

Harold Schiffman, South Asia Studies

FEBRUARY 21, 2023 | VOL 69 ISSUE 24 ([HTTPS://ALMANAC.UPENN.EDU/VOLUME-69-NUMBER-24](https://almanac.upenn.edu/volume-69-number-24)) | DEATHS |

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Hal Schiffman

Harold (“Hal”) Schiffman, an emeritus professor of Dravidian linguistics and culture and South Asia studies in the department of linguistics in the School of Arts and Sciences at Penn, died on December 14, 2022, at his home in Haddonfield, New Jersey. He was 84.

Dr. Schiffman was born in Buffalo, New York. He earned his BA in German and French from Antioch College and his MA in Slavic and Dravidian linguistics and PhD in Dravidian linguistics from the University of Chicago, where his teachers included A. K. Ramanujan and James McCawley.

After a brief stint at U.C. Davis, Dr. Schiffman taught in the department of Asian languages and literature at the University of Washington from 1967 to 1995, and then moved to the University of Pennsylvania in 1995, where he remained until his retirement in 2007. At Penn,

Dr. Schiffman was the Henry R. Luce Professor of Language Learning in what was then the department of South Asia regional studies from 1995 to 2000. He was also the director of the Penn Language Center. From 2002 to 2005, he served as director of the Pedagogical Materials Project of the South Asia Language Resource Center of the University of Chicago.

As a professor of Tamil at the University of Washington from 1967 to 1995, Dr. Schiffman taught a variety of courses in Tamil language, linguistics, and culture and served as chair of the department of Asian languages and literature from 1982 to 1987. He was also an adjunct faculty member in linguistics and anthropology, and director of the UW Language Center.

Dr. Schiffman was an internationally renowned scholar of Dravidian linguistics, language policy, and language maintenance. He wrote grammars, reference materials, and linguistic studies of Tamil, Kannada, and the Dravidian language family. He was an early theorist in as situated approaches to language policy, which draw upon discourse analysis and ethnography to understand how language policy relates to lived experiences. He published widely on the sociolinguistics of South Asia. His studies of Tamil diglossia were well-known and respected, and his book, *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy* (1996), remains a major and widely recognized contribution to the field of language politics.

Dr. Schiffman is survived by his wife, Marilyn; and son, Tim. Donations in his name can be made to Haddonfield United Methodist Church, 29 Warwick Road, Haddonfield, New Jersey 08033, with Hal Schiffman Moscow Seminary Scholarship in the memo line, or at <https://www.haddonfieldumc.org/give> (<https://www.haddonfieldumc.org/give>).