

Language and Culture

LING 340 - PH 319

M W F 1:00-1:50

Instructor: Verónica Grondona

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Office hours: M W F 11:00-12:15 (until further notice)
and **BY APPOINTMENT**

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Course Description:

This course examines the role of language in the wider contexts of culture and society, focusing on the relationship between language and culture. The course will take as a point of departure the hypothesis that language determines the way in which its speakers conceptualize the world, and will explore a wide variety of topics that attempt to demonstrate the inseparable link between a language and the culture of its speakers. The topics to be discussed include how grammars of languages reflect the cultures and social structure of their speakers; how languages organize meaning in domains such as body parts and spatial relations and how they express cultural imagery; how cultural differences and attitudes are manifested through language use, and whether these differences interfere with intercultural and interethnic communication; how gender based differences are reflected in language and culture; how languages are used for political purposes, and whether languages serve causes of oppression and rebellion. Other topics to be discussed include language acquisition and the acquisition of culture; bilingual communities and multilingual nations; language contact, language maintenance and language loss. We will look at case studies from the U.S. and from across less familiar cultures from around the world.

Required Texts:

Bonvillain, Nancy. 1993. Language, culture and communication. Prentice Hall. Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Requirements: Written assignments: 40%
Term project: 30%
Class participation 30%

Assignments

- a. Readings
- b. Short written assignments where the students apply the concepts developed and discussed in class and in the textbook to the speech community of their choice.

Term Project

The term project will take the form of a term paper. It will consist of the research conducted by the students during the course on the speech community of their choice. The material should be compiled into a coherent paper. (More details will be provided in class.) The term project is due Monday, April 23 by 1:00p.m.

Class Participation

Class participation involves **regular attendance** and **active participation** in group and classroom discussions. Students will be responsible for reading assignments each class period, and should be ready to discuss in class the topics and concepts introduced in the readings. Students will also be expected to provide examples of these concepts from the speech community of their choice and from their own personal experience. Each student will also share the results of his/her research on the speech community of his/her choice with his/her colleagues in the form of a brief classroom presentation at the end of the term.

Grading Policies

a. Weights for each requirement are listed above.

b. **Cheating and plagiarism will result in an automatic E for the course, and a memo to the Dean explaining why the E was awarded.**

Assignments:

- If you miss class, it is YOUR responsibility to obtain copies of any handouts and to find out about any possible schedule changes announced in class.
- Readings and written homework assignments are to be completed or handed in on the day indicated, unless a change is announced in class.
- Late assignments will not be accepted. If an assignment is missed, the student should provide (good) documented reason for it, and the assignment may be made up within ONE WEEK.
- It is the individual student's responsibility to ensure that each assignment is understood and carried out sufficiently in advance. "I couldn't understand the assignment" does not constitute a reason for failing to hand in a reasonable attempt.
- Students will be responsible for reading assignments each class period, and should be ready to discuss readings in class. Class participation is important! Therefore, it is important for everyone to attend class and be prepared to discuss the readings each class session. Your classwork is enhanced by conscientious attendance and intelligent participation in class discussion, and hurt by visible lack of preparation for class.
- Videorecordings will be shown in class during the term. Students are responsible for the material presented in the videos and any assignments based on them.
- *Students may be called at random to answer questions and/or contribute to the discussion in class.*
- This course involves a considerable amount of individual research. This is something that you cannot accomplish in just one week, one day or one evening. You should start your research for the course the *first* week of classes, and you should work on it regularly all through the term. Do not leave it for the day or evening before an assignment is due.
- I will give an E to any assignment that has cheating of any kind, including plagiarism.
- **If a problem arises, TALK TO ME!**

Course Objectives:

- To provide students with theories and concepts of language and culture.
- To increase understanding of the relationship between language and culture.
- To understand the role of cultural patterns (beliefs, values, norms) that affect or relate to individuals' verbal and nonverbal behaviors.
- To identify and describe obstacles that hinder the development of intercultural communication, understanding, and competence.
- To help develop practical skills needed for effective intercultural communication.

SCHEDULE FOR THE TERM (Tentative)

(Changes to this schedule will be announced in class and by e-mail. It is **your** responsibility to find out about any changes to this schedule. Only the six 'big' assignments are listed in this schedule. Other small/short assignments may be assigned during the term, and will be announced in class and through e-mail.)

WEEK	TOPIC
1 Jan 8-12	GENERAL INTRODUCTION What is 'language'? What is 'culture'? READINGS: Bonvillain Ch. 1 (for Jan. 10)
2 Jan 15-19	UNITS OF ANALYSIS AND THEORETICAL CONCEPTS FOR THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE Jan 15 - NO CLASSES - Martin Luther King Jr. Day READINGS: Bonvillain Ch. 2 Assignment(s): Assignment #1 due Jan 19
3 Jan 22-26	UNITS OF ANALYSIS AND THEORETICAL CONCEPTS FOR THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE (cont'd) READINGS: Bonvillan - Ch. 2 Assignment(s): Choice of a speech community due Jan 22
4 Jan 29-Feb 2	WHAT IS CULTURE? HOW DO WE STUDY IT? READINGS: Bonvillan - Ch. 3 Assignment(s): Assignment #2 due Feb 2
5 Feb 5-9	THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF COMMUNICATION READINGS: Bonvillan - Ch. 4 Basso, K. H. <i>To Give up on Words': Silence in Western Apache Culture.</i>
6 Feb 12-16	SPEAKING AS AN OBJECT OF INQUIRY FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES READINGS: Bonvillain - Ch. 5 Youssof, I. A., A. D. Grimshaw, et al. 1976. <i>Greetings in the Desert.</i> American Ethnologist 3(4). 797-824. Assignment(s): Assignment #3 due Feb 16
7 Feb 19-23	SOCIETAL SEGMENTATION AND LINGUISTIC VARIATION READINGS: Bonvillain - Ch. 6
8 Feb 26-Mar 2	LANGUAGE AND GENDER READINGS: Bonvillain - Ch. 7 Assignment(s): Assignment #4 due Mar 2

WEEK	TOPIC
9 Mar 5-9	NO CLASSES - WINTER RECESS
10 Mar 12-16	LANGUAGE AND GENDER (cont'd) READINGS: Bonvillain - Ch. 8
11 Mar 19-23	LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND THE ACQUISITION OF CULTURE READINGS: Bonvillain - Ch. 9, 10 Assignment(s): Assignment #5 due Mar 23
12 Mar 26-30	MULTILINGUALISM AND MULTICULTURALISM READINGS: Bonvillain - Ch. 11, 12
13 Apr 2-6	CHANGE IN LANGUAGE, CHANGE IN CULTURE; READINGS: TBA Assignment(s): Assignment #6 due Apr 6
14 Apr 9-13	LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND EDUCATION; STUDENT PRESENTATIONS READINGS: Bonvillain - Ch. 13
15 Apr 16-20	STUDENT PRESENTATIONS and other topics TBA READINGS: TBA
April 23	The TERM PROJECT is due by 1:00p.m. in my mailbox