Ling 98a: Introduction to Optimality Theory
Syllabus

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OH: Thursdays, 1-2pm, Boylston 306

1. Goal of this tutorial

This tutorial will provide an introduction to Optimality Theory, a model that proposes that the surface forms we find in language result from the interaction of competing constraints. OT is used in much current work in generative phonology, and by the end of this tutorial students will be prepared to better understand and critically evaluate OT analyses, and, if they choose, to use OT in their own work. In addition, as we study OT we will also study the typology of a variety of phonological phenomena, including syllable structure, stress, and reduplication.

2. Requirements and schedule

• Readings: Our readings will come from *Optimality Theory* by René Kager (part of the Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics series), which provides an excellent introduction to OT. Our goal will be to cover the material in the first five chapters, but we may cover more or less depending on the natural pace of the class. I have placed a copy of the book on reserve at Lamont.

• Assignments: There will be a total of six problem sets. During each of the first five meetings, I will assign a problem set relating to the material covered during that meeting and the reading for that week. In our last meeting, I will assign a final, longer problem set relating to all of the material covered in the tutorial. Each of the first five problem sets will be due at the beginning of the next class, and the final problem set will be due on Friday, January 11th.

• Schedule:

Week 1: (Nov. 6)	Introduction to OT	**Reading**: Kager Ch. 1 – Conflicts in grammars **Problem Set #1 assigned**
Week 2: (Nov. 13)	Introduction to OT (cont'd)	**Reading:** Kager Ch. 1 – Conflicts in grammars **Problem Set #2 assigned**
Week 3: (Nov. 20)	Correspondences between inputs and outputs	**Reading:** Kager Ch. 2 – The typology of structural changes **Problem Set #3 assigned**

| **Week 4:** | Syllable structure | **Reading:** Kager Ch. 3 – Syllable structure and economy |
| **(Nov. 27)** | | **Problem Set #4 assigned** |

| **Week 5:** | Stress | **Reading:** Kager Ch. 4 – Metrical structure and parallelism |
| **(Dec. 4)** | | **Problem Set #5 assigned** |

| **Week 6:** | Reduplication | **Reading:** Kager Ch. 5 – Correspondence in reduplication |
| **(Dec. 11)** | | **Final problem set assigned: due January 11, 2008** |

- This syllabus, all lecture slides, the problem sets, and any supplemental materials will be posted on the Ling 98a website.

3. Grading

- Attendance and participation: 25%
- Five weekly problem sets: 50%
- Final problem set: 25%