

Phonology course design for the contemporary student

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The contemporary phonology classroom reflects growth and shifts in the field at large. While many scholars and teachers hope to cultivate enthusiasm and appreciation for the contributions of phonological analysis, we also face classes with big populations and small resources in which the traditional tools of engagement and assessment do not clearly scale up or out. Students are diverse in background, preparedness, and interests – while some are drawn by the nuances of linguistic analysis, others have goals of mastery in applications such as speech sciences, speech technology, and public education. Meanwhile, many are distracted by the world and burdened by contemporary pressures. In this context, how do we rethink Phonology and its pedagogy to nurture an appreciation for its position under these conditions?

In this presentation I note the range of conditions that should be considered when designing a phonology curriculum (notably the size and breadth of the program it supports) and suggest potential points of revision in how we commonly approach the canonical concepts and constructs of the field. I also explore ways of introducing phonological notions spanning segments, features, meter, tone, representations, and derivations, while contextualizing datasets more closely to the communities they represent. Bundled with this is the puzzle of how to reimagine problem-solving and assessment in the internet age. I conclude with a discussion of pedagogical strategies intended to address each potential point of complication.