

## 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](mailto: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