

Missouri Western State College
Division of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Department of English, Foreign Languages and Journalism

ENG 232: Language Awareness

Section 01 - TTh 2:00-4:50; JGM 119
Summer 2002

Instructor: Dr. Donaher

Office: Eder Hall (aka SS/C) 222 L

Office Hours: By Appointment

Phone: 816-271-5964

Email: donaher@missouriwestern.edu

URL: <http://staff.missouriwestern.edu/~donaher>

Course Philosophy and Objectives

"When *I* use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master--that's all."

-- Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

The English language is nobody's special property.

-- Derek Walcott, *Writers at Work*

I love the language, that soft bastard Latin, / Which melts like kisses from a female mouth.

-- Lord Byron, *Beppo*

"You taught me language; and my profit on 't / Is, I know how to curse: the red plague rid you, / For learning me your language!"

-- Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

Language is fun. This class is designed to show you just how cool (as in California *kewl*) the study of language can be. Over the course of the semester, we will

- study linguists' theories about the roots, acquisition, nature, and functions of language
- learn about the sounds, structures, and symbols of language
- debate issues of language in relation to speech communities, culture, and gender
- explore constructed languages and attempts at interspecies and extraterrestrial communication
- examine the current state of language and its future
- understand and appreciate linguistic variety.

Required Materials

Textbook:

- Clark, Virginia P., Paul A. Eschholz and Alfred F. Rosa. *Language: Readings in Language and Culture*. Sixth Edition. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.
- Thomas, Lee and Stephen Tchudi. *The English Language: An Owner's Manual*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999.

Other:

- A Collegiate Dictionary
- A spiral bound, lightweight, very portable notebook for your Commonplace Book
- A pocket folder for turning in short papers
- A traditional binder notebook with plastic sleeves for your final portfolio
- Computer disks
- Photocopies of your work and various sources

Assignments

Commonplace Book

Your Commonplace Book is a language journal in which you reflect casually and briefly on your daily language observations, the language artifacts you are gathering, and your growing appreciation of language fun-ness. Entries will be used and shared in class. Carry it with you or write in it at the end of each day.

Daily Assignments and Quizzes

Our daily assignments begin with the creation of our Star Wars names and include everything from doing field research and learning to divide language into its components to creating messages to send to other worlds. Some activities will extend beyond class time and require work outside of class. We will also debate a number of language issues and share our insights and growing collection of language artifacts. There will be a takehome quiz about 1/2 way through the session to help you review for the final exam.

Short Papers

We will write three one page papers in response to specific course activities and readings:

- A report on the history of a word in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED)
- An analysis of fieldwork done in your personal speech community
- An explanation of your linguistic considerations for the message you created to send out to other worlds .

Language Portfolio

Your Language Portfolio will begin with a one page Language and Literacy Narrative that examines and reflects upon language issues that are important to you. You will include in your portfolio a selection of five language artifacts gathered during the semester that illustrate some aspect or aspects of language theory and/or that reflect your interests in and concerns about language. For each artifact, you will include an explanation and analysis of the language issue raised.

Final Exam

The Final Exam will contain two parts: a knowledge portion drawn from the readings, films, lectures, discussion, and quizzes and a short essay portion. You will be given some indication on a day-to-day basis of the kinds of knowledge you will need to retain for the final exam, as well as a study guide late in the semester to help you prepare for the knowledge portion of the exam. The best preparation, though, comes daily, by taking good notes and by reviewing those notes often. You will also be given the essay questions to prepare in advance, and you may choose the questions you feel most comfortable responding to.

Have Fun

And I mean it. Don't let academic sounding essay titles like "Developmental Milestones in Motor and Language Development" discourage you! Even the most abstruse essay contains some fascinating bits of language lore that we will enjoy testing, debating, mangling, and dismantling. And while technical jargon will be required learning, *really, really, really* technical jargon will merely be bandied about in class in the spirit of "so *that's* what that's called!" and "hmm, isn't that interesting?" and "geez, who would've thought?"

Grading

Over the course of the semester, students will read a variety of essays about language and linguistics. In addition to the readings and quizzes, students will do a number of daily assignments, keep a Commonplace book, write three short papers, create a Language Portfolio, and take a final exam. In order to pass the course, you must complete the papers, submit a language portfolio, and take the final exam. In addition, the quality of your work, the percentage of the work that you complete, and your efforts at participation will determine your final grade.

Your Final Grade Distribution is as follows:

- Commonplace Book = 20%
- Daily Assignments and Quiz = 10%
- Short Papers = 20%
- Language Portfolio = 30%
- Final Exam = 20%

Other Requirements

Attendance and Promptness

Attendance is mandatory. Regular attendance is an essential part of the student's educational experience and a requirement for an adequate evaluation of student academic progress. You are responsible for material covered or assignments given which you missed because of absence. School functions, illness, and personal crisis do not absolve you from your classroom obligations, so while due consideration is given to the student struck by lightning on the way to class, an absence cannot be designated as "excused" or "unexcused"--it simply "is." I consider one absence during summer school to be reasonable; absences beyond one will affect your final grade, as you are not here to participate or turn in your work. Chronic lateness will count toward this total.

