

Linguistics Program

Western Washington University

Mission Statement

The Linguistics major engages the student in the scientific analysis of human language. Students analyze the structural components of language: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Students also study how language is acquired, how it varies across time and space, and how it is used in different social contexts. Students are introduced to various subfields of linguistics, including neurolinguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, historical linguistics, computational linguistics, applied linguistics, and discourse analysis. Because linguistics is inherently interdisciplinary, students also develop a solid foundation in a second language, and engage in a concentration based in one of the following departments or programs: Anthropology, Communication Sciences and Disorders, Computer Science, English, Modern and Classical Languages, Philosophy, Psychology, and Teaching of English as a Second Language. Our classes engage students in critical inquiry, enabling them to become informed participants in public discourse about language.

As students progress through the major they will acquire the following:

Skills and Abilities

- recognize and understand the basic fields of linguistic inquiry
- gather and synthesize linguistic data effectively and ethically
- formulate and test hypotheses
- draw conclusions and inferences from linguistic evidence
- conduct linguistic research and present the findings
- demonstrate communicative ability in a another oral or gestural language
- apply knowledge of linguistics to other fields

Knowledge

- understand the biological basis of language
- analyze the structural components of language
- understand language as a grammatical system
- understand social factors that shape language structure and use
- understand theoretical concepts and methodologies for thinking critically about language
- understand how languages vary across time and space

Program Goals

Increasing interest in the program has led to a thriving major. To support this successful program, faculty continue to:

- pursue cutting edge research agendas that encourage professional visibility through delivering papers at professional conferences and through publication
- explore new ways to involve students in their research
- make effective use of technology in instruction particularly through the use of computers for linguistic analysis
- participate in career fairs and other campus events to promote the major and increase its visibility
- assess the effectiveness of courses in the major and to implement any changes that improve the program, to make it reflect current standards of the discipline
- insure that students have access to courses in the major, and are able to meet major requirements in a timely manner
- explore ways to increase support for the major (through work-study students and program assistant)
- provide an intellectually engaging introduction to the major
- provide an effective senior capstone experience to help prepare students to apply their skills and knowledge beyond graduation
- offer multiple sections of quality GUR courses to contribute to the overall mission of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and the University to provide a liberal arts education for our students, and in particular, an understanding of language.
- provide career advising to help prepare students for employment in the field
- place students in top graduate programs

Assessment

Linguistics Program faculty are engaged in an ongoing process of assessing the effectiveness of the program in meeting the above goals. Assessment includes the following:

- evaluating and improving the effectiveness of course design and content
- evaluating and improving the senior capstone colloquium experience
- tracking placement of graduates in graduate programs to assess the effectiveness of career advising
- designing, implementing and evaluating exit interviews to gather information for assessment
- periodically reviewing student evaluations, peer observations, syllabi, textbooks, exams, etc.
- implementing alumni surveys (via the program newsletter)
- reflecting, collaboratively, on teaching practices that address student learning outcomes

There are many examples of how the linguistics assessment plan has been implemented both formally and informally, but the majority of the changes brought about by assessment are undertaken on a course-by-course basis by individual professors. For this reason, and to be as complete and thorough

as possible, the linguistics program assessment contains individual plans for courses at all levels.

Direct measures of student outcomes for objectives are assessed by individual professors, accomplished by evaluating the results of activities and exams specifically designed to monitor the competency in question. So, professors are responsible for maintaining a direct link between goals, syllabi, and course activities. The senior colloquium presentation facilitates follow-up to individual original research, under the guidance of the faculty mentor of the student's choosing.