

ANTH 250 (Language & Culture)

Fall 2004

MWF 10:00-10:50

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Office Hours: M 2:00-5:00, W 2:00-5:00 (or other times by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers an introduction to the anthropological study of language and communicative behavior. It reveals the unique attributes of language—a capacity that only humans possess—and elucidates the key links between language and culture. We begin by comparing human language with non-human primate communication and communication efforts by feral children—two fields of inquiry that enable us to better conceptualize what language is. It requires us to answer the controversial question: Can apes speak? In our efforts to conceptualize language, we draw a distinction between language and non-verbal communication (a topic that we examine in detail), while we broaden our view to include manual as well as spoken language. Thus early on we will learn about ASL, or American Sign language, and the surprising way language can define a distinct (deaf) culture. After reviewing the “design features of language,” we will cover the basic linguistic concepts of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. This will conclude the introductory phase of this course and provide a backdrop for more substantive inquiries into the linkage between language and culture.

The substantive issues we will cover include, first, an exploration of “ethnographies of communication,” which are detailed anthropological studies of communicative events from around the world. Our cross-cultural journey into language and culture will introduce us to the anthropological concept of linguistic relativity (the idea that language shapes an individual's world-view). In line with this we will examine the implications of this much-disputed theory. Next we will focus on sociolinguistics, an approach that elucidate how language use varies *within* communities and nations according to region, race, class, and gender. Students will better understand how people who share the same culture nevertheless vary in how they speak. We then examine language acquisition among babies, both in the U.S. and around the world, and ask whether language use is an innate capacity or a culturally learned skill. Next we examine how language change parallels cultural change by considering how languages die out, transform, and merge (creolize). We will end by exploring the politics of language and culture, asking how individuals and nations cope with linguistic difference and multi-culturalism during the contemporary era of globalization. By the end of the class . . .

- Students will be able to draw several conceptual links between language and culture.
- Students will be knowledgeable about and able to debate several key language-related issues that have arisen in contemporary U.S. society.
- Students will become familiar with non-Western modes of communication and will better appreciate the unique ways that Americans utilize language.

LEARNING GOALS

At a more abstract level, this course has several learning goals that match with the objectives of Gettysburg's new curriculum:

- I. Through regularly scheduled debates on contemporary issues, students will . . .
 - A. . . . enhance their critical thinking and communication skills, learning to verbally articulate complex ideas in a public setting.
 - B. . . . be encouraged to understand the logic and evidence that underlie alternative viewpoints, learning to engage in respectful, reasoned discourse.
- II. Through exposure to different cultures around the world and to different sub-cultures within the U.S., students will gain a more sophisticated understanding of global society and an appreciation of diversity within our own nation.

- III. Through essay exams and a final paper, students will improve their ability to write coherently and effectively

READINGS

Students should complete all readings **by Wednesday** of the week they are assigned (see the schedule below). They should bring the textbook to class every day along with any additional assigned readings for that week.

- A. Books:** Students are required to read one textbook, which is available in the college bookstore:

***Language, Culture, and Communication: The Meaning of Messages*, by Nancy Bonvillain (2003:Prentice Hall)**

- B. Articles:** Students are also required to read a collection of readings (including journal articles, excerpts from books, and newspaper op-ed pieces). These readings are available electronically on Blackboard by clicking the button "Course Documents." I will give an in-class demonstration on how to access the articles. Students must *print up all articles*. To see a list of articles and their full references, go to the end of this syllabus.

FILMS

Students are required to watch eight ethnographic films: four during class time and four outside of class (Film 1 is optional). All films shown outside of class will be aired on the campus video channel #33 on Monday and Tuesday nights at 8:00, except for Film 1. If you cannot view the film at these times please see me *no later than Tuesday* (and preferably earlier) to arrange an individual viewing. The films will provide critical information for the completions of "argumentation forms" (see below) and are therefore required. Questions on the films will also appear on the exams.

Film 1 (wk.1): "L'Enfant Sauvage," 85 min. *OPTIONAL, to be shown Wed & Thurs* ❖

Film 2 (wk.3): "Personal Space: Exploring Human Proxemics," 28 min.

Film 3 (wk.3): "Sound and Fury: The Communication Wars of the Deaf," 60 min ❖

Film 4 (wk.8): "American Tongues," 57 min. ❖

Film 5 (wk.9): "Black English As an American Dialect," 30 min.

Film 6 (wk.10): "Gender and Communication: Male-Female Differences in Language and Nonverbal Behavior," 42 min.

