Human Language and Animal Communication Systems (at UNC-CH)

Linguistics 333 • E. Moreton
Spring 2021 • MWF 1:25-2:15

Linguistic theory asks how come human language is the way it is, and not some other way. This course explores a range of “other ways” found in nature. We will compare language with the communication systems used by other animals, with special focus on vocal communication in humans, human ancestors, non-human primates, and songbirds. Topics include

• Anatomy and acoustics of vocal communication.
• Reconstructing vocal capabilities of extinct human relatives (e.g., Neanderthals)
• Comparing phonology, syntax, and semantics across species
• Innateness and acquisition of communication systems
• Culture and tradition in non-humans

There will be a significant lab component, including studio recording of humans, field recording of birds, and use of the Praat software for acoustic analysis.

• Quantitative Intensive (QI) • Social Sciences (SS)