

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

ENG 232: Language Awareness

Section 01 - TTh 8:00-9:30 - JGM 119
Fall 2003

Instructor: Dr. Donaher

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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 pocket folder for turning in short papers
- Computer disks
- Photocopies of your work and various sources

Assignments

Daily Assignments and Quizzes

Our daily assignments begin with the creation of our Star Wars names and include answering questions about the readings, doing field research, learning to divide language into its components, and creating messages to send to other worlds. Some activities will extend beyond class time and require work outside of class. We will also share our insights and growing collection of language artifacts. The questions and activities will highlight the important points from our readings and will help you prepare for the final exam. There will be frequent quizzes (read: pretty much daily) over the reading assignments. Quizzes cannot be made up. They will be done on WebCT, during the first ten minutes of the class hour.

Short Papers

We will write four 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
- A language and literacy narrative

Final Exam

The Final Exam will be drawn from the readings, films, lectures, activities, discussion, and quizzes. Most of the exam will be done on WebCT. 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.

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, you will read a variety of essays about language and linguistics. In addition to the readings and quizzes, you will do a number of daily assignments, 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 the 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:

- Daily Assignments and Quizzes = 30%
- Short Papers = 30%
- Final Exam = 40%

Other Requirements

Attendance and Promptness

Attendance is mandatory. 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 two absences to be reasonable; absences beyond two will affect your final grade, as you are not here to participate or turn in your work. Chronic lateness will count toward this total.

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. All out-of-class assignments are due at the beginning of the class period. No late assignments are accepted, except as noted below.

You should note, however, that mere attendance does not mean you will pass the course. You must perform adequately on the tasks required and show initiative in completing the course requirements.

If I should be unable to meet class, you will be notified by a secretary, fellow instructor, or a note on the classroom door. Be sure to note any assignments due upon my return.

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.

Sharing Your Work

Students are expected to share their writings and other work with members of the course and, therefore, should not choose to write on topics they consider of a sensitive nature. Further, all work that a student produces may be shared by the instructor with the class for purposes of example and training. Such work will be as anonymous as possible. Finally, the instructor may share your work anonymously with future classes or in her own writing and research.

Classroom Courtesy

You 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 during the first week 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 short 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 day 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 WebCT, 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, while our quizzes and much of our final exam will be on WebCT. 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. You 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 and may result in failure of the course.

Final Thoughts

Life is unpredictable--at least it appears so. I recognize that at times your outside life may interfere with your classroom life. It is up to you to set your priorities and to realize that "doing it all" is not always possible or even desirable. If you are feeling overlystressed about all you have to accomplish, you need to come see me. If I understand what is going on in your life, I can more easily help you achieve your goals.

Course Schedule

Introduction to Language

August

26 (T)

Syllabus and Introduction to the Course

28 (Th)

Reading for Class: *Owner's Manual* pp 31-44

Film: *Discovering the Human Language*

September

2 (T)

Reading for Class: Daniels' "Nine Ideas About Language" pp 43-60

History of Language

4 (Th)

Film: *The Story of English, Part Two: The Mother Tongue*

Assign *OED* Report

9(T)

Reading for Class: *Owner's Manual* pp 139-166

11(Th)

Meet in Library to work on *OED* Reports

16 (T)

Reading for class: Hughes' "Language and Writing" pp 705-722

Language and Culture

18 (Th)

Readings for class: *Owner's Manual* pp 277-306 and Shuy's "Dialects: How They Differ" pp 292-312

Assign Speech Community Fieldwork Assignment

23 (T)

***OED* Reports Due**

Film: *American Tongues*

25 (Th)

Readings for class: Roberts' "Speech Communities" pp 267-276 and Smitherman's "'It Bees Dat Way Sometime': Sounds and Structures of Present Day Black English" pp 328-343

30 (T)

Reading for class: Pfeiffer's "Girl Talk-Boy Talk" pp 357-364 and Tannen, "'I'll Explain It to You': Lecturing and Listening" pp 365-377

Sounds and Structures in Language

October

2 (Th)

Reading for class: *Owner's Manual* pp 50-57 and Callary's "Phonetics" pp 113-133

7 (T)

Reading for class: Ohio State University Language Files' "The Minimal Units of Meaning: Morphemes" pp 134-143

9 (Th)

Francis' "Word-Making: Some Sources for New Words" pp 154-165

14 (T)

Speech Community Field Work and Analysis Due

Reading for class: Jacobs and Rosenbaum's "What Do Native Speakers Know About Their Language?" pp 183-188

16 (Th)

Reading for class: Heny's "Syntax: The Structure of Sentences" pp 189-224

21 (T)

Reading for class: *Owner's Manual* pp 215-237

23 (Th)

Reading for class: Emmorey's "Sign Language" pp 79-95

Constructed and Symbolic Languages

28 (T)

Reading for class: *Owner's Manual* pp 248-257

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

Assign ET Messages and Linguistic Explanation

30 (Th)

Film: *Star Trek Next Generation: Darmok*

November

4 (T)

Reading for class: Pinker's "The Tower of Babel" pp 240-256
Interplanetary Messages - Inclass readings to be assigned

6 (Th)

Work on interplanetary messages

Language Acquisition

11 (T)

Film: *Acquiring the Human Language*

13 (Th)

Reading for Class: Moskowitz's "The Acquisition of Language" pp 529-555 and Lenneberg's "Developmental Milestones in Motor and Language Development" 556-559

18 (T)

Messages and Explanation of Linguistic Considerations Due

Reading for Class: Aitchison's "Predestinate Grooves: Is There a PreOrdained Language 'Program'?" pp 560-579
Assign Language and Literacy Narrative

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

20 (Th)

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

25 (T)

Reading 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

27 (Th)

Thanksgiving Holiday

December

2 (T)

Film: *A Conversation with Koko*

4 (Th)

Language and Literacy Narrative Due

Review for Final Exam

9 (T)

Final Exam 8:30-10:20 am