

LING 27480 / LACS 27480 / HMRT 27480

Linguistic Minorities & Language Rights in the Americas

This syllabus is up-to-date as of: June 2019.

1 Basic information and course description

Instructor:	Adam Roth Singerman
Adam's e-mail:	adamsingerman@uchicago.edu
Adam's title:	Teaching Fellow in the Humanities
Adam's preferred pronouns:	he, him, his
Quarter:	Spring 2019
Meeting time:	Mondays and Wednesdays, 3 to 4:20
Classroom:	Social Sciences Research Building 107
Office hours:	by appointment in Adam's office (Rosenwald 205G)

This course examines the ongoing struggle to maintain, preserve, and revitalize the native languages of the Americas. We ask how that struggle can be better understood as part of a wider initiative, grounded in human rights, to promote indigenous cultural traditions in the face of the European colonization/invasion of the New World. Issues addressed in this course will include: the history of indigenous American languages; the interrelated phenomena of language shift, language endangerment, and language death; and the maintenance and survival of endangered languages of the Americas into the present day. We ask whether recent efforts at the documentation and revitalization of endangered languages are compatible with community-internal language ideologies, with known cases of shift from one indigenous language to another, and with processes of ethno-genesis triggered (at least in part) by European interference. In readings and class discussions we will focus in particular on the Uto-Aztecan peoples of the United States and Mexico; the modern Maya of Guatemala and Mexico; the Aymara and Quechua speakers of the Andes; and the various Native peoples who participate in the Upper Rio Negro contact zone (Brazil and Colombia).

2 Prerequisites

This course will assume no background in linguistics. Relevant linguistic topics, such as historical relations between indigenous languages of the Americas, will be introduced in the course without

any assumption of prior knowledge. While it will be helpful for students to have knowledge of Spanish, Portuguese, or a native language of the Americas, this is not necessary; all required readings will be in English. Students may benefit from having taken at least one quarter of the Latin American Civilizations sequence (but this, too, is optional).

3 Evaluation

The students' final grades will be based on their performance in the following three areas:

1. regular attendance and participation in classroom discussions
2. regular posts to the Canvas sites in response to the readings
3. taking part in the final project (the collective annotated bibliography)

Students are expected to attend each class session and to actively participate in discussion. To make our classroom time as effective as possible, students should always complete the readings in advance of the class when they are due. For each reading, please post one to two paragraphs to the discussion board on our Canvas site by noon on the day of class. In these discussion posts you should raise follow-up questions in response to the readings. You should feel free to be critical (in a productive way) if you feel that doing so is warranted.

For the final project we'll be creating a collective annotated bibliography. Students will have the opportunity to seek out material on topics of interest to them. Each person will be responsible for discussing several peer-reviewed articles and/or significant portions of a book manuscript. The idea is to create a group document that (*a*) will be useful for all of us and (*b*) will reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the course (and the students' diverse set of interests).

4 Accommodations

Please provide a letter from Student Disability Services as soon as possible in order for me to accommodate your needs during our class. It's the policy of the University not to offer retroactive accommodations, so providing the letter now, at the beginning of the quarter, is key.

5 Readings and laptops

You do not need to buy any books for this course. All assigned readings will be accessible in digital form through the University of Chicago Library or, failing that, posted as PDFs to the Canvas site. You are encouraged to make use of our Library's ample digital resources, including the wonderful Oxford and Cambridge Handbooks.

I request that you do not use laptops or cellphones during class except to follow the readings.

6 Class plan and readings

Monday, April 1st

No class because of instructor's conference travel.

Wednesday, April 3rd & Monday, April 8th

Historical linguistics and indigenous American linguistic diversity.

- Introduction, section I ('Race and Language') from Franz Boas's Introduction to the *Handbook of American Indian Languages*
UChicago Library link: <https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/10517177>
- Chapter 3 ('The Origin of American Indian Languages') from Lyle Campbell's 1997 monograph, *American Indian Languages: The Historical Languages of Native America*
UChicago Library link: <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/2449046>

Wednesday, April 10th

Early theorizing around language endangerment and language death.

- Swadesh, Morris. 1948. 'Sociologic Notes on Obsolescent Languages.' *International Journal of American Linguistics* 14(4):226–235.
link: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1262876>
- Hill, Jane H. 1983. 'Language Death in Uto-Aztecan.' *International Journal of American Linguistics* 49(3):258–276.
link: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1265162>

Monday, April 15th

More on the theory of language endangerment and language death.