Film 7 (wk.11): "Acquiring the Human Language: Playing the Language Game," 55 min. ❖

Film 8 (wk.12): "Le Bouillon D'Awara (Awara Soup)," 71 min. ❖

Film 9 (wk.14): "English Only in America?," 25 min.

❖Students may wish to watch these films together in groups. You can access the campus cable channel (33) on any dorm TV, on the TVs in the Musselman Library viewing rooms (on the 4th floor), and on The Junction TVs. If you want tips on how to access the cable channel in Musselman Library's viewing rooms (it's stumped the best of us, including me!), please ask and I'll be happy to show you.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This class is highly participatory and revolves around regular discussions, group work, and collective projects. Therefore attendance is required. Students are permitted 3 un-excused absences, but each absence beyond that will result in a 3-point penalty to the individual's grade. To grasp the weight of such a penalty, note that three such absences would lower one's final grade by a full letter. If the student misses class on the day of a film he or she will be doubly penalized since they will forfeit the two points they would earn from handing in a film guide.

GRADING

A. Participation	16%
B. Mini-presentation on an “ethnography of communication”	3%
C. Argumentation Forms (5 forms @ 7 pts. each)	35%
D. Exams (3 exams @ 12 pts. each)	36%
E. Final Project	10%

A. Participation:

dates: ongoing throughout the semester

Students are expected to participate in open-ended class discussions, group-work, and debates. Please note that successful participation requires you to *carefully and thoroughly* read the assigned books and articles by Wednesday of the week they are assigned, and to attentively view all films. In addition, students must work on, and be prepared to discuss, collective class projects (don’t worry—these are informal and fun, and will include a trip to the National Zoo in D.C., a small sociolinguistics survey, a language & gender questionnaire, and an informal conversational analysis). Failure to take part in any one of these activities will result in an automatic deduction of 2 points from your final Participation grade. The instructor will write weekly comments in a participation log to give you feedback on how you are doing, and you will give a self-assessment of your participation at mid-term and semester’s end. Please see me if you are uncomfortable speaking in class so that we can devise another way for you to contribute to classroom discussions and debate.

B. Mini-presentation on an “ethnography of communication”

dates: Wednesday and Friday of Week #7 (Oct. 13 & 15)

Your mini-presentation will consist of an informal 10-minute presentation of an article that you choose from a list that I provide. All articles are “ethnographies of communication,” meaning that they describe and interpret communicative events in non-Western cultures. See hand-out for full explanation.

❖Late policy: no make-ups for this assignment

C. Argumentation Forms

dates: Fri–Sept. 10; Fri–Sept. 17; Fri–Oct. 1; Wed–Nov. 3; Fri–Nov. 12; and Wed–Dec. 1

***opt-out privilege:** you may opt out of handing in one argumentation form with no penalty.

Argumentation forms will be about 1-3 pages long and will outline arguments and evidence to be presented during scheduled class debates. These forms can be written schematically and need not be structured as essays. They should, however, be detailed and reflect a careful and well-rounded analysis of the proposed issue. For the purpose of debate, the class will be arbitrarily divided into two groups that oppose each other on a particular issue (the issue will be explained in class and posted on Blackboard 2 weeks in advance). On your argumentation form you will draw on class readings and films to a) outline 4-5 separate arguments that support your team’s viewpoint; and b) support each arguments with concrete facts, personal accounts, historical precedents, moral appeals, and any other supporting data/information from class readings and films. Students are also welcome to search for information in books, journals, newspapers, and on the Internet. See hand-out for full explanation and examples.

D. Exams:

dates: Wed–Oct 6; Mon–Nov 15; Fri–Dec 10

Exams will test students’ comprehension of class readings, lectures, and films. They will cover all readings since the last exam, including topics covered prior to the exam in the same week. They will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

❖Late policy: no make-up for missed exams

E. Final Project

date: proposal due Mon–Nov 8; paper and presentation due on Fri–Dec 17, 1:30-4:30

Students will write a 7-8 page research paper on a topic of their interest. You should choose a topic that we

explored in class and that you found particularly interesting—this is your opportunity to learn more about it. The paper can be based on original fieldwork (highly encouraged!) OR library work. Students will give a 10-15 minute presentation to the class during final’s week. See hand-out for full explanation.

HONOR CODE

In order to participate as a registered student in this class, you must agree to adhere to the standards of academic integrity espoused by Gettysburg College. In particular, you must write and sign the Gettysburg Honor’s Pledge at the end of all argumentation forms, exams, and at the end of your final paper.

