

LING 6011: Formal Phonology

Yang Wang

Course

Semester: Fall 2025

Time: TuTh/09:10AM-10:30AM

Textbook: None

Website: Canvas

Location: LNCO 2945

Prerequisites: None

Instructor

Email: yangx.wang@utah.edu

Office Hours: Tu/Th 3:30pm - 4:30 pm or by APPT

Pronoun: she/her/hers

Location: LNCO 2321

1 Course Description

This course is an introduction to modern phonological theory with an emphasis on constraint-based formalisms. The course examines state-of-the-art analyses of phonological phenomena such as syllabification, prosodic morphology, segmental phonology, opacity, metrical phonology, and conspiracies. Theoretical concerns that have driven research on these topics are also addressed, such as factorial typologies, positional faithfulness and markedness, serialism versus parallelism, and rules versus constraints.

2 Course Outcomes and Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Gain familiarity with the core data of phonology.
- Develop a basic understanding of the issues that drive the field.
- Learn to approach new data, and develop a formal analysis of it
- Learn to formulate, and communicate in writing, a clear description and analysis of a set of data in a paper

3 Course materials

You are not required to purchase any textbooks or materials for this class. All necessary materials, including assignments, lecture notes, slides, and readings, will be distributed through the course website on Canvas. If you would like to use some materials as references, I recommend the following.

- Kager, René (1999). *Optimality Theory*. Cambridge UP.

- McCarthy, John (2008). *Doing Optimality Theory*. Blackwell. (available electronically in Marriott Library, click on the link to get a copy).¹

4 Course requirements and grading

Grade break-down

Homework	60%			
Final paper: presentation	10%			
Final paper: paper itself	30%			
In total	100%			
		+		-
		A	94–100%	90–93.99%
		B	87–89.99%	84–86.99%
		C	77–79.99%	74–76.99%
		D	67–69.99%	64–66.99%
		E		≤ 59.99%

Note: As a beginning graduate student, your focus should shift from concern over the grades you’re earning to engaging with the course material in a way appropriate for a (novice) researcher. Even if phonology is not your concentration, it is your responsibility to approach the course not as a hurdle to clear, but as an opportunity to learn concepts and tools that are essential to you as a linguist (e.g., how to read, write and argue; how to present your ideas). Nonetheless, grades are the department’s and university’s formal way of monitoring your progress, so here is how to interpret your final grades.

Grades you may receive	How to interpret it	Translation to a letter grade
4	Exceeds expectations	A+
3	Satisfactory	A
2	Near satisfactory	B
1	Unsatisfactory	C
0	No submission	E

To be clear, if you’re receiving anything less than 3, you should be concerned!

4.1 Homework (60%)

Homework assignments involve problem sets posted on Canvas. For each one, develop an analysis and write a short paper presenting that analysis. We’ll talk about writing phonology papers early in the semester. Homework is due **at the beginning of class**. Late homework will not be accepted unless you’ve made specific arrangements with me.

You are encouraged to work together on the homework, but be sure to do the write-up on your own. Homework should be typed and submitted on Canvas. While you are expected to submit all For the assignments, I will disregard the two with the lowest grades when calculating final averages.

If you need help figuring out how to insert IPA symbols into your documents, see the resources on Canvas, or ask me about doing IPA in \LaTeX —it’s actually pretty easy. It is generally not necessary to include a bibliography in your homework write-ups unless you consult sources beyond the course materials (readings, lectures, slides, etc.).

¹You may find it helpful to consult this book as you do homework write-ups.

4.2 Final project

In lieu of a final exam, you'll be expected to write a term paper (about 8-12 pages, double-spaced), **due by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, December 12, 2025**. The assignment is a simple one: find a phenomenon we haven't talked about in class and develop an analysis of it using the theory from class. To help you get going, there will be assignments — such as a topic proposal and a bibliography — throughout the semester. You will give a short presentation (10-20 minutes) at the end of the semester.

5 Course policies

1. **Email policy:** please email me instead of leaving me a message on Canvas. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours on weekdays. If you haven't heard back from me within that time, feel free to follow up with another email.
2. **Office hours:** Office hours are a space for us to discuss any issues or concerns you might have with the class, and you are always welcome to drop by, whether or not you have a specific question. Beyond the designated office hours, I have an open-door policy: if you see my door open, feel free to knock, and I'll be happy to help with any questions you have.
3. **On the role of attendance:** This would be one of your very first classes as a graduate student and a professional linguist! While attendance and participation won't directly impact your grade, they will absolutely make a great difference to your experience (and mine too). I can promise you'll get much more out of the course if you show up, ask questions, and share your thoughts. I always enjoy your questions, even when I am embarrassed not to have an answer.
If you tend to be shy, think of this class as a safe space to practice and grow. Engaging in discussion is part of your professional training, and there's no better place to start than right here.
4. Please know that my goal as an instructor is to support your success in this class and in your education as much as possible. I aim to challenge you, but not to set you up for failure. Please make use of office hours and class time to ask any questions you may have.