- continued discussion of Swadesh 1948 and Hill 1983
- Selections from Hale, Kenneth, Michael Krauss, Lucille J. Watahomigie, Akira Y. Yamamoto, Colette Craig, LaVerne Masayesva Jeanne, and Nora C. England. 1992. 'Endangered languages'. *Language* 68(1):1–42.
link: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/416368> (please read the contributions by Hale and Krauss)
- **optional:**
selections from Evans, Nicholas. 2010. *Dying Words: Endangered Languages and What They Have to Tell Us*. West Sussex, United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell.
UChicago Library link: <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/10369773>

Wednesday, April 17th

Critiquing the theory and rhetoric of language endangerment.

- Hill, Jane H. 2002. ‘Expert Rhetorics’ in Advocacy for Endangered Languages: Who Is Listening, and What Do They Hear?’ *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 12(2):119–33.
DOI: [10.1525/jlin.2002.12.2.119](https://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.2002.12.2.119)
- The responses to Hill 2002 (‘Expert Rhetorics’ in Advocacy for Endangered Languages’) by Nancy Dorian, Nora England, Joshua Fishman, and Leanne Hinton, all in *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 12(2).
- **optional:**
Labov, William. 2010. ‘Unendangered Dialect, Endangered People: The case of African American Vernacular English.’ *Transforming Anthropology* 18(1):15–27.
DOI: [10.1111/j.1548-7466.2010.01066.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-7466.2010.01066.x)

Monday, April 22nd

More critiques of the theory and rhetoric of language endangerment.

- Muehlmann, Shaylih. 2016. ‘Languages die like rivers’: Entangled endangerments in the Colorado Delta.’ In *Endangerment, Biodiversity and Culture*. Fernando Vidal and Nélia Dias, editors, pages 41–61. London and New York: Routledge.
- Perley, Bernard C. 2012. ‘Zombie Linguistics: Experts, Endangered Languages and the Curse of Undead Voices.’ *Anthropological Forum*, 22(2):133-149.
DOI: [10.1080/00664677.2012.694170](https://doi.org/10.1080/00664677.2012.694170)
- Chapter six (‘Death by suicide’) from Perley, Bernard C. 2011. *Defying Maliseet Language Death*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
UChicago Library link: <https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/11134408>

Wednesday, April 24th

Language vitality and standardization in Mesoamerica.

- England, Nora C. 1995. ‘Linguistics and indigenous American languages: Mayan examples.’ *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 1(1):122-149.

Monday, April 29th

More on language vitality and standardization in Mesoamerica, with a special focus on the Mayan languages of Guatemala.

- England, Nora C. 2003. 'Mayan Language Revival and Revitalization Politics: Linguists and Linguistic Ideologies.' *American Anthropologist*, 105(4):733–43.
link: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3567138>
- Cojtí Cuxil, Demetrio. 2008. 'Higher Education and the Mayan Movement in Guatemala.' In *Indigenous Peoples: Self-determination, Knowledge, Indigeneity*, edited by Henry Minde in collaboration with Svein Jentoft, Harald Gaski, and Georges Midré. Netherlands: Eburon Delft. 313–330.
- Mateo-Toledo, B'alam. 2003. 'The use of languages' names: the Mayan case.' *International Journal of American Linguistics* 69(2):151–153.
link: www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/379682

Wednesday, May 1st

Complications surrounding documentation, revitalization, and standardization: two Guatemalan case studies.

- Hofling, Charles Andrew. 1996. 'Indigenous Linguistic Revitalization and Outsider Interaction: the Itzaj Maya Case.' *Human Organization* 55(1):108–116.
link: www.jstor.org/stable/44126592
- Romero, Sergio. 2012. "They Don't Get Speak Our Language Right': Language Standardization, Power And Migration among the Q'eqchi' Maya.' *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 22(2):E21–E41.

Monday, May 6th

Language rights and their legal context in human rights discourse, with a focus on contradictions within the United Nations' *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

- May, Stephen. 2014. 'Justifying Educational Language Rights.' *Review of Research in Education* 38:215–241.
DOI: [10.3102/0091732X13506694](https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X13506694)
- Hamel, Rainer Enrique. 1994. 'Indigenous education in Latin America: policies and legal frameworks.' In *Linguistic human rights: overcoming linguistic discrimination*, edited by Tove-Skuttnabb Kangas and Robert Phillipson in collaboration with Mart Rannut. Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter. 271–281.

