

Syllabus for Proseminar: Vowel Harmony

1. Professor Information

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Spring 2019
Office hours: Tues. 4-5, Fri. 2-3
Campbell 2101G

2. Content

Vowel harmony is an empirical area that lies at the center of contemporary phonological theorizing. It contributes to almost every debate: framework architecture, formal character of constraints, learnability, role of phonetics in phonology.

Class plan: I will cover a different harmony system Socratically in each class, then plunge into course content.

Course content: (1) extended wallowing in data and typology; (2) seeing what various theorists have to offer; (3) relevant phonetics; (4) experiments (artificial grammar learning and otherwise).

3. Web site

- I will use the standard CCLE web site and post papers there.

4. Requirements

- For **4 units**, do the readings and do a term paper. The term paper should be given to the class as a talk at some point (late is ok) during the quarter.
- For the term paper I require you make two appointments with me during the quarter.
 - Deadlines: end of fifth week, end of tenth week
- If you have an existing project on vowel harmony, I would be happy for your project to be the upgrading of your work toward the goal of submitting it to a conference or journal.
- For **2 units**, do the readings.

5. Tentative topics to be covered (input welcome)

5.1 *Typology*

- What features can harmonize?
- Principles of “traffic control” in vowel harmony

- stem control
- dominant/recessive harmony
- directional harmony
- The “spread bad trigger” principle: Kaun/McCollum
- Non-harmonic vowels: opacity, transparency, translucency
 - What vowels can be transparent and why?
 - The phonetics of transparent segments (silent micro-undergoers?): Kinyarwanda, Hungarian, Finnish, Turkish
 - Translucent vowels and their analysis in probabilistic phonology
 - Consonant triggers of vowel harmony (Turkish, Hungarian, Uighur)
- Vowel harmony phenomena claimed impossible (which apparently exist!): myopia, majority rules

5.2 Frameworks

- Humble Phonology (classical OT, with constraints that include enough features to do the job). How far can we take this?
- Agreement By Correspondence (Rose-Walker etc.) — what are the arguments for and against?
- Frameworks in which hidden structure (span markers) are employed — McCarthy, Cole/Kisseberth
- Frameworks in which you get “credit” for spreading
- The distance problem
 - How do weak local triggers compete with strong distal ones?

5.3 Learning and UG

- Experimental work by Wilson, Finley, Peperkamp, others, including artificial grammar learning
- Can vowel harmony rules be unnatural? Does this impinge on learnability?