

Tilden “Tilly” Brooks

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EDUCATION

- **Stanford University** Stanford, CA
Ph.D. in Linguistics; Knight-Hennessy Scholar, EDGE Fellow *September 2024 - June 2029*
- **Yale Law School** New Haven, CT
Juris Doctor *August 2023 - December 2028*
- **Yale College** New Haven, CT
B.A. in Linguistics, Magna cum Laude and Distinction in the Major *August 2019 - May 2023*
Overall and Major GPA: 3.94/4.00

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- **Linguistics Areas of Interest:** Modal semantics, pragmatics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, historical linguistics, computational linguistics, language policy.
- **Legal Areas of Interest:** Civil rights, statutory interpretation, treaty interpretation, criminal justice, evidence.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- **Stanford Language and Social Interaction Lab (SoIL)** Stanford, CA
Lab Member; Principal Investigator: Dr. Robert Hawkins *September 2024 - Present*
 - **Research:** As a member of SoIL, I attend weekly meetings with the group; watch presentations about research in psycholinguistics, pragmatics, social psychology, and the cognitive science of language; share my own research; and provide feedback to other lab members on their ongoing projects.
- **Stanford Black Academic Development Lab (BAD Lab)** Remote; Stanford, CA
Lab Member; Principal Investigator: Dr. Anne Charity Hudley *March 2022 - Present*
 - **Research:** As a member of the Black Academic Development Lab (BAD lab), I regularly attend meetings, collaborate with other lab members, and conduct original research into topics in educational, applied, and sociolinguistics. I have also served as also a graduate student mentor in the lab’s summer research program since 2023.
 - **Presentations:** Membership in the BAD lab involves presenting original work. In my capacity as a member of the BAD lab, I have presented my original research twice (see Academic Presentations).
- **Yale Law School** New Haven, CT
Research Assistant; Principal Investigator: Prof. John Infranca *February 2024 - May 2024*
 - **Manual Data Coding:** Reading and coding variance decisions issued by zoning boards in the Greater Boston Area.
 - **Computational Linguistics Research:** Using methods from computational linguistics and large language models to automate the coding process of variance decisions issued by zoning boards in the Greater Boston Area.
- **Yale HistLing lab: Historical Linguistics and Australian Languages Lab** New Haven, CT
Lab Member; Principal Investigator: Dr. Claire Bower *August 2022 - May 2023*
 - **Research:** As a member of the Historical Linguistics Lab at Yale, I attended weekly meetings, give feedback to other lab members, and participate in regular lab workshops.
- **Stanford Center for the Study of Language and Information** Stanford, CA
Research Intern; Mentor: Dr. Anne Charity Hudley *June 2022 - August 2022*
 - **Research:** As an intern at the Center for the Study of Language and Information, I worked in an interdisciplinary group of students in cognitive science fields to design and pursue an original research project. Being an intern also involved regular workshops in various research skills, seminar discussions of readings in a variety of cognitive science topics, working closely with faculty mentors, graduate students, and other undergraduates, and presenting work in lab and conference-style environments.
- **Yale Law School** New Haven, CT
Research Assistant; Principal Investigator: Dr. Oona Hathaway *December 2020 - January 2022*
 - **Data Scraping:** Wrote and implemented programs in R to scrape and organize metadata of Department of Energy memoranda of understanding.
 - **Data Coding:** Identified, read, and analyzed the text of nonbinding international arrangements originating from a number of United States federal agencies, including the FCC, FTC, FDA, DOE, DOJ, DOI, EXIM, and NLRB.
 - **Agency Research:** Wrote detailed notes on various federal agencies such as NASA and NLRB and their practices regarding nonbinding international arrangements for use in FOIA requests and other stages in the research process.
- **Peabody Museum of Natural History, Anthropology Research Collection** New Haven, CT
Student Collections Assistant *September 2019 - May 2020*

