

**LING-GA 3510**  
**Seminar in Sociolinguistics: Language change**  
Spring 2018

**Lecture time** Tue. 3:30–6:10pm  
**Location** 10 Washington Pl. #103

<b>Instructors</b>	Dr. Ailís Cournane	Dr. Laurel MacKenzie
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<b>Office hour</b>	Th. 1:30-2:30 V by appointment	By appointment

### Course description

Welcome! This course will cover the fundamental concepts associated with historical linguistics. Topics will include methodologies in historical linguistics, the actuation and propagation of change, and common patterns of change at all levels of language. A key contribution of the course will be to make connections between the findings of historical linguistics and modern-day theories of how language is acquired, transmitted, and mentally represented.

### Readings

The textbook for the course is:

Ringe, Donald, and Joe Eska. 2013. *Historical Linguistics: Toward a Twenty-First Century Reintegration*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

An electronic version is available through the Library website; a PDF copy is posted on NYU Classes. Supplementary readings, when not readily available on Google Scholar or NYU Library, will be posted on NYU Classes.

### Requirements

- **Participation.** All participants are expected to do the assigned readings and to participate in the discussion of the material in class. For each class session, there will be a discussion forum on NYU Classes. Enrolled students are required, and auditors are encouraged, to post two questions per class session by the end of the day on Monday. Questions should be generally connected to topics under discussion for the day and can be clarifications or expansions.
- **Project proposal.** Enrolled students are asked to propose (but not carry out) a research project related to the course. This will be assessed in four stages, with feedback on all stages, as follows:
  - **3/6:** Topic and preliminary bibliography due
  - **4/10:** 1–2 page abstract due
  - **4/17:** Student presentations in class on project ideas
  - **5/1:** 6–8 page mock grant proposal due
- **Peer review.** Each enrolled student will be asked to peer review another student's mock grant proposal. Peer reviews are due on **5/8**.

**Schedule** (subject to change; thank you in advance for your flexibility)

R&E = Ringe & Eska text

1/23 Methods and issues in historical linguistics. (LM, AC)

- R&E Introduction & ch. 1
- Excerpts from: Weinreich, Uriel, William Labov, and Marvin Herzog. 1968. *Empirical Foundations for a Theory of Language Change*. Austin: University of Texas Press. [on Classes]
  - 0. Introduction: pp. 98–103
  - 3.4 Empirical principles for the theory of language change: pp. 183–187
  - 3.5 Some general principles for the study of language change: pp. 187–188

1/30 The actuation of change. Learner errors as a source of change. (AC, LM)

- R&E ch. 2
- Yang (2000/2001), LVC “Internal and External Forces in Change”
  - Everything except the case studies: pp. 231-241 & Conclusion
- Cournane (2017), OUP “In defense of the child innovator” (on my website)

2/6 Sound change: Actuation and spread. (LM)

- R&E ch. 5 up to pg. 89
- Excerpt from: Ohala, John J. 1993. The phonetics of sound change. In *Historical Linguistics: Problems and Perspectives*, ed. Charles Jones, 237–278. New York: Longman. [on Classes]
  - §1–3
- Stevens, Mary, and Jonathan Harrington. 2014. The individual and the actuation of sound change. *Loquens* 1:e003.

2/13 Changes to the phonemic system: Merger, split. Metathesis, dissimilation. Homophony avoidance. (LM)

- R&E remainder of ch. 5, except:
  - Skip the section “Sound change and rule ordering”
- R&E ch. 6, pp. 110–114
- Blevins, Juliette, and Andrew Wedel. 2009. Inhibited sound change: An evolutionary approach to lexical competition. *Diachronica* 26:143–183.

2/20 Changes to underlying forms. (LM)

- Excerpts from R&E ch. 6:
  - pp. 123–135 (Sections “Reordering of phonological rules,” “Unexpected underlying forms”)
  - pp. 141–147 (Section “Rule restriction and loss”)
- Excerpt from: Bermúdez-Otero, Ricardo, and Richard M. Hogg. 2003. The actuation problem in Optimality Theory. In *Optimality Theory and Language Change*, ed. D. Eric Holt, 91–119. New York: Springer.
  - §0–2

- 2/27 Morphologically-conditioned sound change. (LM)
- Excerpts from R&E ch. 6:
    - pp. 135–141 (Section “Rule fragmentation”)
    - pp. 147–end (Section “Morphological influence”)
  - Strycharczuk, Patrycja, and James M. Scobbie. 2016. Gradual or abrupt? The phonetic path to morphologisation. *Journal of Phonetics* 59:76–91.
- 3/6 Morphological change. (AC)
- R&E ch. 7 & 8
  - **Proposal topic and preliminary bibliography due.**
- (3/13 Spring break!)
- 3/20 Syntactic change. (AC)
- R&E ch. 9
  - Gelderen, EV (ed.) 2009, *Cyclical Change*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam.
    - Intro, pp. 1-12
  - Roberts, I, & Roussou, A 2003, *Syntactic Change : A Minimalist Approach to Grammaticalization*, Cambridge University Press.
    - “T Elements”, pp. 35-48
- 3/27 Syntactic change. reconstruction, phylogenetics. (AC)
- R&E ch. 10 & 11
- 4/3 Syntactic change: reconstruction, phylogenetics. (AC)
- Longobardi, Giuseppe & Cristina Guardino. 2009. Evidence for syntax as a signal of historical relatedness. *Lingua* 119, 1679–1706.
  - Newberry, M.G., Ahern, C.A., Clark, R. and Plotkin, J.B. 2017. Detecting evolutionary forces in language change. *Nature*, 551(7679).
- 4/10 Semantic change. (AC)
- Von Stechow, Kai. 1995. The formal semantics of grammaticalization. In *Proceedings to NELS 25*, 175-189.
  - Closs Traugott, Elizabeth. 2011. Modality from a historical perspective. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 5/6, 381–396.
  - **1–2 page abstract of proposal due.**
- 4/17 **Student presentations on project ideas.**
- 4/24 Change in the speech community. (LM)
- R&E ch. 3
  - Excerpt from: Tagliamonte, Sali, and Alexandra D’Arcy. 2009. Peaks beyond phonology: Adolescence, incrementation, and language change. *Language* 85:58–108.
    - §1–3

5/1 Contact-induced change. (AC + LM)

- R&E ch. 4
- Mugglestone, L (ed.) 2014. *The Oxford History of English*. OUP.
  - Matthew Townend, ch. 3, “Conflicts and Contact: Latin, Norse, and French”
- **6–8 page mock grant proposal due.**

5/8 (After classes end)

- **Peer review of another student’s mock grant proposal due**