

Linguistics 686

Morphology – Fall 2020

Course Description

Morphology is currently among the most dynamic areas of linguistics, and the focus of a range of multidisciplinary research initiatives in the language sciences. The place of morphology partly reflects the linguistic importance of word-level patterns of variation. However, the recent resurgence of interest in morphology is also due in part to the availability of sophisticated computational and psycholinguistic techniques, methods and resources that can be used to investigate word-sized units. This course offers a concise overview of current approaches to morphology and some of their broader implications. It surveys morphological variation in the languages of the world and provides an introduction to dominant descriptive and theoretical models that have been developed to analyze this variation. Emphasis is placed on identifying the substantive ideas about form variation that underlie morphological models and on isolating and evaluating any associated typological biases and theoretical idealizations, as well as on drawing out cognitive assumptions and consequences.

Course Administration

Instructor

Jim Blevins (jblevin6@gmu.edu)

Schedule

LECTURES: Asynchronous delivery via Blackboard Collaborate/Ultra, Tuesday

Office Hours

Via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra/Zoom Wednesday 2–3, and by appointment

Prerequisites

LING 306 or LING 520 (or equivalent), or approval of instructor

Course Materials

Resources

All course materials, including assignments and required readings, will be available on Blackboard. Any revisions to the course calendar or syllabus will also be posted there.

Required Text

- Haspelmath, Martin & Andrea Sims. 2010. *Understanding Morphology* (2nd edition). Routledge. ISBN: 9780340950012. Electronic version available in the ‘Supplementary Materials’ folder on Blackboard. [Abbreviated as ‘HS’ in the Course Schedule]

Supplementary Texts

- Aronoff, Mark, & Kirsten Fudeman. (2011). *What's Morphology* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199772810-0001>. [Abbreviated as 'AF' in Course Schedule]
- Blevins, James P. 2016. *Word and Paradigm Morphology*. Oxford University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199593545.001.0001>. [Abbreviated as 'B']
- Carstairs-McCarthy, Andrew. 1992. *Current morphology*. Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203206720> [Abbreviated as 'C']
- Hamp, Eric. P., Martin Joos, F. W. Householder, & Robert Austerlitz (eds.). 1995. *Readings in Linguistics I & II*. University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 9780226410272 [Abbreviated as 'RiL']
- Matthews, Peter H. 1991. *Morphology*. Cambridge University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CB09781139166485>. [Abbreviated as 'M']

Grading policy

Problem Sets (20%)

There will be 2 problem sets, which will be available on Blackboard on Monday in weeks 2 and 9, and due no later than the end of Friday in those weeks. Try to answer all of the questions; grades will be assigned fairly leniently, with partial credit for partially correct answers.

Exams (20%)

There will also be 2 take-home exams, in week 6 and 13, covering material from lectures, readings and problem sets. The format includes true-false, multiple choice, short answer, and/or matching questions. Attempt all questions; there is no penalty for wrong answers.

Semester Project (50%)

Throughout the semester, you will have the opportunity to work closely on a morphological analysis of one or more languages (other than English) of your own choosing. If you select a single language, you will can apply and compare the descriptions assigned by different theoretical models. If you select multiple languages, you can compare the ways that the languages form words and associate words with inflection classes or other morphological classes. You will be expected to produce two interim reports on your project, in weeks 4 and 11, which will provide you with feedback on your progress. The first report should be approximately one page in length, setting out a morphological question, identifying the data to be analyzed and stating a clear hypothesis that will guide the research project. The second report should be approximately three pages in length, developing the components of the first report and identifying some preliminary results and/or implications of the project. The final paper should be approximately 5–10 pages in length, comparing the analyses assigned by different models or the patterns exhibited by different morphological systems. Each of the interim reports will account for 10% of the grade and the final paper will account for 30%.

Class participation (10%)

Problem sets, exams and projects provide the basis for interactive discussions on the Discussion Board. For full grades, students should complete two of the following tasks **each week**:

1. **Ask** a question in the Course Discussion Board on Blackboard, and **either**
 - 2a. **Answer** a question posed in the Course Discussion Board **or**
 - 2b. **Comment on** an answer in the Course Discussion Board.

General Notices

Academic Integrity

Students are reminded of their obligation to adhere to the GMU Honor Code. All class work should clearly acknowledge the source of ideas and materials, and direct quotations must be explicitly identified and properly cited. If you are in any doubt, please contact me **before** submitting your work. The Pledge and full text of the Honor Code are available at:

<<https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/full-honor-code-document/>>

Disability Services

GMU is committed to providing equitable access to students with disabilities. Students who require accommodations should register with Disability Services: <https://ds.gmu.edu/> **as early as possible**, since accommodations/grade adjustments cannot be made retroactively.

Student services

Online Education Services/University Libraries: <<https://library.gmu.edu/for/online>>

Writing Center: <<https://writingcenter.gmu.edu>>

Counseling and Psychological Services: <<https://caps.gmu.edu>>

GMU Nondiscrimination Policy

George Mason University is committed to providing equal opportunity and an educational and work environment free from any discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, pregnancy status or genetic information. George Mason University shall adhere to all applicable state and federal equal opportunity/affirmative action statutes and regulations: <<https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/non-discrimination-policy/>>

Add/Drop Dates

Last day to add classes: August 31

Last day to drop with full refund: September 8

Final drop deadline: Sept. 15

Course schedule

W	Topic	Readings	Assignments
1	Introduction to morphology	HS§1; M§1; AF§1; C§1	Introductory post on discussion board
2	Dimensions of variation	HS§2; M§2; AF§3; C§3; Bickel & Nichols 2007; McDonough 2000	Problem set 1 due Comment and reply on discussion board
3	The atomistic hypothesis	HS§4; M§6; B§2	Comment and reply on discussion board
4	Contrast and meaning	HS§3; M§3; C§6; Baerman 2004; Maiden 2005	Report 1 due Comment and reply on discussion board
5	Parts and wholes	HS§§5.1–5.3; M§4; AF§2; C§2; Robins 1959; Blevins 2006	Comment and reply on discussion board
6	Structure and diachrony	HS§7; M§5; B§5; C§5; Maiden 2011b; Mithin 2011	Exam 1 due Comment and reply on discussion board
7	Splits and subsystems	HS§§5.4-5.5; M§4; AF§5; B§4; Booij 1993; Clahsen 1999	Comment and reply on discussion board
8	Fall break		
9	Recurrence and redundancy	HS§8; M§10; AF§6; B§4; Kemps et al. 2005	Problem set 2 due Comment and reply on discussion board
10	Lexical knowledge and Zipfian distributions	HS§7; M§5; B§5; Maiden 2011a; Blevins et al. 2017	Comment and reply on discussion board
11	Procedures of morphemic analysis	Harris 1942; Hockett 1947, 1961; Koutsoudas 1963; Anderson 2015	Report 2 due Comment and reply on discussion board
12	Paradigmatic and distributed realization	M§9; C§7; B§6; Bonami & Stump 2016; Walther 2017; Halle & Marantz 1993	Comment and reply on discussion board
13	Abstraction and extrapolation	B§7; Beckner et al. 2009; Ackerman & Malouf 2013; Milin et al. (2009)	Exam 2 due Comment and reply on discussion board
14	Mechanisms, routes and networks	HS§12; Bybee & Hopper 2001; Baayen et al. 1997; Ramscar et al. 2010; Lõo et al. 2018	Comment and reply on discussion board
15	Morphology and syntax	HS§11; M§11; AF§7; C§4	Final Paper Due