- **Digital Photo Editing:** Frequently edited images to be used for archival purposes for quality to ensure that the collection was thoroughly documented prior to being moved to an off campus location.
- **Archival Maintenance:** Compared previous records of the collection's contents to the actual contents to check for accuracy and adjust the records as needed.
- **Packing artifacts for transportation:** Prepared packing materials to safely transport artifacts of various sizes to an off campus location for storage. Also packed small artifacts for transit.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- **Eastern District of New York** Brooklyn, NY
Judicial intern to the Honorable Margo K. Brodie, Chief Judge *June 2024 - August 2024*
 - **Legal Research:** Completing legal research and writing assignments, such as memoranda on discrete legal issues, draft opinions, and miscellaneous tasks.
 - **Legal Writing:** Preparing research memoranda and draft opinions in collaboration with Judge Brodie's team of clerks.
- **Plus Media Solutions, Inc.** Remote
Marketing Strategy Intern and Director *October 2021 - April 2022*
 - **Communications:** Writing and sharing company communications campaigns over several channels, including email, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.
 - **Marketing Strategy:** Designing and implementing company marketing strategy with CEO and other leadership.
- **PLATFORM** Remote
Editorial Assistant *August 2021 - May 2022*
 - **Author agreement management:** Communicating with authors to collect their signed agreement granting Platform permission to publish their written work and organizing the collected agreements.
 - **Communications:** Managing the Platform email to handle intake for proposed pieces, answering questions from authors and readers, assisting the editorial team in administrative matters.
- **Yale Department of Art History** Remote
Student Assistant *June 2022 - August 2022*
 - **Archival Research:** Taking photos, editing images, collecting metadata to document and digitize collections to make available to the public.

INVITED TALKS

- **Linguistics for law and law for linguistics:** In this talk, I discussed the relationship between law and linguistics with a focus on the interpretive domain. Oral presentation delivered at the Symposium of Legal Interpretation and Data (SOLID) on February 6, 2026.
- **The socio-pragmatic function of linguistic complexity in the domain of law:** In this oral presentation, I discuss experimental work addressing the impact of various kinds of linguistic complexity on perceived authority. I argue that there is a relationship between the two, with perceived authority being positively correlated with linguistic complexity. This association, however, is not without limitation; overly complex legal expressions are rated as less authoritative than their moderately complex counterparts. Delivered at the Stanford Linguistics Department Open House talk session on March 3, 2026.
- **The semantics and pragmatics of legal *shall*:** In this oral presentation, I discuss the semantic and pragmatic dimensions of *shall* as used in historical legal texts. I describe the qualitative and quantitative differences observed in legal and non-legal writing. I then supply a semantic and pragmatic account of the Talk delivered at the Stanford Linguistics Department Open House talk session on March 11, 2026.
- **BIPOC Experiences in Research, Panelist:** In this invited panel presentation, I discuss my experiences as a Black researcher. Panel presentation to be delivered on April 11, 2026 at the Stanford Undergraduate Research Association Conference.

PEER-REVIEWED ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

- ***shall* usage in legal texts is motivated by genre, not writing process or content:** Poster presentation delivered at the 2026 Linguistic Society of America Annual Meeting. In this project, we offer empirical evidence that *shall* usage in law is more an element of style rather than the result of a specific communicative need.
- **Large Language Models have commitment issues:** Poster presentation delivered at XPRAG 2025. In this project, we assess large language models' (LLMs) judgments of speaker attitudes toward embedded propositions and compare them to human judgments of the same phenomenon. We find that LLMs consistently underperform on this task, even as they excel on other linguistic tasks. Interestingly, this underperformance is consistent across model size, and instruct-tuned models exhibit the best performance on the task.
- **Facts, Law, and Ordinary Meaning: Linguistics in the Interpretive Domain:** In this oral presentation delivered at the 7th General Conference of the International Language and Law Association, I argue that the fact-law division in U.S. law underlies many of the difficulties linguists face as advocates in the interpretive domain of law.
- **Language-based claims and the California Racial Justice Act:** In this exploratory work, we survey caselaw related to the California Racial Justice Act, offering evidence that the meaning of "racially discriminatory language" remains disputed with respect to the statute. Poster delivered at the Linguistics for Justice Conference in July 2025.

