**Master syllabus: Introduction to Linguistics and the Languages of Europe**

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University Studies Cluster requirement: 4C

**Course overview:**

This course provides an introductory overview to the field of linguistics as well as an introduction to the main language groups originating in Europe: the Germanic, Romance and Slavic groups, as well as other languages such as Modern Greek and the invented international language Esperanto. Through guided individual and group research, students will learn more about these languages and the process of second language acquisition, while examining texts and materials that give insight into transformations in European cultural and intellectual history in the 20th and 21st centuries.

This introductory course to European (and by extension, world) languages and cultures, fully integrated into the University Studies curriculum in Cluster 4C, would begin with a three-week introduction to linguistics. Apart from units on phonology, morphology and syntax, students would learn the International Phonetic Alphabet, and practice writing English words in this way; review of parts of speech, verb tenses and accents, and look at how English is used as an European and global *lingua franca* between native and non-native speakers. As a point of contrast, students will look at the story behind the world’s best-known constructed ‘international’ language, Esperanto, and thus begin to learn a first other language in the course.

In the second unit, we would move on to the Germanic languages, beginning with an over of the two surviving branches (North and West), and then concentrating on one in each branch: German, the most widely spoken of them apart from English, and the one often considered the easiest for English speakers to learn: Swedish. Attention will also be given to characteristics of other Scandinavian languages and German, through basic greetings and phrases, popular music available on the Internet, and one film in German.

In the third unit, attention will turn to Romance languages: not only the three currently taught at UMass Dartmouth, i.e., Portuguese, French, Spanish, but also other Romance languages such as Italian, Catalan or Romanian, examining the ways that much of their vocabulary and grammar share common Latin roots, using a book of the history of the Romance languages and a Romance language textbook that focuses on intercomprehension amongst these languages.

Our final section will focus on Greek, its alphabet, and its etymological contributions to other European languages, including English. Our attention will then turn to the Slavic languages and the Cyrillic alphabet, concentrating on Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, a language grouping that uses both the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets, thus allowing students to compare these two writing systems.

Ultimately, if the learning objectives of the course are met, at the end of the semester students will not only have a basic overview of the European linguistic landscape, with the ability to identify and distinguish between them, and even read signs and basic texts in a number of them, either alone or with the help of translations, they will also have been exposed to and be encouraged to evaluate and critique a broad range of cultural materials that will give them a comprehensive perspective into key cultural concepts from all over Europe.

Ideally, this course will encourage students to study those languages currently offered at the university at the intermediate and advanced levels and beyond the foreign language requirement. Equipped with tools for learning languages more effectively, students may be able to join accelerated courses at specialized critical language programs both in the US and abroad, thus speeding up the beginning/intermediate sequence and enabling them to pursue more advanced courses and perhaps even completing a minor or a major in a foreign language. The course aligns with university learning objectives in that it fosters awareness of divergent global perspectives rooted in linguistic difference, providing a strong base for language learning. It also helps engage learners in thinking critically about humanity at the local, European and global level, showing both differences and commonalities among languages as extrapolated among societies and encouraging students to engage with overarching ideas and concepts that shape contemporary European cultures.

This course, as a shared project in general linguistics and European languages, thus aims at developing concrete intercultural skills for further study both at UMD and abroad, as well as broad-based preparation for eventual professional activity in an increasingly competitive global educational and work environment.

**Course-specific learning outcomes:**

1. Students in this course will apply basic concepts of general linguistics: phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax, and language families and the history of languages, both in the context of the English language and other languages. The students will apply the basics of the International Phonetic Alphabet and practice the sounds that are common in the languages. This introductory background to the fundamentals of linguistics and individual and group research into language learning materials will provide a platform for more effective language learning, both immediately and in the future. (Satisfies learning outcome 2 for 4C).

2. This course will familiarize students with structural and lexical elements from a number of other European languages, so that they can identify and distinguish different languages in these families in their studies, as well as in any future research and other advanced academic activity. (Satisfies learning outcomes 1 and 2 for 4C).

3. Students will identify vocabulary from Latin and Greek that is used in most if not all modern European languages, apply the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to master phonetic transcription, and will utilize (at a basic level) two official alphabetical systems currently used in Europe: Cyrillic and Greek. (Satisfies learning outcome 2 for 4C).

4. Using texts and audiovisual materials in different languages, students will decipher basic messages in other European languages. The course will give students initial exposure, tools and practice necessary to decipher those messages. Students will also discuss the ways that languages can be used in a contemporary technological and informational context, be it from a traditional book, digital text on the computer, voice or text on a smart phone, or in the mass media. (Satisfies learning outcome 2 for 4C).

