Content of the course

This course is an in-depth investigation of the structure of a language (or language family) other than English. This year we will examine various aspects of the structure of languages of the Mayan family within the framework of generative linguistics. We will cover a range of topics in phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. While we will look at specific puzzles found within Mayan linguistics, we will do so with an eye toward their relevance to linguistic theory more generally. Throughout the semester, we will bear the following questions in mind: Do existing linguistic theories extend readily to language of the Mayan family? How does an in depth investigation into Mayan provide us with tools to tackle bigger problems in the field? How do Mayan languages inform our ideas about Universal Grammar?

Requirements and evaluation

We will investigate the above topics through a combination of readings (both specific to the Mayan family, as well as general readings on the topics we are covering); class presentations (some led by me, others led by you); in-class and take-home datasets (created both by me and by you); as well as short writing assignments. Group work and in-class participation will be essential to successful completion of the course.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>short assignments</td>
<td>50% (10 x 5% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>final project</td>
<td>30% (paper = 25%; presentation = 5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>article presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>course participation</td>
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Readings

The readings will all be listed on the MyCourses website, either as directly-downloadable articles, or as links to the McGill library website. Your responsibility is to complete the reading before coming to class; all readings are required unless marked as optional. Due to the nature of the course, it is inevitable that you will encounter unfamiliar terms, concepts, and theories while doing the reading for the course. Part of the goal of this course is to develop an understanding of how to efficiently get through difficult readings. You can except to read approximately 3 articles per week (roughly 150 pages).

Short assignments

Over the course of the semester, you will have 10 short assignments to turn in, roughly one per week. These assignments are due on MyCourses at 11:59pm on Monday night (see Late Work below). These will be graded
on a 4-point scale: [✔+] = exceeds expectations; [✔] = meets expectations; [✔−] = below expectations; 0 = not turned in.

**Response to readings**

Throughout the semester, you will be asked to turn in 1–2 page responses to the readings. These should be double-spaced in 12 point Times New Roman font with 1 inch margins. These responses should provide a short summary of some aspect of the readings, but they should go beyond summary. You can use them to raise questions, offer critical analysis, or apply something in the reading to your research language (see below). Though there is a good deal of freedom in content, these should all be well structured into organized paragraphs and spell-checked for typos and grammar.

**Late work**

You have one free late-pass which you may use to turn in one of your short assignments 24 hours late. In order to use your late pass, you must let me know you are using it by the original deadline. Once this pass has been used, late work cannot be accepted for grades without a documented medical excuse. You remain responsible for in-class participation.

**Your research language and small groups**

Within the first couple of weeks, you will be assigned to a small group of 3–4 students. Each group will be responsible for presenting one article to the class (see course outline below). Presentations should be no more than 30 minutes, including at least 10 minutes for class discussion or in-class tasks.

As small groups, you will also be asked to adopt one of the following Mayan languages (and associated grammars) for the semester. Some of the short assignments will ask you to investigate certain aspects of your language, either alone or in your group.

1. Mam (Mamean) — England (1983), *A grammar of Mam, a Mayan language*
2. Jakaltek (Q’anjob’alan) — Craig (1977), *The structure of Jacaltec*
3. Itzaj (Yucatecan) — Hofling (2000), *Itzaj Maya grammar*
5. Tz’utujil (K’ichean) — Dayley (1985), *Tz’utujil grammar*
6. Ch’ol (Tseltalan) — Vázquez Álvarez (2011), *A Grammar of Chol, a Mayan language*
7. Sipakapense (K’ichean) — Barrett (1999), *A grammar of Sipakapense Maya*
8. Tojolab’al (Q’anjo’balan) — Furbee-Losee (1976), *The correct language: Tojolabal*

**Varia**

**Academic integrity**

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the code of student conduct and disciplinary procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).
L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

Right to submit in French

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).

Copyright

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OSD

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009

Laptops and cellphones

Mobile computing or communications devices are not permitted to be used in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.

