# Historical Linguistics

## Prof. Paola Pontani

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course aims to introduce students to the issues and methods of historical comparative linguistics and to make them aware of the mechanisms that regulate the diachronic evolution of languages.

Intended learning outcomes

- Know the theoretical principles, interpretative methods and models of historical linguistics

-Know the history of the subject and its essential outline

-Know the classification of Indo-European languages and their main characteristics

-To know the fundamentals of cognitive linguistics

-Know how to apply the comparative-reconstruction method

-Know how to distinguish and describe different typologies of change

-Know how to identify, illustrate and explain linguistic phenomena found in historical-natural languages from a diachronic perspective

-Know how to use specific terminology in a consistent and appropriate manner

-Make connections between theoretical notions learned in class and direct observation of empirical data related to ancient and modern languages.

-Elaborate autonomous reflections on the mechanisms of language and communication in general

***COURSE CONTENTS***

**Module A**

1. The main issues and methodologies of historical-comparative linguistics
2. The history of linguistics (18th and 19th century)
3. Indo-European languages (part 1)

**Module B**

1. History of linguistic thought (from the 19th to mid-20th century)
2. Indo-European languages (part 2)
3. Historical linguistics and cognitive linguistics

***READING LIST***

Lecture notes.

A supplementary reading list will be provided during the course.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Frontal lectures. Students are expected to take an active part through commentary on linguistic data and the application of the comparative-reconstructive method.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The final assessment will consist of an oral exam. The oral exam will assess students’ understanding of course contents and their ability to apply this knowledge, particularly by commenting on the phenomena/texts discussed in lectures.

Students will be assessed on soundness of answers (50%), ability to justify statements, hypotheses and interpretations (30%), communication skills and use of specialist terminology (20%).

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

There are no prerequisites for attending the course. However, students should already have basic knowledge of traditional modalities of meta-linguistic description of their own native language.

Students who have already taken an exam in Historical Linguistics Students are required to agree on the syllabus with the lecturer.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.