5. Students will compare and contrast contemporary European language cultures, having a chance to experience music, cinema and short literary texts, both in the original and accompanied by English translation, both to facilitate comparison and immediate comprehension. With these materials, students will discuss social and political issues related to linguistic identity such as social inequality, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, cultural, linguistic and 20th century and more recent ideological conflicts, and analyze and critique a set of divergent perspectives on global topics such as European colonialism, the resurgence of nationalisms, transnational migration and globalization. (Satisfies learning outcomes 1-3 for 4C).

**University Studies learning outcomes for Cluster 4C:**

This course will address and fulfill the basic learning outcomes Cluster 4 C through the following kinds of assignments outlines below. (**Please note** that the general course objectives above and the individual assignments below are also marked with a corresponding number for each of these required learning outcomes.)

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain basic problems faced by societies and cultures outside the US or issues that shape societies globally. This learning outcome will be fulfilled by writing and presentation assignments that require students to engage critically with current questions of linguistic and cultural identity in contemporary Europe (journal entries, online and class discussions), as well as through oral presentations and unit tests.

2. Locate, analyze, summarize, paraphrase and synthesize material from a variety of sources. This learning outcome will be fulfilled by two key assignments: 1) an individual research component that requires students to test and evaluate language learning materials critically, whether online on in the Language Lab, as well as 2) gathering music from different European cultures online and sharing their findings with classmates

3. Evaluate arguments made in support of different perspectives on global society.

This learning outcome will be addressed and fulfilled both in in-class discussion on films and readings, as well as in reaction papers and essay questions on unit tests. Reaction paper topics that will directly engage critical thinking are included in the proposed course schedule below.

**Example of texts, readings and other available learning materials:**

* Hornsby, David. *Linguistics; A Complete Introduction.*
* Film: Sam Green, dir. *The Universal Language.*
* *http://www.ikso.net/en/libera/*  Libera Esperanto Libro.
* iPhone apps and websites for language learning (Duolingo, Memrise).
* A selection of contemporary films from Europe and elsewhere that tackle pertinent social and political issues: cross-cultural contact and/or conflict, ideological differences, as reflected in the transitions from Cold War divisions to the present political and economic landscape. Students will watch them on their own in the language lab, and they will form the basis for in-class discussion and debate.
* Popular music in European languages from different genres (1970s to the present):. CDs and online links available in the language lab. An MP3 collection for the course will be developed by the students as they listen and share tracks with other students. Materials from the Internet: news articles from major online newspapers, videos, short essays, etc., with lists of online resources available in the language lab.
* Alkire and Rosen, *The Romance Languages: A Historical Introduction* (Cambridge UP, 2010).
* Bonvino, Elisabetta et al. *EuRom5: Leggere e capire cinque lingue romanze*. Hoepli, 2011.
* *Europe Phrasebook* (Lonely Planet, 2009, required), as well as other phrasebooks available in the language lab.
* *Teach Yourself* language courses in: Swedish, German, European and Brazilian Portuguese, Italian, French, Castilian and Latin American Spanish, Catalan, Romanian, Greek, Russian, Polish, Serbian, Croatian. (Each student should buy at least one; others will be available in the language lab.)

**Assignments: (marked with numbers 1, 2, and 3 to correlate with US guidelines above)**

* A series of short, two-page reaction papers on cultural language materials presented in class (a song, a film, a short story which is illustrative of a historical event, cultural phenomenon, specific political situation, etc.): 50%. (1,2, 3)
* Four unit tests to assess knowledge of basic linguistics, vocabulary and phrases learned in class exercises, as well as social and cultural content of texts and materials. Sections will include multiple choice, identifications, and a short written essay section. 40%. (1,3)
* Participation in discussion and class activities (incl. short quizzes, games and competitions): 10%. (1.2.3)
* Extra credit option: Participation in a language event (luncheon or dinner), with performance of a basic dialogue or a song for the class in a language studied in class (BCS, Greek) with translation and commentary provided, or preparation of a potluck dish using a foreign language recipe with English translation and commentary on the cultural significance of the dish provided. 5%. (1, 2, 3)

**Assessment rubric for written and classroom assignments:**

* Assignment not turned in: F
* Minimal effort made, main questions not addressed adequately, demonstrates little understanding of the material, factually incorrect, presented in grammatically flawed and incoherent language: C-D.
* Assignment shows some, but not sufficient depth in addressing the questions posed. Basic understanding demonstrated, but not complete mastery. Language free of errors to a large extent, but not completely. Argument makes sense, but still shows flaws. In short, still needs more work: B-C.
* Assignment completed with an original approach and thoughtful analysis. Language is articulate and free of errors. Argument is coherent, consistent and easy to follow. A.

