# 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 explore the Germanic branch (Northwest), with a focus on Old English, its similarities and differences with Old Nordic or Old Norse, and the reading of epic works in these languages, such as the *Beowulf* and the *Poetic Edda*.

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 some of the richest Indo-European traditions, the one written in Old English and the one in Old Norse, and identify the fundamental linguistic units structuring 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 English and Old Norse, the *Beowulf* and the *Poetic Edda***

Introduction to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family, internal classification, and fundamentals of the history of Germanic languages. The contrastive grammar profile of Old English and Old Norse, with a focus on phonology, morphology, and syntax, from both a synchronic and historical-comparative perspective. Analysis of the processes taking place in the history of these languages, their analogies and differences.

Outlines of the history of Germanic literature and introduction to the textual traditions in Old English and Old Norse. Reading and commentary with a synchronic and historical-comparative analysis of epic texts in Old English and Old Norse (the original version and the translation will be provided by the lecturer), with a focus on the most important epic poems of their traditions, the *Beowulf* in Old English and the *Poetic Edda* in Old Norse, and their similarities with epic works written in other languages of the Indo-European family, such as the Homeric poems in Ancient Greek and the *Mahābhārata* in Sanskrit – for the latter, please see the course content section of the ‘Sanskrit Language and Literature’ course.

***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.

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

2. Language:

G. Mazzuoli Porru, *Manuale di inglese antico*, Giardini, Pisa, 1992.

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

D. Ringe e A. Taylor, *A linguistic history of English II. The development of Old English*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014.

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

3. Literature and culture:

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

M. V. Molinari, “Epica e storia nell'Alto Medioevo inglese e tedesco”, in G. F. Gianotti (edited by), *Tradizioni epiche e letteratura*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2011, 209-226.

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.

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

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

G. Brunetti, *Beowulf*, Carocci, Rome, 2003.

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

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course includes both frontal lectures, with the support of slides and other teaching material (always made available on Blackboard as well) and (for module A) guided practical activities, in which the course content is introduced not only from a purely theoretical perspective but also through the direct experience on texts.

***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, but also on the 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 (ModuleI) 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”, 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.