LING 4891: Research Seminar in Linguistics (CRN 35586)
Northeastern University, Spring 2015

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION
Instructor       H. Littlefield, Ph.D.
E-Mail          h.littlefield@neu.edu (preferred contact)
Office          548 Nightingale Hall; 617.373.3164
Office hours    Tuesdays, 12:50pm – 2:50pm; Fridays, 11:35am – 1:35pm
                If these times are not convenient, please contact me to set up an appointment.

COURSE INFORMATION
Weekly research meetings
Tuesdays, 11:45 am – 12:45 pm, Linguistics Program Seminar Room (545 Nightingale)

Course description
The research seminar in linguistics is meant to give students hands-on experience conducting research. Students will gain experience in all areas of conducting a research project: identifying a working hypothesis, designing and conducting the research project, writing up the results in a formal paper. Students are strongly encouraged to submit the results of their project to an undergraduate linguistics conference; exceptional work may be recommended for submission for publication.

COURSE RESOURCES
Blackboard website
Background readings, file downloads, and many other materials will be available on Blackboard. Most parts of the website will be set up as a file-share, and students are expected to share any materials that they find valuable.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Weekly presentations and participation
Although the research projects conducted by students in this course will consist mainly of independent work, the weekly research meetings are essential to the successful completion of a final, sound research project. These meetings are designed to (1) help students learn about the steps in conducting research, (2) encourage collaboration among students, (3) keep everyone motivated and progressing on their projects.

At each meeting, every student will present for approximately five to ten minutes, giving an overview of the progress made on their research project during the preceding week, raising any issues or problems that have arisen, and briefly outlining their goals for the coming week. As a group, we will discuss how to address the issues or questions that have come up, and give suggestions for future steps in the process.

Students will receive a grade for these weekly presentations based on how well prepared their presentation are, and demonstrated progress on the research project. Each student’s efforts to actively collaborate and contribute to the group will be included in this grade. Thus coming to the meeting to only present one’s own update and issues, but not participating in the discussion of other students’ research will negatively affect this grade.

Attendance at office hours
Students are also expected to meet individually or in small groups (depending on the type of research they are doing) with Prof. Littlefield to go into more detail about the steps their project will require. For example, some issues will be better discussed individually or in small groups, for example: talking about the details of using CLAN and CHAT to code and analyze child language transcripts, or proof-reading
IRB approval forms for students working with human subjects. Students are also expected to meet with Prof. Littlefield individually as the need arises, to cover any issues that arise that are specific to their project or experience.

**Research project**
Throughout the course, students will work on a research project of their own choice, guided by the instructor. Each of the different stages of the course will be discussed in turn, and milestones will be set in order to ensure that adequate progress is made throughout the term. Students should expect to spend an average of 10 to 12 hours a week working on their project in order to obtain a satisfactory level of depth and progress on the project.

Students will also be expected to turn in drafts of their work at key milestones throughout the semester. These drafts will be peer reviewed, reviewed by the instructor, and will be graded. Several key pieces of the project are outlined below; details on these and other parts of the project will be given in class and discussed before the due dates.

**Research project: Abstract**
All students will develop an abstract of their research, and ideally will submit this abstract to at least one conference. After discussing the elements and typical length requirements of abstracts, students will submit a draft of their abstract, and these will be revised through peer review until an abstract is achieved that could be submitted for a conference. Further details will be given in class.

**Research project: Presentation of findings**
At the end of the term (please be sure to save the date: April 22!) you will present the findings of your research to the class and the wider linguistics community at Northeastern. This will allow you to practice your presentation skills, preparing you to present research in the context of a professional conference poster session. It will also allow you to share the research of your results with a wider audience.

**Research project: Final paper**
Students will complete a final paper based on their research. This paper should be organized and written like an article in a linguistics journal would be. Typically, articles have one of two basic structures, depending on whether they are data oriented or theoretically oriented; we will discuss each type as well as the type of style sheet to use. Full details and expectations for the final paper will be given before students begin writing. Note that students should expect to complete a series of drafts before completing the final paper, and will begin turning in drafts of their work well in advance of the final due date for the paper.

**Peer review**
Professional research and writing is heavily shaped and informed by peer review and revision, and peer review will be utilized in this course to improve students’ research projects. Students will conduct peer reviews at each of the main milestones; these reviews will be graded. Guidelines and expectations for the peer review process will be given in class.

**COURSE GRADES**

**Calculation of grades**
In calculating grades, I use a criterion-referenced grading system. That means that your final grade for the course is calculated by taking the total number of points that you have earned in the class (including extra credit points) and dividing by the total number of possible points (excluding extra credit points). This percentage is used to assign your letter grade according to the scale below (see “Grading scale”). The anticipated values for the course requirements are provided below. In the unlikely event of the need to shift the total points (i.e. drop an assignment due to lack of time at the end of the term), you will be
notified in class. Importantly, all efforts will be made to keep the average weight of each requirement the same, so the relative value of each type of work is not altered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly presentations and participation (12 presentations)</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research project milestones</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final presentation</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total points:</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Anticipated values for course requirements

**Grading scale**
Because I am using a criterion-referenced system, I use an absolute scale (as shown below), and there is no curve. Note that “A” work is exceptional: it goes beyond just completing an assignment accurately and obviously exceeds the minimum requirements. It shows a clear attention to detail and demonstrates the highest levels of depth and breadth of conceptual comprehension.