- Hamel, Rainer Enrique. 1994. 'Linguistic rights for Amerindian peoples in Latin America.' In *Linguistic human rights: overcoming linguistic discrimination*, edited by Tove-Skuttinnabb Kangas and Robert Phillipson in collaboration with Mart Rannut. Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter. 289–303.
- **optional:**
Dunbar, Robert. 2001. 'Minority language rights in international law.' *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 50:90–120.

Wednesday, May 8th

Problematizing language rights via a North American case study.

- Whiteley, Peter. 2003. 'Do "language rights" serve indigenous interests? Some Hopi and other queries.' *American Anthropologist*, 105(4):712–22.

Monday, May 13th

Introduction to language contact and language history in South America. (There aren't any readings assigned for today. Please take the opportunity to work on your final bibliographies and also to make up any Canvas discussion posts that you are behind on.)

Wednesday, May 15th

More on language contact and language history in South America.

- Epps, Patience. 2009. 'Language classification, language contact, and Amazonian prehistory.' *Language and Linguistics Compass* 3(2):581–606.
- Emlen, Nicholas Q. 2016. 'Multilingualism in the Andes and Amazonia: A View from In-Between.' *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 22(3):556–577.
- **optional:**
Muysken, Pieter. 'Modelling the Quechua-Aymara Relationship: Structural Features, Sociolinguistic Scenarios, and Possible Archaeological Evidence.' In *Proceedings of the British Academy – 173. Archaeology and Language in the Andes: A Cross-Disciplinary Exploration of Prehistory*, edited by Paul Heggarty and David Beresford-Jones, pages 85–109. Oxford: Oxford University Press, publishing for the British Academy.
- **optional:**
Adelaar, Willem F.H. 2012. 'Languages of the Middle Andes in areal-typological perspective: emphasis on Quechuan and Aymaran.' In *The Indigenous Languages of South America: a comprehensive guide*, Lyle Campbell and Verónica Grondona, eds., pages 575–624.

Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

UChicago Library link: <https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/8626320>

Monday, May 20th

Do Native Andean cord-keeping practices constitute reading and writing? A look at the still enigmatic khipus.

- Urton, Gary. 2008. 'The Inca Khipu: Knotted-Cord Record Keeping in the Andes.' In *Handbook of South American Archaeology*, edited by Helaine Silverman and William H. Isbell, pages 831–843. New York: Springer.

UChicago Library link: <https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/8884872>

- Hyland, Sabine. 2017. 'Writing with Twisted Cords: The Inscriptive Capacity of Andean Khipus.' *Current Anthropology* 58(3):412–419.

- **optional:**

Covey, R. Alan. 2008. 'The Inca Empire.' In *Handbook of South American Archaeology*, edited by Helaine Silverman and William H. Isbell, pages 809–830. New York: Springer.

UChicago Library link: <https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/8884872>

- **optional:**

Urton, Gary. 2014. 'From Middle Horizon cord-keeping to the rise of Inka khipus in the central Andes.' *Antiquity* 88:205–221.

DOI: [10.1017/S0003598X00050316](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003598X00050316)

Wednesday, May 22nd

The continuation of cord-keeping into the present day, and the ramifications of our understanding of indigeneity in the Andes.

- Chapter five ('The Khipu Art after the Inkas') and chapter six ('The patrimonial quipocamayos of Tupicocha') from Salomon, Frank. 2004. *The cord keepers: khipus and cultural life in a Peruvian village*. Durham: Duke University Press.

UChicago Library link: <https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/10516334>

Monday, May 27th

No class because of Memorial Day. Please e-mail Adam with an update about your annotated bibliography: what topic you've settled on, what sources you're planning on including, what problems (if any) you've run into, etc.

Wednesday, May 29th

Can we make human rights discourse intelligible across linguistic and cultural boundaries? A case study from Chiapas, Mexico.

- Pitarch, Pedro. 2008. 'The Labyrinth of Translation: a Tzeltal version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.' In *Human Rights in the Maya Region: Global Politics, Cultural Contentions, and Moral Engagements*, edited by Pedro Pitarch, Shannon Speed, and Xochitl Leyva Solano, pages 91–121. Durham: Duke University Press.

Monday, June 3rd and Wednesday, June 5th

Synthesis and discussion of the themes we've addressed this quarter, with informal presentations by students about the topics they've chosen for their annotated bibliographies.

Friday, June 7th

Deadline for graduating seniors to submit their annotated bibliographies.

Friday, June 14th

Deadline for everyone else to submit their annotated bibliographies.