O. P. Jindal Global University
Spring Semester 2026

Indo-European and Indian Linguistics:
A Comparative Introduction
Cross-elective course, currently taught through
the Centre for Foreign Languages (CFL)
of the Office of English and Foreign Languages (OEFL)

Course Title: Indo-European and Indian Linguistics: A Comparative Introduction
Course Code: OEFL - CFL - EIE
Course instructor: Prof. (Dr.) Sérgio Meira (sergiomdsc.oliveira@jgu.edu.in)
Course duration: 15 weeks
Credit hours: 4 credits
Class meeting times: 2 two-hour sessions per week,
                        Time: TBD

Course description

The Indo-European family of languages was first established by Sir William James in the 18th century, when Europe, having discovered the Sanskrit language, and processing the similarities it had with classical European languages (Latin, Greek, Gothic, Old English, Old Church Slavonic, etc.). This is the best known language family from the historical perspective, with reconstructions allowing us to accompany the evolution of the several groups that compose it from pre-historical times to the present.

In this course, on the basis of the rich Indo-European material available, we will consider: (a) the historical-comparative method and how it was basically created to prove the existence, and allow of the reconstruction, of the Indo-European protolanguage; (b) the various subgroups found in the Indo-European family; (c) the specific subgroup that includes Indian languages (the Indo-Aryan subgroup) and its justification; (d) the evolution of Proto-Indo-European to the modern Indo-Aryan languages; (e) a comparison of popular hypotheses on Indo-Aryan and Indo-European that have recently become popular in India.

Course learning objectives and outcomes
- To acquire familiarity with historical linguistics as it is applied to the Indo-European family.
- To learn about the various groups that compose it, their differences and similarities.
- To examine in closer detail the Indo-Aryan subgroup, which contains Indian languages.
- To consider and discuss knowledgeably various different hypotheses about Indo-European and Indo-Aryan.

Assessment (Grading)

Students will be assigned readings (chapters from the books listed in the course materials) one week in advance, and will be expected to have read them as the class will assume some familiarity with their topic in order to foster deeper and more interesting discussions, in which all students will be expected to participate with their own thoughts, views, and

opinions (always in a thoughtful and respectful manner, taking into account different opinions and refraining from uninformed bias or prejudice). Moreover, an attempt will be made to make further discussion possible also online, with the help of specific linguistic websites (to be determined). Student participation in class will count for 20% of the final grade, on a three-level scale (participation = 'good', 'average', 'bad').

Another 20% of the final grade will be derived from written assignments consisting of exercises with specific tasks (e.g., the analysis of a specific example or linguistic phenomenon), to be given out at specific moments during the course for which students will be expected to provide well-argued answers with explanations (usually 300-500 word pieces). Students are expected to return their answers one week after receiving each exercise.

30% of the final grade will come from a 2000-word essay, the topic of which will be chosen by each student and previously accepted by the course instructor. A certain range of possible topics will be proposed after the first half of the course, but students will be free to select other (sufficiently interesting) topics to write about if none of the suggestions appeals to them. The essay will be due by the last day of the course.

The final 30% of the grade will come from an end-of-semester examination with several questions to be answered in writing (500-1000 words), on any of the topics presented in the course (possibly including also exercises). The end-of-semester examination will be administered to the students during the designated examination period.

Given the availability of all kinds of sources and materials on the web, it is important to stress here that plagiarism will not be tolerated. All students are supposed to write their assignments and papers themselves; plagiarism will be severely punished.

Learning resources and materials

Books:

1. Fortson, Benjamin W. 2015 (2nd ed.). *Indo-European Language and Culture: An Introduction.* Chichester, West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing
2. Buck, Carl Darling. 1988. *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages.* London, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
3. Campbell, Lyle. 2013. *Historical Linguistics: An Introduction.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
4. Mallory, J. P., and D. Q. Adams (eds.). 1997. *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture.* London, Chicago: Fitroy de Arborn Publishers.

Course outline (calendar)

SESSIONS	TOPICS	READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS
1st week	• Introduction to the course • Introduction to historical linguistics and the historical-comparative method	Campbell 2013, Ch. 1-2
2nd week	• The historical-comparative method in detail (specifics, exercises, etc.)	Campbell Ch. 2-3. Assignment: A historical-comparative problem
3rd week	• The historical comparative method applied to Indo-European languages	Fortson Ch. 3

	- Defining the family - Establishing correspondences	Assignment: An Indo-European historical-comparative problem
4th. week	• The historical comparative method applied to Indo-European languages - Subgrouping the family - Characteristics of each subgroup	Fortson Ch. 3-4.
5th. week	• The Indo-Aryan subgroup in detail - Is Sanskrit the "proto-language"? - Specific evidence for the Indo-Aryan subgroup and for its internal subgroups	Assignment: one problem of historical analysis within the Indo-Aryan subgroup.
6th. week	• The evolution of Indo-Aryan languages from their protolanguage to the modern-day languages (and the position of Sanskrit)	Fortson, Ch. 5 (no assignment)
7th. week	• Other theories of Indo-European: - Problems with non-scientific theories or theories based on methods other than the historical-comparative method	Fortson, Ch. 6 (no assignment)
8th. week	• The cultural side: The culture of Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Indo-Aryan.	Fortson, Ch. 7 (General 'midterm' assignment, with varios questions based on all of the preceding material in the first half of the course.)
9th. week	• The cultural side: The culture of Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Indo-Aryan.	Fortson, Ch. 8-9 (no assignment)
10th. week	• The cultural side: The culture of Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Indo-Aryan.	Fortson, Ch. 8-9 (no assignment)
11th. week	• More modern theories of Indo-European and India and their political implications (the 'Nostratic' hypothesis)	Fortson Ch. 11 (parts of 12) (no assignment) (assignment: on the validity and reliability of arguments for new modern theories)
12th. week	• More modern theories of Indo-European and India and their political implications (the 'Out-of-India' proposal)	(various sources of current information) (assignment: on the validity and reliability of arguments for new modern theories)
13th. week	• General overview: what can we know about the linguistic past?	(no assignment)
14th. Week	• General overview: what can we know about the history of Indo-European culture?	(no assignment)
15th. Week	• Final consideration and review of the main topics of the course.	final essay
Reading & Revision Period		
Examination Period		