Please note that while I have an “A+” grade listed here, Northeastern does not allow for the assignment of “A+” grades. I will, however, report this as the top grade possible in my courses in letters of recommendation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grade Range</th>
<th>Level of Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97 – 100%</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93 – 96.9%</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 92.9%</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89.9%</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 – 86.9%</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 82.9%</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 – 79.9%</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73 – 76.9%</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70 – 72.9%</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67 – 69.9%</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63 – 66.9%</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60 – 62.9%</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 – 59.9%</td>
<td>Failure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Grading scale

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Academic integrity**
All work that you turn in must be your own: cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (the invention of data) of any kind will not be accepted. Any violation of academic integrity will be immediately reported to the Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) and will be given an automatic zero. If you are unsure as to what constitutes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, etc., please see me before you turn in any work. I strongly recommend that you read the information at the following sites: www.northeastern.edu/osccr/ and www.lib.neu.edu/online_research/help/avoiding_plagiarism/.

**Respectful and professional collaboration**
During the weekly research meetings (and all other interactions), the highest level of professional behavior is expected. This means listening respectfully to others’ presentations and comments, and contributing and commenting on others’ work in a polite, respectful, and professional manner. Students
must also be sensitive to everyone’s right to participate: participants should not dominate class time or engage in disruptive behaviors (chatting with a neighbor, texting, surfing the web, etc.).

**Electronic devices**
Using personal electronic devices during the weekly research meetings can hinder instruction and learning, not only for you, but also for your classmates, and for me, your instructor. Please be courteous to all, and make sure to turn your cell phone off and keep it put away during class. Laptops, tablets and other electronic equipment are not allowed in class except for the express purpose of taking notes. Students may not work on their laptops, tablets, etc. for any other purpose, even working on their own work, while others are presenting: such behavior will adversely affect the participation and presentation grades.

**Students with disabilities**
If you have a documented disability (learning or otherwise) and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please meet with me as soon as possible so we can work out a plan to meet your needs.

**Submission of coursework**
All work must be submitted electronically, unless otherwise noted.

**General formatting guidelines**
All work must be typed with a standard 12-point serif font, be single-spaced, and have 1-inch margins; a stylesheet will be provided for more specific formatting guidelines.

**Late work**
All work must be turned in on time or ahead of time. “On time” for work due in class means at the beginning of class on the day that it is due; other deadlines will be specific as to date and time. If you will be absent, you must submit the assignment before the deadline. Late work will be deducted by 20%; assignments more than one week late will not be accepted, and will receive a score of ‘0’.

**WHERE TO FIND HELP**

**Instructor**
I am always happy to help answer questions, and provide extra assistance. Drop by anytime during my office hours, or make an appointment, if those aren’t convenient. I’m also happy to answer questions via e-mail (be sure to allow for a day or so, as I may not be able to respond immediately).

**Support groups**
Many students find that discussing their work with their fellow classmates helps them to understand the material more fully. Small groups of two to three people are ideal, as they allow for everyone to contribute their ideas and questions to the discussion.

**Blackboard**
All relevant class materials will be posted on blackboard; these will be helpful for reviewing the material and filling in your notes.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**
This schedule is tentative and may be revised over the course of the semester. If revised, you will receive an updated copy in class, and it will be posted on Blackboard. Due dates for assignments will be specified in class; the weeks when work is expected to be due are indicated here for general planning purposes.
Development of a Working Hypothesis; Project Design

January 13  Introduction; Identifying research interests

January 20  Literature Review

January 27  Planning the project: Considerations and concerns and types of data

February 3  Planning the project: IRB proposals; Applying for grants
  Turn in: Draft 1: Literature review and project plan

Data Collection

February 10  Data Collection

February 17  Data Collection
  Turn in: Draft 2: Preliminary abstract
            (Submit Abstract to RISE 2014 at Northeastern)

February 24  Data Collection
              (Submit Abstract to McGill University Undergraduate Linguistics Conference)
              (Submit Abstract to Harvard Undergraduate Linguistics Conference)

March 3  Data Collection

March 10  No meeting: Spring Break!
            (Submit Abstract to Harvard U Undergrad. Ling. Conference)

Data Analysis

March 17  Data Analysis
  Turn in: Draft 3: Data collection

March 24  Data Analysis

Preparing and Presenting the Results

March 31  Results

April 7  Results & Writing
  Turn in: Draft 4: Paper, incorporating results

April 14  Writing
  Turn in: Draft 5: Presentation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 21</td>
<td>Wrapping up</td>
<td>Turn in: Draft 6: Revised paper and abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 22</td>
<td>Final Presentations (Note: Wednesday, Time TBD!)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 24 – May 1</td>
<td>Finals Week</td>
<td>Turn in: Draft 7: Polished final paper and abstract</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>