The Gettysburg Honor’s Pledge affirms that you have not cheated on an exam or plagiarized an essay other take-home assignment. It is considered plagiarism when you:

- Submit the words, sentences, ideas, conclusions, and/or examples from a source (a book an article, the Internet, another student’s paper) without citing the source.
- Submit another person’s work in place of your own
- “Recycle” a paper that was written for another class and for which you have already received credit
- Knowingly aided another student in plagiarizing an assignment as defined above.

Violations of this Honor code will be penalized according to the college’s policies. For more information on the Gettysburg Honor Code go to: http://www.gettysburg.edu/academics/acad/honor_code/index.html.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities should notify me as soon as possible so that I can make all reasonable efforts to accommodate your needs.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: August 30 & September 1 & 3

Topics:	All about our class Feral children: what they tell us about language Language versus communication: the design features of language
Readings:	Savage-Rumbaugh, et al. (first 50 pages), e-reserves
🎬Film:	“L’Enfant Sauvage,” 85 min. *OPTIONAL* ♣
Assignment(s):	none

Week 2: September 6, 7, 9

Topics:	Chimp-talk debate: can non-humans speak?
Readings:	Savage-Rumbaugh, et al. (finish), e-reserves
Assignment(s):	▲ Argumentation form/class debate #1 (Friday)—can chimps talk? (students versus instructor)

Week 3: September 13, 15, 17

Topics:	Language versus gesture: exploring non-verbal communication Language & speech: exploring American Sign Language
Readings:	Bonvillain book, pages 30-44 Hall, e-reserves

Dolnick, e-reserves
Wolkomir, e-reserves

🎬Films: “Personal Space: Exploring Human Proxemics,” 28 min.
“Sound and Fury: The Communication Wars of the Deaf,” 60 min ❀

Assignment(s): ▲ Argumentation form/class debate #2 (Friday)—should the deaf reject cochlear implants in order to retain their own culture?

Week 4: September 20, 22, 24

Topics: The form of the message: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics

Readings: Bonvillain, pages 7-30
Basso, e-reserves

Assignment(s): none

Week 5: September 27, 29 & October 1

Topics: Language & cultural meaning: the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Readings: Bonvillain, pages 46-73
Ravitch, e-reserves

Assignment(s): ▲ Argumentation form/class debate #3 (Friday)—does society need “the language police” to protect youth from politically incorrect language?

October 2: Trip to the National Zoo for a tour of Think Tank,
home of the Orangutan Learning Project

Week 6: October 6, 8

Topics: Outline of an ethnography of communication: anthropological investigations of language

Readings: Bonvillain, pages 76-92

Assignment(s): **Exam #1 (Wednesday)**

Week 7: October 11, 13, 15

Topics: Ethnography of communication, continued

Readings: Bonvillain, pages 92-108
Frake, e-reserves
Additional article of your choice (select from list)

Assignment(s): **student mini-presentations of an “ethnography of communication” (Wednesday & Friday)**

Week 8: October 18, 20, 22

- Topics: Communicative interactions: analyzing conversation
Societal segmentation and linguistic variation: regional dialects
- Readings: Bonvillain, pages 111-138
Tannen, e-reserves
Mufwene, e-reserves
Lippi-Green #1, e-reserves
- 🎬Film: “American Tongues,” 57 min. ♣
- Assignment(s): conversational analysis (informal)

Week 9: October 25, 27, 29

- Topics: Societal segmentation and linguistic variation: class & race
- Readings: Bonvillain, pages 140-178
Rickford, e-reserves
Lippi-Green #2, e-reserves
- 🎬Film: “Black English As an American Dialect,” 30 min.
- Assignment(s): dialect project (informal)

Week 10: November 1, 3, 5

- Topics: Language & Gender: U.S. & non-Western societies
- Readings: Bonvillain, pages 181-239
- 🎬Film: “Gender and Communication,” 42 min.
- Assignment(s): ▲ Argumentation form/class debate #4 (Wednesday)–free for all: *you* think of topics to debate!!
Language & gender survey (informal)

Week 11: November 8, 10, 12

- Topics: Learning language: babies & speech in cross-cultural perspective
- Readings: Bonvillain, pages 241-295
Pinker, e-reserves
- 🎬Film: “Acquiring the Human Language: Playing the Language Game,” 55 min. ♣
- Assignment(s): ▲ Argumentation form/class debate #5 (Friday)–is language innate? (students versus instructor)