- **Unordinary Meaning: Statutory Interpretation as a Domain of Sociolinguistic Inquiry:** In this project I argue that linguistic variation is a highly relevant but often neglected consideration in legal interpretation. In particular, I contend that variation should be considered carefully whenever “ordinary meaning” is. Poster presentation delivered at the Chicago Linguistic Society Annual Meeting in May 2025.
- **Linguistics at the Supreme Court: Current Challenges and Potential Solutions:** Oral presentation given at 101st Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, January 2025. In this presentation, I demonstrate that, despite increased interest in the law-linguistics interface, linguists have remained at the margins of debates over language in the Court. I propose that misunderstanding of linguistics, hostility to the contributions of linguists’ in the statutory interpretation context, and the division of factual and legal issues in law are the three biggest barriers to successful linguistic advocacy at the Supreme Court and argue that the solution to the problem is pedagogical.
- **Modal Auxiliaries in Legal United States English: The Case of the United States Constitution:** Oral presentation of my undergraduate thesis given in April 2023. The essay discusses the semantics, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics of legal language in the United States and examines the behaviors of modals in the United States Constitution, making the argument that there is a significant semantic and pragmatic difference the modals in the Constitution and their non-legal counterparts.
- **The Semantics of Constitutional *shall*:** Oral presentation given at UC, Berkeley, 6th Annual Undergraduate Linguistics Symposium, Berkeley, April 2022 [Also given at Stanford Black Academic Development Lab, May 2022]. Oral presentation of my original research investigating the formal semantics of the modal auxiliary *shall* as it appears in the 1787 text of the United States Constitution.
- **Modal Verbs to Modal Auxiliaries:** Oral presentation given at 3rd Annual Emory Undergraduate Linguistics Conference, April 2022. Presentation concerning my original research on the historical development of the present day English modal auxiliaries. Following from Elizabeth Traugott’s Invited Inferencing Theory of Semantic Change (IITSC), my research presents a unified account for the development of the modal auxiliaries and offers a sociohistorical explanation for why the changes are isolated to English.
- **The Language of Educational Gag Orders:** Oral presentation given at Stanford Center for the Study of Language and Information Internship Final Presentation, Stanford, August 2022 [Also given at Stanford Black Academic Development Lab, August 2022]. Original research investigating the language used in legislation educational policies. These presentations consisted of preliminary findings, largely focusing on ethical framework, corpus design, literature review, and next steps.

PUBLICATIONS

- **Linguistics at the Supreme Court: Current challenges and potential solutions:** In this paper, I survey the efficacy of linguistics amicus briefs filed with the United States Supreme Court. I find that engagement with linguistics amicus briefs remains limited in most cases and propose that [DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3765/plsa.v10i1.5945>]
- ***shall* usage in legal texts is motivated by genre, not writing process or content:** In this paper, we experimentally probe the motivations for *shall* usage in law. We find that it is knowledge of writing in the legal genre rather than communicative content that motivates frequent use of *shall* in legal texts. [In process, to be submitted as a paper for the *Proceedings of the Linguistic Society of America*]
- **Broaching the subjects of race and other intersectional identities and sources of oppression during the counseling process: Why sociolinguistics matters.:** In this paper, we discuss the importance of understanding sociolinguistic variation in the counseling setting and offer some basic insight into African American English [Under review with the *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*].

