

# **ANT 3620: Language and Culture**

## **Fall 2015**

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 1:55pm – 2:45pm  
Turlington L011

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Office Hours: Mondays – 9:00am – 12:00pm

### **Introduction, Course Objectives, and Outcomes**

The main goal of this course is to provide you with a basic understanding of various anthropological approaches to the study of language and how to properly analyze and deconstruct instances of language. You will learn about how language both replicates and shapes thought, culture, power and society. This course is not designed as a course in linguistics – the formal systematic study of language and its structures – but as a means of contextualizing how anthropology as a discipline approaches the issue of language and thought and their roles in social settings.

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Understand and apply the basic terms and concepts of language and anthropological thought concerning.
- Evaluate the relationship between the biological phenomenon of language and the cultural phenomenon of speech.
- Analyze the ways in which language not acts as a passive conveyer of information but also as a vehicle for constructing social relationships.
- Create relations between speech, media and discourse to express how the concept of language is continuing to evolve.

### **Course Materials and Required Readings**

There is one textbook for this course:

Ahearn, Laura. 2012. *Living Language: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publications.

There will be additional readings from the primary literature. These readings are listed at the end of this document. They will be distributed as .pdf files on Canvas.

### **Assignments and Grading**

The grades and assignments for this course break down as follows:

Class participation: 100 points total

Exams: 100 points each: 300 points total

Gordon Rule Essays: 75 points each: 150 points total

Non-Gordon Rule Project: 150 points total

In either case, the total amount of points a student can receive will be 550. This number is used to calculate your grade, with the total number of points one received divided by 550. The assigned letter grades are as follows:

A+ = 100 – 97

A = 96 – 94

A- = 93 – 90

B+ = 89 – 87

B = 86 – 84

B- = 83 – 80

C+ = 79 – 77

C = 76 – 74

C- = 73 – 70

D+ = 69 – 67

D = 66 – 64

D- = 63 – 61

F = 60 and below

*Class participation:* It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ARRIVE ON TIME. Class participation is measured through group activities conducted in class that are given at random times and on random days. The required weekly readings MUST be read before the week to ensure proper and lively discussions. Some group activities may be small quizzes with questions drawn from the readings; it is advisable you do not skip any readings as they will also be on the exams. Coming late to class, or any other non-emergency absence, will result in no points for that activity. If you have three unexcused absences, you will automatically drop to a 50% for your attendance grade. I have a zero tolerance policy towards students who attempt to sneak around the system. Therefore, I reserve the right to change attendance policy on an as-needed basis.

*Exams:* These are a combination of multiple choice, true/false and other question types to evaluate students' knowledge of the material assigned thus far. Each exam's total points are 100. The third exam is NOT a final exam, it is NOT cumulative and will be held on the last day of class.

*Gordon Rule Essays:* Those students who are signed up for the Gordon rule section of this course must write 4,000 words to fulfill the requirement. There will be two essays assigned during the semester whose topics will be larger debates within linguistic anthropology, culled from large topics covered in the lectures.

Essay 1: Language and Thought: Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Essay 2: Language and Power: Social Hierarchies through Language

For each essay, students will be given a prompt and relevant articles/readings to properly engage in the debates, and give their own viewpoints. These relevant readings will be found on Canvas. All essays MUST be grammatically correct with few to no spelling errors. Students' writing capabilities ARE A PART OF THE TOTAL GRADE for your essays; poorly written essays with many grammatical and spelling errors will accordingly lose points. Each essay must be between 1,800 – 2,000 words. Both essays will be constructed throughout the semester as: an initial draft, that it then peer-reviewed by fellow students before final submissions.

*Non-Gordon Rule Visual Discourse Project:* Those students who are not signed up for the Gordon Rule requirement must complete a small visual project that will analyze media images and their related language to investigate how societal norms and perpetuated/subverted through popular culture. Readings from the class must be incorporated into the essay, as well as the relevant images. Further instruction will be discussed in class and posted to Canvas later in the semester. The project will consist of a small essay (1,000 – 1,200 words) analyzing a set of images that students will choose themselves to explore ideas presented in lectures of the last third of the semester.

## **Course Policies, Procedures, and Useful Links**

### **Class Attendance and Make-up Policies**

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policy, which can be found [here](#).

