

COURSE SYLLABUS

Language and Culture (ANTH 233)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the evolution and use of human communication and language, placing special focus on its relationship to culture and society. Aside from a thorough reconstruction of the nature of language as a critical evolutionary feature of our species, it allows students to understand the diverse ways in which people employ language in different cultural and social settings, encouraging them reflect critically about the relations between language, status, power and social change.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify the main characteristics of human language and of linguistic evolution and variation.
2. Explain what language is and how it differs from other systems of communication found throughout the animal kingdom, as well as how it has evolved and how it is used within cultural systems for social reasons other than communication, such as status markers or as access to differential power structures in society.
3. Analyze the use of different elements within a linguistic system when confronted with a novel case.
4. Apply this knowledge to think critically about the use of language within contemporary social issues.

SUPPLEMENTAL REQUIRED READING

There is no required textbook for this course, supplemental readings will be assigned as required.

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

	Topic	Assignments due
Week 1	0. Introduction	
	1. Closed systems of communication	
Week 2	2. Humans and open systems of communication	
	3. Descriptive linguistics — Open systems through duality of patterning	
Week 3	3. Descriptive linguistics — Syntax and grammar — Kinesics and paralanguage	
	4. The evolution of human communication	--LECTURE CHECK 1 begins

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

Week 4	5. Acquiring language — Basics	
	5. Acquiring language — Acquiring multiple languages	
Week 5	6. Language and thought — Noam Chomsky — Sapir-Whorf hypothesis	
	6. Language and thought — Whorfian effects	--LECTURE CHECK 2 begins
Week 6	7. Dialect formation	
	7. Dialect formation	
Week 7	8. Language formalization and the Nation State	
	8. Formal languages and dialects of Prestige	--LECTURE CHECK 3 begins
	NO CLASS	
	NO CLASS	
Week 8	NO CLASS	
	NO CLASS	
Week 9	9. Writing systems --The lead up to writing, Mesopotamian cuneiform, and Egyptian hieroglyphs.	Documentary: Breaking the Maya Code
	9. Writing systems --Origins of writing around the world	
Week 10	9. Writing systems --Types of writing systems	
	10. Historical Linguistics and the spread of languages	--LECTURE CHECK 4 begins
Week 11	11. Language under globalization — Language under colonialism	

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

	11. Language under globalization — Globalization and language	
Week 12	11. Language under globalization — Processes of linguistic loss — Language conservation efforts	
	11. Language under globalization — Spanglish and mock spanish	--LECTURE CHECK 5 begins
Week 13	12. Language and systems of power: Gender — The difference model	
	— The dominance model	
Week 14	13. Agency and contesting culture	
FINAL	FINAL: 8:00 -10:00 am	

METHODS OF EVALUATION

- 1) Lecture checks (12% each).....60%
- 2) Final Exam.....20%
- 3) Attendance.....20%

Lecture checks

Lecture checks are small multiple-choice or short answer quizzes designed to make sure everyone is keeping up with lectures. They stem directly from classes, weekly readings, and classroom discussions.

PLEASE NOTE: Lecture checks are due when assigned and can only be made up due to an excused absence with proper documentation.

Attendance

Attendance is important, as many of the concepts introduced in the readings will be further elaborated and discussed in class. For those reasons, periodic attendance will be taken, and will constitute 20% of the grade.

Extra Credit

There is no extra credit available in this course.

GRADING SCALE

The following grading scale is utilized for student evaluation:

A	90% and above
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	59% and below