

Syllabus: Metrics

Class: Tues./Thurs. 2-4, in Public Policy 1278

Instructor: **Bruce Hayes**, Department of Linguistics
Office: Campbell Hall 2101G
Phone: 825-9507
bhayes@humnet.ucla.edu
Mailbox: Campbell 3125

Office hours: Mon. 12-1, Wed. 2-4, and by appointment
Since there are no sections for the course, I especially encourage you to come see me with questions.

Prerequisites: Linguistics 20 and Linguistics 103. Linguistics 120A is recommended.

Required text: We will work from a bundle of Xeroxed readings; see below.

Course requirements:

- **Readings**—Xeroxed articles and chapters from a text I am slowly writing. Please remit \$20 to cover Ling. Dept.'s Xeroxing costs.
- About 8 **homeworks** (40% of grade).
 - The homeworks will cover scansion, syllabification, syntax, and other core aspects of the course material. Some of the homeworks will examine your term paper verse material and should help you make progress on the paper.
- A **term paper**, the work for which will be done partly as part of the homeworks. The term paper will analyze and discuss a sample of verse of your choice. (58% of grade)
- At least one **appointment** with me to discuss your paper topic, before you proceed (2% of grade).

COURSE CONTENT

This course surveys **metrics**, a field of linguistics that studies the (usually unconscious) rules by which verse is constructed. Metrics is a good area for applying what you have learned in other linguistics courses. To scan a line of poetry accurately, you need to understand its:

- **Phonetics and phonology** (for instance, to establish its syllable count, its stress pattern, and the weight of its syllables)
- **Syntax** (because line division and other phenomena depend on phrasing)
- **Semantics** (because focus stress and other semantic phenomena influence scansion)

In this course, we will review (and, where appropriate, learn) the relevant linguistics and apply it in the construction of grammars that determine

- the correct **scansion** (rhythmic alignment to the meter) of lines of verse
- the **well-formedness** (metrical acceptability) of verse.

Metrics is unique in linguistics because the data samples selected for analysis are not ordinary bits of language, but are considered to have esthetic value. Sometimes this can be a distraction (we need to maintain a strictly scientific outlook even when we study a masterpiece), but it also makes metrics a fun area for many linguists.

I hope to cover a fairly wide range of verse, including poets of the English literary canon (Shakespeare, Milton, Gerard Manley Hopkins), as well as sung English folk verse gathered by field workers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. If time permits I will also cover a bit of popular verse (e.g., rap) and metrics of other languages.

PLANNED SERIES OF TOPICS

1. Quatrains and the idea of metrical rules

- rules for regulating quatrain structure
- The puzzle of Emily Dickinson

2. Phonological backgrounds for the study of metrics

- Stress
 - transcription; rules regulating stress; analysis through “stress profiles”
- Juncture
 - assessing juncture from syntactic structure; role of juncture in metrics; “break profiles”
 - word-break verse in other languages: Japanese

3. Forms of Spoken Verse

- iambic pentameter: Shakespeare
 - assigning stress in older text
 - interactions between stress and word boundaries/phrasing
 - the hierarchical pattern of pentameter: evolution from 2+3 to 3+2
- iambic pentameter: Milton

possible variation between poets
conventionalized phonology in poetry: prosodic rules
sprung rhythm: Gerard Manley Hopkins
inspirations for Hopkins from Milton

4. Beyond English

Quantity in Persian, Japanese, Serbo-Croatian
Word-break verse in various languages