Participation And Preparation

You will be expected to make significant contributions to the class in the form of participation and preparation. Participation includes the contributions you make to class discussion and the effort you make to be a part of our discourse community. Preparation includes doing the daily readings and responses as assigned, as well as engaging exuberantly in our activities. Keep in mind that live classroom discussion

- gives you practice arguing with others respectfully and professionally
- gives you opportunities to formulate applications of principles
- gives you prompt feedback on difficult or confusing issues and material
- increases your retention of material through explaining, summarizing, and questioning.

Classroom Courtesy

Students are expected to be courteous and respectful in all of their exchanges with the instructor and other students. We, as students of language, should be particularly careful to note how tone and language contribute to the overall impression of our words. The college expects all students to conduct themselves so as to maintain an effective environment for learning, to act responsibly in accordance with good taste, and to respect fully the rights of others.

Student Disability

Any student in this course who has a disability that prevents the fullest expression of abilities should contact me by the second class period so that we can discuss class requirements.

Late Work

All assignments are due at the beginning of the hour on the due date, unless otherwise specified. Learning is a cumulative process and each assignment in this course is designed to build on the last assignment; therefore, late work disrupts this important aspect of the learning process. Except for the formal papers, no late work will be accepted. Papers will not be discounted if turned in within 24 hours of the due date. Otherwise, they will be discounted one letter grade for every class period past the due date. No work will be accepted after the last class day before the final exam.

Computer Usage

You will be called upon to read materials online, use Webboard, and to use computers in and outside of class time. We will post some of our materials to Webboard so that we may more fully share our ideas and increase our interchanges. Further, the final papers and portfolio for this course must be word processed.

Plagiarism

. . . it is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation. -- Herman Melville

Plagiarism is literally the stealing of others' words and ideas and using them as your own. Make every effort to give credit where credit is due, and if you are not sure of "how"--ask. Students are responsible for proving that all work turned in for grading is their own original work. Papers with evidence of plagiarism will receive a zero.

Final Thoughts

Keep in mind that each class period equals roughly one week of a traditional semester course and thus, the work load, like the class pace, is accelerated. You will want to plan ahead and set aside an appropriate amount of time to do the class readings and assignments, as well as time to review your materials in preparation for the final exam.

Course Schedule

Introduction to Language and History of Language

May

30 (Th)

Syllabus and Introduction to the Course
Assign Commonplace Book
Assign Language Portfolio
Assign OED Report
Film: *Discovering the Human Language*

June

4 (T)

Readings for Class: *Owner's Manual* pp 31-44, Daniels' "Nine Ideas About Language" pp 43-60, and *Owner's Manual* pp 139-166
Film: *The Story of English, Part Two: The Mother Tongue*

Language and Culture

6 (Th)

Readings for class: Hughes' "Language and Writing" pp 705-722, Roberts' "Speech Communities" pp 267-276, and Marckwardt and Dillard's "Social and Regional Variation" pp 277-291
Film: *American Tongues*
Assign Speech Community Fieldwork Assignment

11 (T)

OED Reports Due

Readings for class: Shuy's "Dialects: How They Differ" pp 292-312, Smitherman's "'It Bees Dat Way Sometime': Sounds and Structures of Present Day Black English" pp 328-343, and Pfeiffer's "Girl Talk-Boy Talk" pp 357-364

Language Acquisition

13 (Th)

Readings for Class: Moskowitz's "The Acquisition of Language" pp 529-555, Lenneberg's "Developmental Milestones in Motor and Language Development" 556-559, and Aitchison's "Predestinate Grooves: Is There a PreOrdained Language 'Program'?" pp 560-579
Film: *Acquiring the Human Language*

Sounds and Structures in Language

18 (T)

Speech Community Field Work and Analysis Due

Readings for class: Callary's "Phonetics" pp 113-133 and Ohio State University Language Files' "The Minimal Units of Meaning: Morphemes" pp 134-143

20 (Th)

Readings for class: Jacobs and Rosenbaum's "What Do Native Speakers Know About Their Language?" pp 183-188 and Heny's "Syntax: The Structure of Sentences" pp 189-224

Constructing and Constructed Languages

25 (T)

Readings for class: Emmorey's "Sign Language" pp 79-95, Francis' "Word-Making: Some Sources for New Words" pp 154-165, *Owner's Manual* pp 248-25

Web reading for class: "An Introduction to the Klingon Language" at <http://www.uni-duisburg.de/SCHULEN/GDM/schueler/stpage/klingon.htm>

Symbolic Language and Communicating with Extraterrestrials

27 (Th)

Take Home Quiz Due

Reading for class: Pinker's "The Tower of Babel" pp 240-256

Interplanetary Messages - Inclass readings to be assigned

Film: *Star Trek Next Generation: Darmok*

Assign ET Messages and Linguistic Explanation

July

1 (T)

Conclude discussions and critique messages/Catch up day

4 (Th) - Fourth of July Holiday

Animal Communication (Bonus points to anyone who can sing the theme song from *Dr. Doolittle*)

8 (T)

Messages and Explanation of Linguistic Considerations Due

Readings for class: Kemp and Smith's "Signals, Signs, and Words: From Animal Communication to Language" pp 658-680 and Ohio State University Language Files' "True Language?" pp 74-77

Film: *Signs of the Apes, Songs of the Whales*

11 (Th)

Commonplace Books Due - 30 Entries

Film: *A Conversation with Koko*

Work on finishing Language Portfolios

15 (T)

Language Portfolios Due

Final Exam Review

18 (Th)

Final Exam