Language Inside and Out: Selected Topics in Language Development, Structure, and Use

LING 2340 (16743)
Fall 2017

MW 10:30 pm – 11:50 pm PSCI 222A

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Course description:

The foremost attribute of human beings is language. Language pervades every part of our lives, and we are surrounded by spoken and written forms of language. As essential as language is in all human endeavours, we take language for granted. In this course, we challenge students to reflect on the nature of human language and its influence on our thoughts and beliefs, the many purposes of language in different domains, and the reasons that we vary our spoken and written language.

The content of this course serves as a valuable springboard for further academic pursuits, for, as noted by Paul Bloom, "Every philosopher or psychologist or humanist or neuroscientist who has ever thought about people has had to make some claim about the nature of language and how it works . . . If you hope to make it with a theory of what people are and how people work, you have to explain and talk about language." (Lecture, Open Yale Courses, February 5, 2007)

In the context of discussions on the nature of language, language cognition and language use, students will become acquainted with relevant aspects of linguistics, such as phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. The course will address the issues/questions presented in this syllabus. During the course, students will have the opportunity of conducting two mini-research projects exploring some of these issues.

Course objectives:

1. Critical thinking skills
   ▪ Synthesize information from lectures, class discussions, readings and video programs to formulate answers to the questions about language which are presented in the course syllabus.
   ▪ Evaluate contradictory evidence gleaned from course materials that address these issues.
   ▪ Develop research questions for given empirical procedures in assigned projects.

- Solve short problems involving language-related issues.

2. Communication skills
   - Explain and critique different perspectives presented in course readings and videos during class and small-group discussions
   - Write clear and complete syntheses and project reports.

3. Empirical and Quantitative skills
   - Using given procedures designed to address a particular issue about language cognition or language use:
     - Collect and analyze data
     - Interpret the data and report outcomes using a given format.

4. Social Responsibility
   - Critique myths and negative attitudes regarding the relative value of different languages and dialects.
   - Identify sources of cross-cultural miscommunication.

     These learning outcomes will be achieved through materials that focus on the socio- historical, political, psychological and structural aspects of language, including phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics.

Required text:

There is no required text for this class.

Course evaluation

- Class Participation   10%
- Homework   20%
- Projects (3)   30%
- Exams (3)   40%

Grading scale

90-100%   A - Outstanding
80-89%   B - Good
70-79%   C – Satisfactory
60-69%   D – Poor
0-59%   F – Fail (no credit)

Class Participation

Students are expected to have read all the material before class and be ready to participate in class activities that are based on the readings, to ask questions or make comments. Presence in class is the minimum expected, but that alone does not constitute active participation in class. During the semester you will have to complete different in-class assignments. Some of these assignments will be due by the end of each class, and some of them will be graded.

If you have questions, or even if you're just curious about something related to what we're working on, please ask. Your questions and observations help us all to learn and make the class more interesting for everybody.

Homework

Students will be required to write reading journals several times during the semester. Journal writing guidelines will be posted on Blackboard. Journals will be submitted through Blackboard.

Projects (Presentations)

In groups, you will have to explore a particular aspect language and share your findings with the class. Students will choose a sub-topic from these major topics: Writing Systems, Conlanging, and Linguistic Landscape. Guidelines will be posted on Blackboard.

Exams

You will be asked to answer different types of questions. In every exam students will be required to answer multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and give definitions. There will be THREE partial exams during the semester (the last exam will NOT be comprehensive). A study guide will be posted on Blackboard before each exam. There will be no final exam.

Extra credit

There will be several extra credit opportunities, one before each exam.
-A study guide will be provided before each of the three exams. You are required to complete it and turn it on the day of the exam (optional). Study guides will get you five extra credit points. The guide has to be complete, if it is not, you do not get any extra credit.

Any extra credit you receive will be added to your exam score.
To receive extra credit you are required to turn in your study guide before the exam.

