Syllabus

This course is an introduction to the theory of phonology. The content and course design are oriented primarily toward graduate students in linguistics, though other interested participants are very welcome.

The course has three goals, which will be pursued in roughly the following order of logical (not chronological) priority:

• to acquaint you with the major issues in contemporary phonological theory. This will begin preparing you to conduct research on your own and read articles critically — preparation which continues in subsequent courses of this Department’s phonology program.
• to give you instruction and practice in organizing and analyzing phonological data.
• to offer you some minimal essentials of articulatory and acoustic phonetics. This course is by no means an introduction to experimental phonetics, which you will find in other Departmental offerings.

Requirements: The course revolves around problem sets. These are extremely important — they are essential to mastery of the material. You must do these problem sets thoroughly and turn them in on time. You should participate in the discussion of the problems in class. When you budget your time for the semester, you should assume that you have a substantial homework assignment due each and every week. Except when the assignment is unusually brief, I will always give you at least a weekend, and usually a full week, to complete the homework. (That is, I will never give a long assignment out on Tuesday and expect it to be done two days later, on Thursday.)

If the requirements of another course come into conflict with the requirements of this course (for instance, two large assignments due simultaneously), you should raise the matter with me and the other instructor. Do not assume that faculty members consult with one another about the homework they assign.

If you are persistently late in turning in problem sets or if you frequently miss class, you and I will discuss whether you should withdraw from the course.

You will also write a very short (3-5pp.) paper by the end of the semester, with detailed instructions on topics ahead of time. The frequency of problem sets will decrease as the deadline for the paper comes near.

There is no textbook and there will be relatively few readings, which I will supply. There will be extensive handouts, and you should study them closely. If you want to do additional reading on any topic, ask me for suggestions, look at the reference lists on the handouts, talk to an advanced student in phonology, or visit the Rutgers Optimality Archive (http://ruccs.rutgers.edu/roa.html) and search for the topic you’re interested in.
**Policy on collaboration:** You are permitted (you are even expected and encouraged) to collaborate with other students in the class on the homework assignments. But I insist that you write up the results on your own. And be careful about collaborating with students whose knowledge is much more advanced than yours; it may not be the best way for you to learn the material.

**Prerequisites:** There are no formal prerequisites for this course. I don’t assume that you have any background in phonology beyond what you would acquire in a decent introductory linguistics course, such as:

- the meaning of the most common phonetic transcription symbols, such as $\ddot{e}$ or $\ddot{g}$.
- basic notions of articulatory phonetics, like which sounds are nasal, which sounds are voiced, and so on.
- the traditional idea in generative phonology that there is a lexicon of (possibly abstract) underlying representations which is transformed by a sequence of rules into a surface representation.
- the meaning of the expression $A \sim B / C \ldots D$ and what it does to /CAD/.

Quite literally, this is all I expect for background. But if you feel insecure, then talk to me and I’ll recommend some reading from one of the various fine phonology or phonetics textbooks that are available.

**The Plan in Outline:** The goal of this syllabus is to get up to speed on issues in contemporary phonological theory as quickly as possible. Rather than a backward-looking, historical orientation, the plan is my attempt to devise a course that is more forward-looking. Precedents in earlier work aren’t ignored, of course, but they aren’t allowed to determine the overall direction taken either.

Our primary focus will be on the role of constraints in determining phonological patterning, alternations, and typology. The organizing principle we will be looking to is the idea that constraints are ranked and violable, which is the fundamental tenet of *Optimality Theory* (Prince & Smolensky 1993). Simultaneously, we will depend on the problem sets and class discussion to draw in other issues that are important to phonology, such as the role and character of underlying representations, ways of organizing and analyzing phonological data, the relation of phonology to phonetics, types of phonological processes, and so on.

Here’s an approximate schedule of how we will proceed:

**Weeks 1–8** Introduction to constraints, Optimality Theory, phonological analysis, learnability. As empirical basis for this introduction, we will study prosodic phonology (syllabification, deletion, epenthesis, alignment, sentence phonology).

**Readings:**


Weeks 9-13  Segmental phonology (allophony, inventories, assimilation, dissimilation, harmony).

Readings:
- Lombardi, Linda (1995). Why Place and Voice are different: Constraint interactions and feature faithfulness in Optimality Theory, University of Maryland, College Park, MD.

Week 14 Overview and Summary of the Course