North American Indian Languages
Fall 2020 – University of Kansas

- Course name : North American Indian Languages (NAILs)
- Course number : LING 447, ISP 504, LING 747, ISP 804
- Location : Blake 108, Zoom
- Times : Tues, Thurs 1:00 pm – 2:15 pm
- Course type: Hybrid

- Instructor : Dr Andrew McKenzie – *andrew.mckenzie@ku.edu*
- Office Hours (by zoom) : Mon 12:30 pm – 2 pm, Fri 10:00 am – 11:30 am, or by apppointment

Revision as of Oct 2

Course Description

This course introduces students to the indigenous languages of North America. Students critically examine the structures and status of these languages, which have greatly expanded our knowledge of human language and linguistic theory. Topics include the history and future of North American languages and indigenous speech communities, the history of the field of Americanist linguistics, as well as important linguistic questions raised by phenomena from American languages in phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and historical linguistics.

KU Core

This course satisfies Goal 4, Learning Outcome 1, of the KU Core curriculum:

Upon reaching this goal, students will be able to investigate the diversity of human experience within the United States, considering, for example, age, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, and social class, and appreciate the contributions of different social groups.

Courses and educational experiences approved as meeting this outcome must achieve the following:

- Devote a majority of content to ensuring student understanding of basic human diversity within the United States, such as biological, cultural, historical, linguistic, social, economic, sexual, and ideological diversity.

  This course is almost solely devoted to understanding cultural, historial, social, and especially linguistic diversity within the United States.
- Generate discussion among students, leading to examination of students' own value assumptions in the context of various value systems within the United States.

  Many class sessions and assignments will have students perform these examinations, for different aspects of language and of linguistic investigation.
- Integrate other-cultural readings and academic research on cultural competency to define and analyze issues and other-cultural key words and concepts, and practices within the United States.

  Readings emphasize indigenous perspectives, and ethical questions in linguistics that concern them.
- Evaluate student work that documents and measures their grasp of diverse cultures and value systems within the United States through reflective written or oral analysis.

  Key assignments will require written analysis, and each student will write a paper that demonstrates understanding of indigenous value systems.

Learning Outcomes

- Understand and discuss the history and situation of indigenous languages of North America
- Recognize and appreciate the vast diversity of American languages and cultures
- Balance indigenous and academic perspectives towards language and language study
- Distinguish among many of the most widely known American languages and language families
- Situate the study of NAILs within the history of linguistics
- Develop ideas for analytic or applied research with a language community

Textbooks

There will be no textbook. This course will employ a Blackboard site, where all the materials will be posted. Other materials will be handed out in class.

Discussion and content disclaimer

In this course we will be addressing elements of historical and cultural fact that could be difficult or even painful to talk about. I try to address these topics with a neutral tone, which might sound to you as dispassionate or even callous— but it is not meant to be either. I am no robot, but I simply find it more educational to shine a bright light on dark topics, and let students' hearts take them where they may need to go.

Also, some of our primary sources will contain language that, frankly, is inappropriate in a modern setting. Some of it might be downright shocking or painful to read. Indeed, we will be reading documents that are now known to be false. I will discuss such documents in the same way, but in discussions and assignments, you can feel free to add your own perspective or commentary. It would still be helpful to distinguish the two.

Generally speaking, you can assume that what I am telling you is what is known or believed to be true, but you should not assume any personal views I might hold for or against any element of discussion or primary document, unless I indicate it. I will extend the same courtesy to each of you.

Coronavirus

Due to the risk of COVID-19, this course will be taught in a Hybrid style. We will meet once per week, on Tuesday during the first week, and on Thursdays afterward. Those meetings will be recorded. We will also have zoom classes at the regular times on the other days. Lecture materials will be posted on Blackboard.

If you feel the slightest bit ill, or fear you may have been exposed to COVID-19, please inform me immediately and refrain from coming to in-class sessions for a couple of weeks.

You are free to ask me for a course adaptation, which will convert you to fully-online course for the rest of the semester. A zoom connection will be set up with the classroom during face-to-face meetings. I recommend you have the ability to print handouts so you can follow along more easily.

Office hours will be conducted by Zoom.

Modules

This course will consist of several modules. The exact calendar is not yet planned out.

1. **The status of languages** - American languages today - How did we get here? - What were things like before Europeans? - Whose narrative should we use?

2. **Bringing languages "back"** - Revitalization, Documentation - the role of linguists - the role of communities - policy and government - What are we even preserving? Why?

3. **Language structures** - NAILs don't fit theories well - Syllables and phonotactics - Non-configurational syntax - Polysynthesis - Semantics - Finding configuration

4. **The place of NAILs in linguistics** - Different periods - Historical - anthropological - generative - engagement - Sapir-Whorf

5. **Classifying languages** - Major language families - How can we tell languages are related - What can we learn about prehistory? - Language areas

6. **Research in NAILs** - Different approaches - Data sources - Field methods - Working with archives - Working with communities and cultures - Engaged scholarship

Requirements and assignments

- You will be expected to have read and understood your assigned readings. Each one will come with questions to guide your attention.

- Attendance is not required, but it's your loss.

- Over Zoom, it is preferred to have your video on, and if you have pets or cute kids you may be expected to show them off.

Analysis assignments (2, 10% each = 20%)

- Analysis of language structures

- Critically analyze a media document about indigenous American languages

Reading assignments (2, 10% each = 20%)

- Two readings will require critical assessments

Application assignments (2, 10% each = 20%)

- Imagine a community asks to work with it on a language program. What are some of the things you would or would not do?