Course Policies:
- Avoid unnecessary absences. We cover a lot of material each day and much of it is cumulative.
- 3 absences are allowed without penalty, use them for emergencies. Every time you miss a class additional to the three allowed absences you will loose 5 points from your final grade (half a letter grade).
- At the professor's discretion, when a student has missed more than 3 classes, (s)he may be dropped from the course with a W before the drop date or with a W or F after that date. For details, refer to the Undergraduate Catalog.
- Please, arrive on time, and please do not leave early; either is very disruptive to both the students and the professor. A late arrival, and an early departure will be counted as half an absence.
- A student may also be dropped at the professor's discretion for various behaviors which in the professor's opinion may compromise the delivery or the intellectual integrity of the class (e.g. talking or phoning during class, looking in the direction of someone else's test paper, disturbing the class, etc.).
- Please get assignments turned in on time and be present for all examinations. **It is your responsibility to do so.**

- Late assignments will not be accepted. If for some reason you can't turn in an assignment on the due date and time, give it to me earlier.
- By university policy, a missed exam results in a grade of 0% for that exam, unless a prior arrangement has been made with the professor. Refer to the Undergraduate Catalog for details.
- If you need to contact the instructor through email include your name, and the class that you are taking in the body of the email.
- If a student wishes to record the class, you must ask the instructor for authorization.

Laptop use
- Charge your laptop batteries fully before coming to class.
- Set your laptop volume control to mute or off before coming to class.
- Keep your laptop closed during presentations, and other specific in-class activities.
- Do not engage in unauthorized communication or entertainment (web browsing, texting, chatting, DVD viewing, music playing, game playing, etc.) during class unless it is part of the lesson. If you are found doing any of these activities you will be asked to leave the class and you will have an absence.

Cell Phones
- Set your phone to mute or silent mode before coming to class.
- Do not answer incoming calls or make outgoing calls except in an emergency.
- Do not use text messaging or web browser features while in class.

Recommendations for Students

The University of Texas at El Paso supports the use of technology for learning. We also understand that the use of laptops can be an asset to some students and help them in their note-taking and learning. That being said, we also believe that students should have diverse learning experiences and be adaptable to different styles of learning and note-taking.

Students are expected to follow the rules and guidelines established by instructors for each class that they are taking, and to make a conscious effort to adapt to learning environments that may vary across instructors, classrooms, and disciplines.

Academic Dishonesty:

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on reports or papers. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another person's as ones' own. And, collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act.

Academic dishonesty is an assault upon the basic integrity and meaning of a University. Cheating, plagiarism, and collusion in dishonest activities are serious acts which erode the University's educational and research roles and cheapen the learning experience not only for the perpetrators, but also for the entire community. It is expected that UTEP students will understand and subscribe to the ideal of academic integrity and that they will be willing to bear individual responsibility for their work. Materials (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill academic requirements must represent a student's own efforts.

Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions.

Students with disabilities:

If you have or suspect a disability and need accommodations, you should contact Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5184 or at dss@utep.edu or come by Room 106 Union East Building.

Tentative course schedule:

Topics	Readings
PART 1	
Week 1	
Introduction - Syllabus, What is Linguistics?	
Do animals have language?	Emiliano the macaque
Week 2	
Labor Day - University Closed	
Nim - Documentary	
Week 3	
Design Features of Language	How did language begin?
The Origins of Language / Neanderthal Communication	
Week 4	
Writing Systems - Group Work	Writing Systems
Introduction to Writing Systems	
Week 5	
Writing Systems - Group Presentations	
TEST 1	
PART 2	
Week 6	
Child Language Acquisition	Language Acquisition
Child Language Acquisition	Genie - discussion
Week 7	
Reduplication	
Body Language	How Human Brains do Language: One system two channels

Week 8

Endangered Languages   The Race to Save a Dying Language

Instroduction to Conlanging

Week 9

Esperanto   Conlanguages: Dothraki

Conlanging - Group Work

Week 10

Conlanging - Group Presentations

TEST 2

Fall 2017 Course Drop Deadline

PART 3

Week 11

Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Bilingualism   My Language Experience

Week 12

Linguistic Landscape   Linguistic Landscape Article - Student research

Language and Culture

Week 13

Linguistic Landscape - Group Work

Linguistic Landscape - Group Work

Week 14

Linguistic Landscape - Picture Coding

Language Variation Survey

Week 15

Linguistic Landscape - Group Presentation

TEST 3

Week 16   FINALS WEEK

IMPORTANT NOTE: The syllabus provides a general plan for the course; modifications are often necessary and may be implemented as a result of students' needs, course development, and classroom life in general.