6 Course schedule (tentative)

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Deadlines</i>
1	8/19	Introduction, review, and previews	
	8/21	From rules to constraints: conspiracies	
2	8/26	Optimality theory: The logic of ranking	HW1 due
	8/28	Segmental Phonology	
3	9/02	Segmental Phonology II	HW2 due
	9/04	Segmental Phonology III	
4	9/09	Metrical Phonology I	HW3 due
	9/11	Metrical Phonology II	
5	9/16	Metrical Phonology III	
	9/18	Morphophonology I	
6	9/23	Morphophonology II	HW4 due
	9/25	Morphophonology III	
7	9/30	Morphophonology IV	
	10/02	Morphophonology V	
8	10/07	<i>Fall break</i>	
	10/09	<i>Fall break</i>	
9	10/14	Autosegmentalism	Final project topic due
	10/16	Positional Asymmetries	
10	10/21	Positional Markedness & Faithfulness I	HW 6 due
	10/23	Positional Markedness & Faithfulness II	
11	10/28	Positional Markedness & Faithfulness III	
	10/30	Variation I	
12	11/04	Variation II	HW 7 due
	11/06	Variation III	
13	11/11	Opacity & Process interactions I	
	11/13	Opacity & Process interactions II	
14	11/18	Acquisition I	HW 8 due
	11/20	Acquisition II	
15	11/25	Acquisition III	
	11/27	<i>Thanksgiving</i>	
16	12/02	Course wrap up I	
	12/04	Course wrap up II	
	12/12	Final paper due	

Note: This syllabus is meant to serve as an outline and guide for our course. Please note that I may modify it with reasonable notice to you. I may also modify the Course Schedule to accommodate the needs of our class. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas under Announcements.

7 Getting help

- (a) **Accommodations.** Accommodations will be considered on an individual basis and may require documentation. Please contact Yang as soon as possible (preferably shortly before the semester begins) to request accommodations of any kind.
- (b) **Extreme personal circumstances.** Please contact your instructor as soon as possible if an extreme personal circumstance (hospitalization, death of a close relative, natural disaster, etc.) is interfering with your ability to complete your work.
- (c) **Religious practices.** To request an accommodation for religious practices, contact your instructor at the beginning of the semester.
- (d) **Active duty military.** If you are a student on active duty with the military and experience issues that prevent you from participating in the course because of deployment or service responsibilities, contact Yang as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations.
- (e) **Disability access.** All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services (CDS). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. Prior notice is appreciated. To read the full accommodations policy for the University of Utah, please see Section Q of the Instruction & Evaluation regulations (<http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6100.php>). If you will need accommodations in this class, contact the Center for Disability Services 801-581-5020 (<https://disability.utah.edu/>).

1. Your success at the University of Utah is important to all of us here! If you feel like you need extra support in academics, overcoming personal difficulties, or finding community, the U is here for you. Please refer to the [Student Support Services](#) page for the U for updated information. Please feel welcome to reach out to Yang to handle issues regarding your coursework.
2. Success at The University of Utah includes learning about and using available resources. The Basic Needs Collective (BNC) is a coordinated resource referral hub. They educate about and connect students to campus and community resources to help them meet their basic needs. As a central location for resource referrals related to food, housing, health insurance, managing finances, legal services, mental health, etc., any student experiencing difficulty with basic needs is encouraged to contact them. Drop into their office located in the Union basement or schedule with them online for an in-person or virtual visit through their webpage: <https://basicneeds.utah.edu/>.

8 University Policies

1. **The Americans with Disabilities Act.** The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability & Access, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to [the Center for Disability & Access](#).

Given the nature of this course, attendance is required and adjustments will only be permitted as required by Policy 6-100(III)(O). If you need to seek an ADA accommodation to request an exception to this attendance policy due to a disability, please contact the Center for Disability and Access (CDA). CDA will work with us to determine what, if any, ADA accommodations are reasonable and appropriate.

In compliance with ADA requirements, some students may need to record course content. Any recordings of course content are for personal use only, should not be shared, and should not be made publicly available. In addition, recordings should be destroyed at the conclusion of the course.

2. **University Safety Statement.** The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit <https://safeu.utah.edu>
3. **Addressing Sexual Misconduct.** Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information.

If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 383 South University Street, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

Lauren's Promise: Lauren's Promise is a vow that anyone – faculty, staff, students, parents, and community members – can take to indicate to others that they represent a safe haven for sharing incidents of sexual assault, domestic violence, or stalking. Anyone who makes Lauren's Promise vows to: 1.) listen to and believe those individuals who are being threatened or experiencing sexual assault, dating violence or stalking; 2.) represent a safe haven for sharing incidents of sexual assault, domestic violence, or stalking; and 3.) change campus culture that responds poorly to dating violence and stalking. By making Lauren's Promise, individuals are helping to change campus cultures that respond poorly to dating violence and stalking throughout the nation.

4. **Academic Misconduct Statement.** It is expected that students adhere to University of Utah policies regarding academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. This includes the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools without citation, documentation, or authorization. Students are expected to adhere to the prescribed professional and ethical standards of the profession/discipline for which they are preparing. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty or who violates the professional and ethical standards for their profes-

sion/discipline may be subject to academic sanctions as per the University of Utah's Student Code: <https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-410.php>

5. **Drop/Withdrawal Policies.** Students may drop a course within the first two weeks of a given semester without any penalties. Students may officially withdraw (W) from a class or all classes after the drop deadline through the midpoint of a course. A "W" grade is recorded on the transcript and appropriate tuition/fees are assessed. The grade "W" is not used in calculating the student's GPA. For deadlines to withdraw from full-term, first, and second session classes, see the U's Academic Calendar.