

Anthony Kroch, Linguistics

MAY 11, 2021 | VOL 67 ISSUE 38 ([HTTPS://ALMANAC.UPENN.EDU/VOLUME-67-NUMBER-38](https://almanac.upenn.edu/volume-67-number-38)) | DEATHS |

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Anthony Kroch

Anthony (Tony) Kroch, professor emeritus of linguistics in the School of Arts and Sciences, died from complications of cancer on April 27 at his home in Philadelphia. He was 75.

Born in New York City to German Jewish refugees who had fled from the Nazis in 1938, Dr. Kroch was raised in New York City; White Plains, New York; and Needham, Massachusetts. He graduated from Needham High School in 1963, then attended Harvard University, where he graduated summa cum laude in anthropology in 1967. After graduating, he traveled to Brazil and Senegal on a scholarship, studying indigenous stories and myths. In 1974, Dr. Kroch earned a PhD in linguistics from MIT, studying under professors Paul Kiparsky, Noam Chomsky, and Kenneth Hale.

While a student at Harvard and MIT, Dr. Kroch participated in civil activism against the Vietnam War and academic racism. After graduating, he briefly held academic appointments at the University of Connecticut and Temple University.

In 1978, Dr. Kroch obtained a fellowship to work with William Labov, a professor of linguistics at Penn, to conduct sociolinguistic interviews and analyze the language of upper-class Philadelphians. Three years later, Dr. Kroch joined the faculty of the linguistics department as an assistant professor of linguistics. He became a full professor in 1991. At Penn, Dr. Kroch served on several Faculty Senate and University Council committees and conducted research that won University Research Foundation (URF) grants in 2003 and 2007. In 2006, he was named the Edmund J. and Louise W. Kahn Endowed Term Professor in the Cognitive Sciences (*Almanac* December 19, 2006 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/volumes/v53/n16/sas.html>)). He joined Penn's 25-Year Club in 2003 and retired in 2020.

Dr. Kroch's research focused on the structure of human language, using computational and statistical methods. He is best known for his work on historical syntax, demonstrating that grammatical changes over time occur at a constant rate. In collaboration with Beatrice Santorini, a senior fellow in the department of linguistics, and others, Dr. Kroch pioneered the construction of large annotated databases of historical texts. He also developed tools to search these texts; his efforts continue to support a range of linguistic studies. Dr. Kroch was widely published, writing dozens of peer-reviewed articles and several books, including co-authoring the seminal *Semantics of Scope in English* (1979) and *Alternative Conceptions of Phrase Structure* (1989).

Dr. Kroch is survived by his wife, Martha; brother, Eugene; daughters, Miriam (Daniel) Morrissey, Deborah (Brian) Leaf, Abigail Kroch (Jason Brenier); five grandchildren; and a beloved niece and grandnephew.