Course outline (◆ = obligatory; ♥ = optional; ☐ = student presentation)

1. Week 1, September 6 & 8 — Introduction
   - Reading:
     - Bennett, Coon, and Henderson (to appear) — ‘Introduction to Mayan linguistics’
     - Mateo Toledo (2003) — ‘The Use of Languages’ Names: The Mayan Case’
     - Campbell and Kaufman (1985) — ‘Mayan linguistics: Where are we now?’
   - In class: T – Introduction, class organization and logistics; short survey; datasets; tour of the Mayan family and topics to be covered this semester.
   - Turn in: Short survey

2. Week 2, September 13 & 15 — Categories, roots and stems
   - Reading:
     - Coon (to appear-b) — ‘Mayan morphosyntax’
3. **Week 3, September 20 & 22 — Ergativity: Set A & Set B**

   • Reading:
     - Larsen and Norman (1979) — ‘Correlates of ergativity in Mayan grammar’
     - Coon (to appear-a) — ‘Little-v agreement and templatic morphology in Ch’ol’
     - Comrie (1978) — ‘Ergativity’

   • In class: T/Th: Discuss readings; ergativity problem sets; preview of Voice

   ➸ Turn in 9/21: Assignment 2 — Ch’ol roots and stems

4. **Week 4, September 27 (no class September 29) — Voice & Valence I**

   • Reading:
     - *skim:* Payne (1997, chapter 8) — ‘Voice and valence adjusting operations’
     - Dayley (1981) — ‘Voice and ergativity in Mayan languages’ (read sections 1–3 and section on your language’s sub-family)

   ➸ Group 1 presents: Garzon (1998) — ‘Indigenous groups and their language contact relations’

   • In class: T: class presentation; start Voice

   ➸ Turn in 9/26: Assignment 3 — response to readings

5. **Week 5, October 4 & 6 — Voice and valence II**

   • Reading:
     - Craig (1979) — ‘The antipassive and Jacaltec’
     - Coon (2016) — ‘Unergatives, antipassives, and roots in Chuj’

   ➸ Group 2 presents: Craig (1987) — ‘Jacaltec: Field Work in Guatemala’

   • In class: Voice discussion

   ➸ Turn in 10/3: Assignment 4 — Describe one voice in your research language and be ready to discuss

6. **Week 6, October 11 & 13 — Aspect and split ergativity**

   • Reading:
     - Payne (1997, chapter 9.3) — Tense and aspect
     - Bricker (1981) — ‘The source of the ergative split in Yucatec Maya’
     - Coon (2012) — ‘Split ergativity and transitivity in Chol’
7. Week 7, October 18 & 20 — Phonetics & Phonology

- Reading:
  - Bowern (2008) — ‘chapter 3: Starting to work on a language’
  - Bennett (to appear) — ‘Mayan phonology’

- In class: fieldwork prep; Chuj elicitation; phonetics/phonology

- Turn in: Assignment 6 — either a short response to readings, or a description of any kind of split in your research language

8. Week 8, October 25 & 27 — Syntactic ergativity

- Reading:
  - Smith-Stark (1978) — ‘The Mayan antipassive: Some facts and fictions’
  - Ayres (1983) — ‘The antipassive “voice” in Ixil’
  - Aissen (to appear) – ‘Correlates of ergativity in Mayan grammar’
  - Brown and Levinson (1993) — ‘“Uphill” and “Downhill” in Tzeltal’

- In class: AF overview; Extraction problem sets

- Turn in 10/24: Assignment 7 — Chuj transcription problem

9. Week 9, November 1 & 3 — Word order I

- Reading:
  - England (1991) — ‘Changes in basic word order in Mayan languages’
  - Aissen (1992) — ‘Topic and focus in Mayan’
  - Clemens and Polinsky (to appear) — ‘Verb-initial word orders (Primarily in Austronesian and Mayan languages)’

- In class: Word order overview; preview; discuss final project proposals

- Turn in 10/31: Assignment 8 — 1 page proposal for your final project

10. Week 10, November 8 & 10 — Word order II

- Reading:
  - Clemens and Coon (2016) — ‘Deriving verb initial order in Mayan’
  - De León (1998) — ‘The emergent participant: Interactive patterns in the socialization of Tzotzil (Mayan) infants’
• In class: word order; preview numerals and classifiers

➽ Turn in: Assignment 9 — Feedback on a classmate’s proposal

11. Week 11, November 16 & 17 — Numerals and classifiers

• Reading:
  ◦ Craig (1986) — ‘Jacaltec noun classifiers’
  ◦ Zavala (2000) — ‘Multiple classifiers in Akatek (Mayan)’
  ❪ Group 8 presents: Haviland (2000) — Warding off witches: Voicing and dialogue in Zinacantec prayer

• In class: classifiers (guest presentation)

➽ Turn in: Assignment 10 — Short response to readings; may include discussion of classifiers in your language

12. Week 12, November 22 & 24 — Presentations

13. Week 13, November 29 & December 1 — Presentations

Final papers due 12/9
Readings

Clemens, Lauren Eby, and Jessica Coon. 2016. Deriving verb initial order in Mayan. Ms. SUNY Albay and McGill University.


Vázquez Álvarez, Juan J. 2011. A grammar of Chol, a Mayan language. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Texas Austin, Austin, TX.