### **Academic Honesty**

Both I and the University of Florida will give no leeway when it comes to cheating and plagiarism. If I catch a student cheating on an exam, the exam will be taken away and you will receive a zero and be asked to leave the exam space. The same policy applies to plagiarism on your essays and visual projects. All students are expected to honor their commitment to the [University's Honor Code](#).

### **Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the [Disability Resource Center](#). The DRC will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. **Please make any requests by September 3.**

### **UF Counseling Services.**

Resources are available on-campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career and academic goals that interfere with their academic performance. These resources include:

1. [University Counseling and Wellness Center](#), 3190 Radio Road, 392-1575. Personal, career, and emergency counseling
2. [Career Resource Center](#), Reitz Union, 392-1601, Career development assistance and counseling
3. [Writing Studio](#), 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Writing assistance, study skills, test preparation

### **Course Evaluations**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing [online evaluations](#). Evaluations are typically open during the last 2-3 weeks of the semester, but students will be notified of specific times when they are open. [Summary results](#) of these assessments are also available to students.

## Course Schedule: Dates, Topics, and Required Readings

Week 1: August 24 – August 30: Introduction to Language

- Ch. 1 of Ahearn
- Kroskrity 2004 (Duranti companion)
- Maffi 1990 “Somali Color Term Evolution”

Week 2: August 31 – September 6: Language and Thought

- Ch. 4 Ahearn
- Conklin 1955
- Lakoff and Johnson 1980
- Whorf 1956

Week 3: September 7 – September 13: Culture

- Duranti 2004, Ch. 2
- Geertz 1973
- Levi-Strauss 1963, selected readings

Week 4: September 14 – September 20: Biology of Language

- **Essay 1** due on September 14<sup>th</sup> (Monday)
- **Exam 1** on September 20<sup>th</sup> (Friday)
- Corballis 2011 – Chapters 1, 3 and 4

Week 5: September 21 – September 27: Meaning in Linguistic Forms

- Ch. 7 of Ahearn
- Duranti 2004, Ch. 6

Week 6: September 28 – October 4: Ethnography/Communication

- Ch. 2 of Ahearn
- Duranti 2004, Ch. 4

Week 7: October 5 – October 11: Speech Communities

- Ch. 5 of Ahearn
- Duranti 2004, Ch. 3, pp. 72 – 83; Ch. 7, pp. 214 – 229
- Geertz 2005
- Meyerhoff 1999

Week 8: October 12 – October 18: Individual/Societal Multilingualism

- Ch. 3 and 6 of Ahearn
- Childs 2006, in *5-Minute Linguist*
- Agha 2004

Week 9: October 19 – October 25: Nonverbal Communication

- **Exam 2** on October 19<sup>th</sup> (Monday)

- Ch. 8 of Ahearn
- LeMaster, Barbara and Leila Monaghan 2004
- Iverson & Goldin-Meadow 2005

Week 10: October 26 – November 1: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Technology

- Java, Akshay, Xiaodan Song, Tim Finin and Belle Tseng 2007
- Naaman, Mor, Jeffrey Boase and Chih-Hui Lai 2010
- Poe 2010

Week 11: November 2 – November 8: Gender, Sex, Language

- Ch. 9 of Ahearn
- Ochs 1992 “Indexing Gender”
- Eckert 1993

Week 12: November 9 – November 15: Class, Dialect, Ethnicity, Race

- Ch. 10 of Ahearn
- Philips 2004
- Besnier 2004

Week 13: November 16 – November 22: Philosophies of Language and Power

- Ch. 12 of Ahearn
- Foucault, selected readings
- Derrida, selected readings
- Additional readings from blogs, online essays, etc. on scholars’ discussions of Foucault, Derrida and other philosophers of Europe who deal with language and power.

Week 14: November 23 – November 29:

- Thanksgiving Break
- **Essay 2** due by November 29<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm

Week 15: November 30 – December 6: Language Death

- Ch. 11 of Ahearn
- Kolbert 2005

Week 16: December 7 – December 9:

- No assigned readings
- December 7<sup>th</sup> is a review session
- **Exam 3** on December 9<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday)
- **Visual Discourse Project** due