**Course artifacts for assessment:**

1. Reaction papers

2. Unit tests

3. Copies of completed class activities

**Sample course outline**

The weekly readings, lectures and assignments below **satisfy University Studies learning outcomes by introducing key elements of European languages for study and analysis (1), assigning individual and group research projects to supplement coursework with additional relevant cultural materials based on students’ individual interests (1,2), and offer culturally specific reading and viewing materials in European languages that raise questions about 20th-century and contemporary European societies (1,2,3).** Each activity or assignment is marked with the number relevant to it.

Week 1: Begin readings in general linguistics: Language families and history of (Indo-) European and other languages. (1, 3)

Week 2: Phonetics and phonology. Learning the International Phonetic Alphabet (2). Watch the film *The Universal Language*, as a point of departure for adiscussion how European linguistic community have evolved both organically and artificially. Short reaction paper on the need and/or relevance of Esperanto in contemporary Europe: is the idea of creating an artificial international language to act as a neutral vehicle for communication still a good idea? Why or why not? (1, 3).

Week 3: Morphology. (1,3) Individual research on language lab materials, online resources and online apps for language learning, summarized in a reaction paper on the following topic: How is foreign language learning changing through information technologies? (2)

Week 4: Syntax. First unit test on introductory linguistics, with essay questions on cultural materials presented in class. (1, 2, 3)

Week 5: Germanic languages: introduction, history. (1, 3) Begin work in phrasebook in German, in *Teach Yourself* Series, and in independently researched sources (2). Reaction paper on first contact with elements of German language and culture (1, 2, 3): How has a basic introduction in linguistics aided in your first attempts at learning this language, if at all? Analyze and discuss the ways that a better understanding of basic elements of general linguistics might be of use to university language learners.

Week 6: Parallel-text German short story. (1, 3) German film: “Goodbye, Lenin!” (1, 3) Discussion of the post-Cold War transition and its effect on contemporary European cultural identities. Reaction paper on the film that discusses this key ideological and paradigmatic shift from a state-directed socialist economy to a free-market civil society: Express your opinion on a specific element in the film. For example: was the film an accurate or convincing representation of this transition? (1, 3). Begin with Swedish in phrasebook, comparing with German section (2).

Week 7: Basic Swedish phrases and vocabulary: songs in Swedish. (2) Learning narrative/reaction paper on learning German and Swedish consecutively and/or simultaneously: does it work for you? What kinds of materials are most useful in facilitating/accelerating the language learning process )books, online websites or videos, mobile apps)? (3) Second open-book test on German and Swedish languages and cultural materials (1, 3).

Week 8: Romance languages: comparisons of etymology and morphology. (1, 3) Comparison exercises in phrasebook. (2) Readings from *The Romance Languages: A Historical Introduction.* (1, 3) Begin work with *EuRom5* book and website: www.eurom5.com (2)

Week 9: Continue readings from *The Romance Languages* (1, 3) and EuRom5 book (2). Watch one film from collection of Romance-language films in the language lab (ex. Walter Salles’ *Behind the Sun*), and write a reaction paper on a pertinent topic as represented in the film: e.g., economic inequality/class difference, illiteracy/literacy, the challenges of cultural translation, or cycles of violence and revenge in and beyond Europe. Identify and discuss a topic, arguing your opinion. Example: Can violence be eliminated from ethnically and linguistically diverse communities? (1, 2, 3)

Week 10: Final work in *EuRom5*. Researching online sources from other Romance languages: songs in Italian, Portuguese and Romanian. (2) Third open-book unit test on Romance languages. (1,3)

Week 11: Greek etymology in English: Greek alphabet. (1) Work in phrasebook on greetings and basic phrases in Modern Greek. (2) Language practice: contemporary Greek songs. Reaction paper on the usefulness on studying etymology of Greek loan words, the challenges of learning a new alphabet, etc. (1, 3)

Week 12: History of Cyrillic alphabet, and cultural materials from the Slavic languages, focusing on students’ own online research. (1, 2, 3) Play with languages: download keyboard and text a friend in Greek or Cyrillic alphabet, or compare basic phrases from the phrasebook in at least two Slavic languages, with a reaction paper discussing one of the two topics below. (2) Slavic language film: Emir Kusturica’s *Time of the Gypsies*. (1, 3) Discussion of the situation of linguistic and ethnic minorities and migrants in light of the resurgence of nationalisms in Europe, especially in the former Yugoslavia. Example: Can marginalized ethnic and linguistic minorities find a place within the current structures of ethnic nationalism and translational EU politics? Why or why not?

Week 13: Fourth and final unit test. (1, 3) Class evaluations. Language and cultural event, with creative presentations of group research projects that synthesize what has been learned over the course of the semester. (1, 2, 3)