- Imagine a document is given to you. How would you go about figuring out the language on the document? What would you avoid?

Final paper (1, 40%) There will be a final paper, of 10-20 pages, on a chosen aspect of the course.

Date	milestone	% of paper grade
Oct 10	topic chosen	5%
Oct 30	preliminary research complete	10%
Nov 15	rough draft complete	15%
Dec 10	paper due	70%

Exam There is no exam

Other assignment policies

Grading scale

Grades for assignments are out of 20 points, along a non-percentage based scale that leaves more room for errors of learning.

A	16-20.00
B	12-15.99
C	8-11.99
D	4-7.99
F	0-3.99

The final paper will have a slightly different grading scale to reflect its rubric.

Working together

Collaboration is allowed on homeworks, take-home assignments, final projects, and in-class exercises (unless specified), but be sure to list the names of your collaborators, lest I grow suspicious.

Outside research

You may conduct outside research for your homeworks. Treat it as you would if you were collaborating with a classmate— cite your sources. Failure to do so will be interpreted as plagiarism, which mainly boils down to passing off other people's work as your own. Plagiarism is an egregious form of academic dishonesty. Copy-and-paste jobs are not only easy to spot versions of plagiarism, but they are just plain lazy. If you can't at least paraphrase, you're better off not doing anything.

Attendance Policy

Taking attendance

I will not take attendance. However, absence will ensure your missing of a substantial amount of course material and practice with analysis, even with recorded lectures. These cannot be made up without proper excuse (see below), and I will not teach the whole course over during office hours.

Grounds for proper excuse

Grounds for proper excuse include illness, likely exposure to COVID-19 or other highly infectious diseases, medical treatment, urgent issues concerning your dependents or very close friends/family, unforeseen circumstances (flat tire, jury duty, zombie apocalypse, etc.), problems connecting to Zoom (including technical, logistical, or personal/family reasons), funerals and other tragic major life events, births and other joyous major life events, major religious holidays, or university-related activities. Foreknowledge engenders sympathy in such matters, so even if you expect to be excused, be sure to let me know as soon as you know you will miss a course. With any absence, I may ask for verifiable documentation.

Note that forseeable technical difficulties are not grounds for proper excuse (see Late work).

Important Notifications

Disability Accommodations

The Academic Achievement & Access Center (AAAC) coordinates accommodations and services for all KU students who are eligible. If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations and have not contacted the AAAC, please do so as soon as possible. Their office is located in 22 Strong Hall; their phone number is 785-864-4064 (V/TTY).

Information about their services can be found at disability.ku.edu. Please contact me privately in regard to your needs in this course; office hours are a great time to discuss these. Many students struggle immensely for a long time, only to find that they've been hindered the entire time by an academic disability.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be dealt with in accordance with the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences policy on academic misconduct, which may result in failure of the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

Electronic communication

I will send all e-mail concerning this course to your ku.edu address. If you want to use a different e-mail address, set your ku.edu address to forward e-mail from me or from Blackboard to the address you use to ensure that you don't miss important e-mails.

Amendment Disclaimer

This syllabus is subject to change depending on extenuating circumstances, KU policy, or class interest.

Calendar

date	topic	reading	handout
08/25	Introduction to NAILs	syllabus, intro to Native North America	
08/27	How did we get here? the life cycle of languages	Trafzer et al 2006, Wilkins & stark 2011 ch 5, excerpt from *Carlisle Indian Craftsman* 1909	
09/01	Early days of NAILs study	Roger Williams *Key* (1643), Thos. Jefferson *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787)	
09/03	Historical linguistics of NAILs how to tell languages are related	Campbell & Poser 1-12, 114-120, 162-176	Correspondences exercise, Amerind
09/08	New directions in linguistics		
09/10	Sound systems	Boas 1911	Sound inventories, Loanwords in Tiipai
09/15	Endangerment	Hale et al. 1992	
09/17	Sound systems & Loanwords	Mithun 1997, Hargus 2010	
09/17	Reading assignment #1	Hale & Krauss 1992, Ladefoged 1992	
09/22	A shift in language policy	Wilkins & Stark 129-134, Hinton & Hale 45-48, Patrick 2017	
09/24	Noun morphology types	Fitzgerald 2015, Mithun ch 2, 3	
09/29	Verbal morphology		Creek Tense Inflection
10/01	Indian revival, self determination	Declaration of Indian Purpose, Hafen 2013	
10/06	Polysynthesis	Mithun 1983	Polysynthesis
10/08	Analyzing polysynthesis		Caddo Verb Problemset
10/11	Reading assignment #2	L. White 2015	
10/13	Non-configurational languages	Hale 1983 1-16, (Jelinek 1984 43-66)	
10/15	Non-configuration in grammars	Broadwell 2006, Cook 1984, Sapir 1931	
10/20	Whorfianism	SEP, Sec 4, Whorf 1956 207-19	
10/22	Native linguists opening doors		
10/27	Aspect and academia	Deloria 1987 78-100, Chen & Matthewson 2021 1-9	
10/29	Inverse systems/obviation; evidentials		Inverse handout
11/03	Revitalization	Hinton 2003, Neely & Palmer 2009	
11/05	Endangerment? The death metaphor	Perley 2012	
11/10	Documentation	Furbee 2010	
11/12	Renovation?		
11/17	Back from "the dead"	*We Still Live Here*	
11/19	Revitalization strategies	Rice 2010, Hinton & Hale	

White, Louellyn. 2015. *Free to Be Mohawk: Indigenous Education at the Akwesasne Freedom School*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.