# Historical Linguistics

## Prof. Riccardo Ginevra

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

The first teaching module (introductory) aims to provide basic training in the field of linguistics, with particular reference to general linguistics, historical linguistics and Indo-European linguistics. The second module (in-depth study), which differs from year to year, has the objective of consolidating students’ understanding of historical linguistics mechanisms, introducing them to the language and texts of an ancient tradition which is part of an important branch of the Indo-European linguistic family, whether Anatolian, Celtic, Germanic or Indo-Iranian languages. This year the course will focus on the Germanic branch, with a special focus on Old Norse (or Norse), the language of the texts of what is known as the Eddic tradition, which are the main sources for the study of Scandinavian mythology.

At the end of the course, students will be capable of:

* carrying out the elementary phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic analysis of linguistic material;
* identifying the groups and languages of the Indo-European family and analysing the main language change phenomena, with particular reference to Indo-European languages and their Germanic branch;
* applying linguistic methodologies to the analysis of the literary texts of one of the most ancient Indo-European traditions, Norse, and identifying the fundamental linguistic units which structure them; integrating the analysis of language material with the historical and comparative study of cultural conceptions and religious beliefs.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Module I

**General linguistics, historical linguistics and Indo-European linguistics: theory and practice**

Introduction to historical linguistics. Language classification, genealogical vs. typological; Indo-European linguistics and phonetic laws. Levels of analysis and change: phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics. Analysis of the processes which have an impact on language change and of their possible causes. Analysis of case studies mainly from the history of Indo-European languages, including a focus on theoretical aspects.

Module A

**Germanic: Old Norse, the Eddic tradition and the Scandinavian myth of “The Death of Baldr”**

Introduction to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European linguistic family, its internal classification and outline of the history of Germanic languages. Grammar profile of Old Norse and analysis of some processes which influence the transition from Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Germanic to Old Norse, with particular reference to phonology, morphology and syntax.

Outline of the history of Scandinavian literature and introduction to textual tradition in Old Norse. Commented reading with the synchronic and historical-comparative analysis of poems and/or mythological topics in Old Norse (provided by the lecturer in the original language and translated), with a specific focus on the Scandinavian myth of “The Death of Baldr” and on similar forms and themes in other Indo-European traditions, in particular in the Greek myth of “The Abduction of Persephone” and in the Indian myth of the “Wounded Sun” – for the latter please see “Sanskrit Language and Literature (module I)”.

***READING LIST***

The exam syllabus includes the lecture notes and all the material which is uploaded on the relevant online platform; the texts analysed during lectures will be provided by the lecturer (both in the original language and translated) during the course. Except for Module A’s translated home reading (full reading of the texts) the following items must only be used as reference and the relevant sections will be specified during lessons:

Module I

G. Berruto-M. Cerruti, *La linguistica. Un corso introduttivo,* UTET, Turin, 2017.

S. Luraghi, *Introduzione alla linguistica storica,* Carocci, Rome, 2021.

Module A

1. Introduction:

M. Battaglia, *I Germani.* *Genesi di una cultura europea*, Carocci, Rome, 2021.

J. Byock, M. Federici-J. Le Goff, *La stirpe di Odino. La civiltà vichinga in Islanda*, Mondadori, Milan, 2012.

2. Language:

M. Scovazzi, *Grammatica dell'antico nordico*, Mursia, Milan, 1991.

N. Francovich Onesti, *Filologia germanica. Lingue e culture dei germani antichi*, Carocci, Rome, 2022.

D. Ringe, *A Linguistic History of English* I*. From Proto-Indo-European to Proto-Germanic,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2017.

A. Noreen, *Altisländische und altnorwegische Grammatik*, Niemeyer, Halle, 1923.

3. Literature:

O. E. Haugen (edited by), *Le lingue nordiche nel medioevo* I*. Testi*, Novus Press, Oslo, 2018.

N. Francovich Onesti, *Filologia germanica. Lingue e culture dei germani antichi*, Carocci, Rome, 2002.

M. Meli, “L’epica nordica”, in G. F. Gianotti (edited by), *Tradizioni epiche e letteratura*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2011, 187-208.

C. Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995.

3. Religion:

G. Chiesa Isnardi, *I miti nordici*, Longanesi, Milan, 2008.

G. Dumézil, *Gli dèi dei Germani. Saggio sulla formazione della religione scandinava*, Adelphi, Milan, 1974.

M. L. West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.

4. Translated home reading (full reading of the texts):

P. Scardigli-M. Meli, *Il Canzoniere Eddico*, Garzanti, Milan, 2009.

G. Chiesa Isnardi, *Snorri Sturluson. Edda*, Garzanti, Milan, 2016.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures will be held partly online and partly in-person (as scheduled), complemented by slides and material published also on the Blackboard platform.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

There will be a separate exam for each module which will be marked out of thirty. In the oral exam, students will have to answer questions on course topics and on recommended reading. The final assessment will not only be based on the accuracy of the knowledge acquired by students, but also on their reasoning skills and their capacity to discuss the various topics clearly and articulately, using the appropriate disciplinary lexicon. Finally, students’ ability to apply acquired methodologies to the analysis of empirical data will be assessed.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Module I is designed for students wanting to earn the first 6 ECTS in Historical Linguistics. Being introductory, there are no knowledge prerequisites in order for students to attend Module I.

Students who wish to be awarded 6 additional ECTS will attend Module II (Module A). Students wanting to earn 12 ECTS will attend both Modules. In order to attend Module II (Module A), students must have acquired the basic knowledge of historical linguistics concepts. In order for students to attend, there are no prerequites in terms of language proficiency and prior knowledge of the traditions coveed during lectures.

The “Historical Linguistics (Module A): Germanic” lectures, although totally separate, are structured in parallel with those of “Sanskrit Language and Literature (Module I)”, so as to facilitate the complementary learning of the two disciplines during the same semester.

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.