SELECTED WORKING PAPERS

- **The Linguistic Injustice of Textualism:** In this working paper, I address the family of interpretive approaches falling under the umbrella of textualism through the lens of linguistic justice. I argue that the approach is linguistically unjust for three reasons: (1) textualism allows judges to limit the expressive freedom of legislatures without proper justification; (2) textualism allows judges to instantiate normative linguistic hierarchies; and (3) textualism instantiates epistemic and linguistic injustice by misrepresenting the nature of language and linguistics.
- **Medellín Revisited: Modals, Self-Execution Doctrine, and Treaty Interpretation:** This paper explores the legal and linguistic underpinnings of the Roberts Court’s treatment of self-execution doctrine, the legal theory that governs the domestic legal effect of treaties in the United States. Using both empirical linguistic evidence and legal research, I argue that three major points: (1) the Roberts Court has wrongly conflated linguistic evidence of state obligation with evidence of self-executing status, (2) although the Court has held otherwise, the usage of modals does not vary significantly between self-executing and non-self-executing treaties, and (3) the best way forward for the United States is to pursue international lawmaking through statutory executive agreements rather than through Article II treaties.
- **Modal Auxiliaries in Legal United States English: The Case of the United States Constitution:** My senior thesis, this proof of concept essay discusses the semantics, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics of legal language in the United States and examines the behaviors of modals in the United States Constitution, making the argument that there is a significant semantic and pragmatic difference the modals in the Constitution and their non-legal counterparts.
- **The Semantics of Constitutional *shall*:** Written version of the presentation I delivered at the UC, Berkeley, 6th Annual Undergraduate Linguistics Symposium. The paper provides an account of the semantics and pragmatics of the modal auxiliary *shall* as it appears in the United States Constitution.

- **Modal Verbs to Modal Auxiliaries:** Written version of the presentation I delivered at the Emory Undergraduate Linguistics Conference investigating the development of the present day English modal auxiliaries *shall, should, can, could, will, would, may, might, and must*. Following from Elizabeth Traugott's Invited Inferencing Theory of Semantic Change (IITSC), my research presents a unified account for the development of the modal auxiliaries and offers a sociohistorical explanation for why the changes are isolated to English.

SELECTED COURSEWORK

- **Law School Coursework:** Criminal Law, Procedure, Constitutional Law, Contract Law, International Law, Research Methods in United States Legal History, Evidence, Legislation
- **Semantics/Pragmatics:** Semantics I; Semantics II; Semantic Change; Topics in Semantics: Time and Possibility; Pragmatics; Bridges between Formal Semantics and Historical Linguistics; Causative Constructions; Implicature and Pragmatic Theory; Lexical Semantics; Topics in Semantics: Tense and Mood
- **Sociolinguistics:** Sociolinguistic Theory and Analysis; Variation and Social Meaning; Seminar in Sociolinguistics: Intertextuality; Historical Sociolinguistics of the Ancient World
- **Psycholinguistics:** Introduction to Psycholinguistics, Methods in Psycholinguistics
- **Historical Linguistics:** Historical Linguistics; Classical Sanskrit; Old English; Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian; Latin; Ancient Greek; Homer's Iliad
- **Other Linguistics Courses:** Syntax; Phonology; Quantitative Linguistics; Meaning, Concepts, and Words; Research Methods in Linguistics; Topics in Language Documentation: Technology; Language and Computation; The Structure of Discourse; Social and Political Philosophy of Language
- **Other Relevant Courses:** First-Order Logic; Population Studies; Introduction to Information Systems (Survey course in Python and Unix); Social and Political Philosophy of Language; Community-Based Participatory Methods

