

# **Advancing Linguistics as a Science in Undergraduate Programs:** *Issues and strategies*

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# Background

- Ph.D. in Linguistics from USC
  - Phonology, phonetics, and psycholinguistics
  - Teaching Assistant for *Language and Mind* course for 2 years
- Assistant professor at Boise State since Fall 2009
  - Linguistics is housed in the English department
    - Within College of Arts and Science
  - As of Fall 2009, only 7 linguistics courses
  - Several venues for proposing new courses
- New courses include *Language and Mind*, *Phonetics and Phonology*, and a revamped *Psycholinguistics* course.

# As a TA for Language and Mind

- Firsthand experience working with undergraduate students on application of scientific methods in relation to speech.
  - Drove home the explicit emphasis on how linguists bring the methods of science to the study of language
    - In lab meetings, there were several experiments students participated in and conducted
    - Lectures and discussions reinforced scientific thought process
  - There were constant connections of science and linguistics to real-world issues

# Options for new courses at BSU

- Within English department/linguistics program:
  - Special topics courses
  - Advanced topics courses
- University-wide options:
  - General Education offerings
  - Honors seminar

# LING X97 - Special Topics

- Only requires departmental curriculum committee approval to be taught
- May be taught up to three times before having to submit official course proposal to university curriculum committee
- Allows for flexibility of level – 197, 297, 397, 497

## **LING 497 – Phonetics and Phonology**

- Articulatory and acoustic phonetics (including vocal tract and ear anatomy)
- Phonological representations
- Now required course for all majors as part of new linguistics curriculum

# LING 424 – Advanced Topics

- Only requires departmental curriculum committee approval to be taught
- Allows instructors to create course around research interests
- Builds on students' previous knowledge in more depth

## **Possible topics:**

- Laboratory phonology
- Experimental methods in psycholinguistics
- Experimental methods in phonetics
- Research methods in linguistics

# HON 392 - Honors Seminar

- 3-unit upper-division seminar course
- Course approval through Honors advisory board
- Honors College encourages courses that “feature multiple intellectual and/or disciplinary perspectives [and are team-taught]”
- Encourages faculty to recruit from Honors College

## **Language and Mind (Fall 2011, Fall 2012)**

- 3-unit course, 75 minutes twice a week
- Examining cognitive science through a linguistic lens
- Discussions of readings, lectures, experiments, in-class group work

# General Education Offerings

- Courses qualifying for a **natural or physical science** must meet the following learning outcome:
  - *Apply knowledge and the methods characteristic of scientific inquiry to think critically about and solve theoretical and practical problems about physical structures and processes.*
- Courses qualifying for a **social science** must meet the following learning outcome:
  - *Apply knowledge and the methods of inquiry characteristic of the social sciences to explain and evaluate human behavior and institutions.*



# Remaining Challenges

- Linguistics viewed as a liberal art/in the humanities
  - Some students are surprised to find the scientific nature of the class more challenging than expected.
  - Although we were able to propose a GE course of linguistics as a social science, we have yet to get buy in from colleagues in the hard sciences to be able to offer a course like *Language and Mind* as natural or physical science course.

# Thank You!

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