignment, but I might be able to help you see what to think about or how to structure your discussion.

C. Phonological concepts exam: This exam is scheduled for ***Thursday, April 11*** in class. It includes short-answer questions to check for basic understanding of essential concepts, as well as problems that test your ability to carry out and defend a phonological analysis. If you have a conflict with the exam date, please let me know ***in advance*** so that we can schedule a make-up exam. If you miss the exam with no advance warning, you may not be allowed to make it up.

D. Final exam activity: The collaborative final exam activity will take place during the official final-exam period, which is ***Thursday, May 9*** at ***4:00 pm***. It will be a fun, hands-on, group activity involving software or computational tools for phonological analysis.

E. Final squib and presentation: A 'squib' is a short, original linguistics paper. During the last few weeks of the semester, you will select your own topic (in consultation with me), submit a proposal with references, present your analysis to the class in a workshop format, and hand in a final written version, which will likely be significantly revised based on feedback from the presentation. Detailed information about the squib and the presentation will be provided later.
- Squib **proposal** due in early April (exact date TBA)
- In-class **workshop presentation** of your data and analysis: one of the last two class days
- Final **write-up** of squib due at the start of our final-exam period, ***Th May 9 at 4:00 pm***

IV. Course policies

Submitting assignments: In general, **no late assignments will be accepted**, but exceptions may be considered as follows:
(i) With ***advance*** permission (before the due date), extensions ***may*** be granted.
(ii) If an illness or emergency unexpectedly makes you unable to submit an assignment, please provide a ***written explanation*** of the situation and request an extension. On a case-by-case basis, such assignments ***may*** be accepted, possibly with a late penalty.

Collaboration/citation policy for work outside the classroom: You are strongly encouraged to discuss problem sets with your classmates (please list the names of any collaborators when you turn in an assignment). However, you (or your group, for a group assignment) must ***write up*** your assignment ***independently***.

The use of outside references for an assignment is ***strongly discouraged*** unless otherwise stated. However, if you consult any materials that are not assigned in this course for any assignment, you must cite such outside references in your assignment (this includes course-reserves readings).

Artificial intelligence (AI) use: The following uses of generative AI tools are permitted in this course: topic selection, brainstorming, idea generation, and searching for published research papers. Without advance permission, any other use of generative AI tools will be considered an instance of academic dishonesty and will be referred to the Honor System. (If you have questions about AI use, please ask!)

Weather cancellations: Unless University classes are officially canceled, you should assume that our class will be held, but if there is bad weather, please use your own judgment about whether it is safe for you to travel to campus. If classes are canceled, check the course web site for announcements and schedule changes.

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, native language variety, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, and physical and learning ability. I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve.

• ***The following policies are UNC-CH standard policies:***

Attendance policy: As stated in the University's [Class Attendance Policy](#), no right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities: [University Approved Absence Office (UAAO) website](#) provides information and [FAQs for students](#) and [FAQs for faculty](#) related to University Approved Absences
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by [Accessibility Resources and Service](#) and/or the [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).

Honor Code: 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. If you are unsure about which actions violate that honor code, please consult [honor.unc.edu](#) or talk to your instructor.

Syllabus changes: The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

V. Additional readings

The following books are good sources for additional background on specific topics in phonology. They are on reserve under "LING523" in Davis Library; some are e-reserves. See Course Reserves in Canvas.

- de Lacy, Paul (ed.). 2007. *The Cambridge handbook of phonology.* Cambridge, UK: CUP.
- Goldsmith, John (ed.). 2011. *The handbook of phonological theory*, 2ed. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Kager, René. 1999. *Optimality Theory*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kenstowicz, Michael. 1994. *Phonology in generative grammar*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- McCarthy, John. 2002. *A thematic guide to Optimality Theory*. New York: Cambridge UP.
- McCarthy, John. 2008. *Doing Optimality Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- van Oostendorp, Marc, et al. (eds.). 2011. *The Blackwell Companion to Phonology.* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. 5 volumes.
- Zsiga, Elizabeth. 2013. *The sounds of language.* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

VI. UNC-CH resources for learning, wellness, and safety

Learning resources:

- The Learning Center (`https://learningcenter.unc.edu`) offers consultations, peer tutoring, academic coaching, study-skills workshops, and peer study groups.
- The Writing Center (`https://writingcenter.unc.edu`) provides one-on-one assistance and offers many online resources to support all stages of writing.

Accessibility Resources and Service: ARS (htps://ars.unc.edu) receives requests for accommodations, and through the Student and Applicant Accommodations Policy determines eligibility and identifies reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or chronic medical conditions to mitigate or remove the barriers experienced in accessing University courses, programs and activities.

ARS also offers its Testing Center resources to students and instructors to facilitate the implementation of testing accommodations.

Counseling and Psychological Services: UNC-Chapel Hill is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body. The Heels Care Network website is a place to access the many mental health resources at Carolina. CAPS is the primary mental health provider for students, offering timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services. Go to their website https://caps.unc.edu/ or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health building for an initial evaluation to learn more. Students can also call CAPS 24/7 at 919-966-3658 for immediate assistance.

Title IX and related resources: Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/ or by contacting the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, titleixcoordinator@unc.edu) or the Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu). Confidential resources include Counseling and Psychological Services and the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu). Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.