LEADERSHIP & SERVICE ACTIVITIES

- **Stanford Department of Linguistics, Colloquium Committee:** Organize departmental colloquia, including logistics for visiting speakers and coordinating meetings between students and visitors.
- **Stanford Department of Linguistics, Professionalization Committee:** Design and prepare professionalization resources and trainings for graduate students in the Linguistics department
- **Stanford Department of Linguistics, Social Committee:** Organize, plan, and execute department social events.
- **Yale OutLaws, New Student Representative:** As a New Student Representative with OutLaws (the LGBTQ+ affinity group at Yale Law School), I collaborate with the organization's board to organize events, attend board meetings, and represent the new student community (first-year JD students and LLM students) in the Yale.
- **Yale Journal of Law and Humanities, Lead First-Year Editor:** In this role, I am responsible for collaborating with a team to provide substantive feedback on a piece and source-citing submissions.
- **Yale Civil Rights Project:** As a volunteer with the Yale Civil Rights Project, I worked in a team conducting research on various topics related to reparations in New York State, with each member assigned their own project. For my project, I conducted legal and historical research on the history of slavery in New York and presented my findings in a research memorandum to be used as background materials in support of New York Senate Bill S1163A .
- **Yale Undergraduate Linguistics Society, Co-President:** As president, I was responsible for outreach to other universities, outreach within Yale, coordination within the Yale Linguistics department, planning and running events, and various other executive responsibilities.
- **Yale Department of Linguistics Undergraduate Advisory Committee:** As a member of the Linguistics Undergraduate Advisory Committee, I was in regular correspondence with the Director of Undergraduate Studies (Dr. Claire Bower) to provide feedback, information about the undergraduate perspective, and serve as a liaison between undergraduates and faculty, staff, and graduate students in the department.
- **Disability Empowerment for Yale, Director of Events and Outreach:** In this role, I was responsible for writing and operating organizational communications on several social media platforms, producing and sharing graphics on behalf of the organization, writing and managing organizational newsletters, and participating in general club activities as a member of the executive board.
- **Yale Residential College Seminar Program, Student Coordinator:** As a student coordinator, I represented Grace Hopper College in the selection of special seminar programs, interviewing applicants and selecting the seminar to be sponsored by the college.

SKILLS

- **Reading Languages:** Latin, Ancient Greek, Classical Sanskrit, Old English, Middle English, Manichaean Middle Persian, Parthian
- **Spoken Languages:** English (native), Spanish (intermediate)
- **Programming Skills:** *Intermediate:* Python, Unix, R; *Beginner:* HTML, Javascript, CSS
- **Other Software Skills:** HubSpot, Mailchimp, Canva, Microsoft Paint 3D

HONORS AND AWARDS

- **International Language and Law Association Book Prize:** Book prize awarded for excellence in oral presentation at the 7th General Conference of the International Language and Law Association.
- **Grace Hopper College Council Award:** Award presented to graduating seniors of Yale College in recognition of service to the Grace Hopper College community and contributions to the work of the college and council.
- **National Latin Exam:** Three time gold medalist, National Latin Exam 2016-2019. One of roughly 800 students out of over 130,000 test takers to achieve a perfect score on the exam.
- **National Greek Exam:** Two time National Greek Exam Blue Ribbon recipient (2018-2019).
- **Bishop Julius Atwood Literature and History Prize:** Prize awarded to the best scholar in the combined fields of history and literature in the graduating class at Groton School.

MEDIA APPEARANCES

- **Imagine A World Podcast, Invited Guest:** Interviewed about my work, life and interests for the Knight-Hennessy Scholarship podcast.
- **The Black Yearbook, Interviewee:** Interviewed and photographed by Adraint Bereal for his book, *The Black Yearbook* (Penguin Random House 2024)
- **Stanford Graduate School of Education News, Interviewee:** Interviewed to share my experiences as a student intern and graduate student mentor in the NSF-REU in the Black Academic Development Lab in the Stanford Graduate School of Education.
- **The Polyglot Podcast, Invited Guest:** Invited as guest interviewee to discuss the fields of semantics and historical linguistics, both describing the areas and discussing my own research.
 - **Ep #32: Linguistics and the field of semantics with Tilly Brooks PT.1:** First part of the interview, largely focusing on semantics.
 - **Ep #33: Linguistics and the field of semantics with Tilly Brooks PT.2:** Second part of the interview, focused on historical linguistics.
- **Yale Daily News, Guest Writer:** Recruited as guest writer and researcher for two special issues the Yale Daily News.
 - **“Classica Delenda Est” in Celebrating Black Communities, February 2022:** Opinion piece featuring a discussion of the history and current status of the field of classics and philology. The main contention of the piece is that the field cannot move forward without substantially dismantling the ideologies upon which the scholarship was built.
 - **“The Sweep of South College: The Life and Death of Osborn Allston” in YDN History, September 2022:** Research piece discussing the historical treatment of black staff in Yale campus publications, focusing on an especially well-known campus figure, Osborn Allston.