Week 12: November 15, 17, 19

- Topics: Multilingual nations & creolization
- Readings: Bonvillain, pages 298-332
Diamond, e-reserves

🎬Film: “Le Bouillon D'Awara (Awara Soup),” 71 min. ❀

Assignment(s): **Exam #2 (Monday)**

Week 13: Nov 22

Topics: Multilingual nations & creolization, cont'd

Readings: Lippi-Green #3, e-reserves
Crawford, e-reserves
Dorfman, e-reserves

Assignment(s): none

Week 14: November 29 & December 1, 3

Topics: Bilingual communities
Language Death

Readings: Bonvillain, pages 336-366
Rodriguez, e-reserves

🎬Film: “English Only in America?,” 25 min.

Assignment(s): ▲ Argumentation form/class debate #6 (Wednesday)—should Americans support mono- or multi-lingual language policies?

Week 15: December 6, 8, 10

Topics: Language & Institutional encounters: courts, doctors, & schools

Readings: Bonvillain, pages 371-402
O'Barr, e-reserves

Assignment(s): **Exam #3 (Friday)**

Final's Week

Assignment(s): **Final paper due, to be presented to class Fri–Dec 17, 1:30-4:30 Quiz #4 on Monday, May 10 at 1:30**

ARTICLES AND CHAPTERS AVAILABLE ELECTRONICALLY

(Access via Blackboard under “Course Documents”)

Basso, Keith

1996 Wisdom Sits in High Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache. New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press.

Crawford, James

2001 A Nation Divided by One Language. Guardian Unlimited March 8:??

Diamond, J.

1991 Re-inventions of Human Language. Natural History 100(5):22-27.

Dolnick, Edward

1993 Deafness As Culture. Atlantic Monthly 272(3):37-48.

Dorfman, Ariel

1998 If Only We All Spoke Two Languages. New York Times 147(51189):A25.

- Frake, Charles
 1972 How to Ask for a Drink in Subanon. *In Language and Social Context*. Pier Paolo Giglioli, ed. Pp. 87-94. England: Penguin Books.
- Hall, Edward, and Mildred Reed Hall
 1997 The Sounds of Silence. *In Conformity and Conflict*. James McCurdy David Spradley, eds. Pp. 61-70. U.S.: Longman.
- Lippi-Green, Rosina
 1997 Hillbillies, Rednecks, and Southern Bells: The Language Rebels. *In English With an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States*. Rosina Lippi-Green, Pp. 202-16. NY: Routledge Press.

 1997 The Real Trouble With Black English. *In English With an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States*. Rosina Lippi-Green, Pp. 176-201. NY: Routledge Press.

 1997 The Stranger Within the Gates. *In English With an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States*. Rosina Lippi-Green, Pp. 217-39. NY: Routledge Press.
- Mufwene, Salikoko
 1996 Forms of Address: How Their Social Functions May Vary. *In Talking About People: Readings in Contemporary Anthropology*. William Haviland and Robert Gordon, eds. Pp. 46-48. Mountainview, CA: Mayfield.
- O'Barr, William, and John Conley
 1996 When a Juror Watches a Lawyer. *In Talking About People: Readings in Contemporary Anthropology*. William Haviland and Robert Gordon, eds. Pp. 42-45. Mountainview, CA: Mayfield.
- Pinker, Steven
 1994 Baby Born Talking--Describes Heaven. *In The Language Instinct*. Pinker, Steven Pp. 262-96. New York: William Morrow and Company.
- Ravitch, Diane
 2003 The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn. NY: Knopf.
- Rickford, John
 1999 Suite for Ebony and Phonics. *In Applying Cultural Anthropology*. Aaron Podolefsky and Peter Brown, eds. Pp. 58-62. Mountainview, CA: Mayfield Publishing.
- Rodriguez, Richard
 1981 Aria. *In Hunger of Memory: the Education of Richard Rodriguez*. Richard Rodriguez, Pp. 9-40. Boston: David Grodine.
- Savage-Rumbaugh, Sue, Stuart G. Shanker, and Talbot J. Taylor
 1998 Apes, Language, & the Human Mind. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Tannen, Deborah
 1999 Why Don't You Say What You Mean? *In Annual Editions: Anthropology*. Elvio Angeloni, ed. Pp. 66-69. Guilford, CT: Dushkin/McGraw Hill.
- Wolkomir, R.
 1992. "American Sign Language: It's Not Mouth Stuff--It's Brain Stuff." *Smithsonian* 23, no. 4: 30-41.