

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE

EN 2403.01
Spring 2016

Location: 103 Butler Hall
Time: 2:00 – 3:15 PM

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Office: Lee Hall, Room 2313
Office Hours: MW 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM
(and by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Language is an integral part of our lives, but many questions we have about language go unanswered. Can animals be taught to use language in the same way as humans? Why do 'knight' and 'knee' start with k's? Why do people who speak the same language have different accents? Why is it so hard to get rid of accents in foreign languages? Is it really easier to learn a second language as a child? This course attempts to answer these questions and others by introducing students to the methods used to study language.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of this course, students will be prepared to:

- examine and question common assumptions and attitudes about language and language use.
- describe the basic theoretical trends and ideas associated with the study of language.
- use basic notational conventions and terminology associated with linguistics.
- identify academic and career opportunities available in linguistics.

REQUIRED TEXT:

Yule, G. (2010). *The Study of Language* (5th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Please bring *The Study of Language* to class every day as we will use it frequently for reference and for practice exercises. The readings listed on the course schedule are to be done before class on the day they are listed. We will discuss the general principles from the readings in class; you are responsible for the information in the assigned readings whether or not it is also presented in class. If information from the readings is unclear, please do not hesitate to ask questions about it.

GRADING BREAKDOWN:	Reaction Piece Average	20%
	Practice Sets	20%
	Midterm	20%
	Assumptions Project	20%
	Final Exam	20%

Grades for all assignments will be posted on myCourses.

A = 89.5 – 100 B = 79.5 – 89.4 C = 69.5 – 79.4 D = 59.5 – 69.4 F = 59.4 and below

MYCOURSES & BULLY MAIL:

I will regularly post items (e.g., announcements, readings, practice sets, web links, etc.) to myCourses and Bully Mail. It is your responsibility to check your myCourses and Bully Mail accounts regularly. Please see me if you need assistance.

CLASS PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE:

All students are expected to attend class and participate in class discussions. Regular attendance and participation are essential to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the subject. **You will sign in with your full name each class day.** I will only circulate the attendance sign-up once per class, so it is important to arrive **on time**. It is your responsibility to make sure that you have signed in.

You may be absent 2 times without penalty. Every additional absence will cost 2 percentage points off your final grade, up to 10 points. For example, if a student has a final average of 84% and misses class five times, his/her final grade will be 78% or a C. Use your two freebies carefully – these are your only sick days! Save freebies for when you have strep throat or another illness. Don't just waste them skipping class!

The only excused absences will be for religious holidays with advance notification or for University-sponsored events with proper prior documentation. If you have a documented continuing health problem or a major life emergency that may influence your attendance, please discuss your situation with me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as the situation arises so that accommodations can be made.

You are responsible for all notes, announcements, practice sets, handouts, and other information given in class. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes and information about what you missed from a classmate. If there is information in those notes that you do not understand, you are welcome to come to office hours or to make an appointment to see me. I am happy to clear up points of confusion, but I will not reproduce the lecture for you.

REACTION PIECES:

During the first half of the semester, you will write a series of reaction pieces based on material covered in the course. In about one page, you will respond to the textbook material, our class discussion of that material, and another assigned medium on that topic (e.g., article, chapter, video, etc.). Your reaction piece should include a summary ***in your own words*** of the material from ***all*** of those sources, your personal reaction to that material, and your explanation of how that material is related to common assumptions about language and language use. Due dates are listed on the course schedule, and reaction pieces will be due as a ***hard copy*** at the beginning of class. A detailed assignment sheet and rubric will be discussed in class prior to the first reaction piece and will be available on myCourses.

You may discuss your ideas with others, but the written reaction pieces should be ***entirely your own work in your own words***. Failure to follow this guideline counts as academic dishonesty and leaves you open to the penalties associated with violation of the MSU honor code (see below).

PRACTICE SETS:

Practice activities will be assigned throughout the semester. Due dates are listed on the course schedule. Details of the assignments will be announced in class and posted on myCourses in the Practice Sets folder.

Practice sets are due as hard copies at the beginning of class. If you arrive late to class, turn in your practice set before you sit down. If you know that you will miss class, avoid a penalty by turning your practice set in early, either at the previous class, in my office mailbox (second floor of Lee Hall), or electronically via email. Late practice sets (any work not turned in at the beginning of class) will be accepted until the beginning of the next class meeting and will be marked down one letter grade.

You may discuss your practice sets with others to help each other figure out the problems, but you must list the names of the people you worked with at the top of your assignments. Failure to acknowledge collaboration on practice sets counts as academic dishonesty and leaves you opens to the penalties associated with violation of the MSU honor code (see below). When practice sets require you to come up with original examples, all students should have their own examples.

ASSUMPTIONS PROJECT:

During the second half of the semester, you will choose a reaction piece to further develop as a project on the common assumptions people hold about language and language use. This project will include the six equally graded portions below. Each portion will be due as a hard copy at the beginning of class. Due dates are on the syllabus. For each portion, a detailed assignment sheet and rubric (when applicable) will be discussed in class and available on myCourses.

- position statement
- evidence
- first draft
- peer review and self-reflection
- writing center or office hour visit
- informative paper

EXAMS:

The material you are tested on will be taken from class lectures, assigned materials, and practice sets. You are expected to take detailed notes of the class lectures and ask questions whenever something is unclear. The final exam is not cumulative, but the materials in this course build on each other, so it is not a good idea to forget everything from the midterm as soon as it is over. No make-up tests will be given unless there are compelling circumstances to warrant it. In this case, you must notify me in advance of the test time, or as soon as possible thereafter.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

- Complete all assigned readings before each class meeting.
- Bring assigned readings to class to facilitate class discussions.
- Put away electronic devices prior to class.
- Participate in class discussions.
- Complete all graded assignments on time.
- Follow the honor code (<http://www.honorcode.msstate.edu>). It is your responsibility to thoroughly familiarize yourself with MSU's policies and procedures concerning academic integrity.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND THE MSU HONOR CODE:

“As a Mississippi State University student I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.” Academic dishonesty includes cheating on tests as well as copying or otherwise plagiarizing in other assignments. The standard penalty for violation of the honor code is a grade of F for the class.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:

If you have a physical, psychiatric, or learning disability and require accommodations in this class, please let me know at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you are eligible. You will first need to provide documentation of your disability to the Office of Student Support Services, located in Montgomery Hall (<http://www.sss.msstate.edu/>).

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week	Date	Hard Copies Due	Topic	Reading assignment
1	1/11		Course Requirements Introduction	
	1/13		Language History and Change	Yule Ch. 17
2	1/18	NO CLASS: MLK Day		
	1/20		Language History and Change	
3	1/25	Practice Set 1	Origins of Human Language	Yule Ch. 1
	1/27		Language and Culture	Yule Ch. 20
4	2/1	Reaction Piece 1	Language and Culture	
	2/3		Animal Communication	Yule Ch. 2
5	2/8	Reaction Piece 2	Animal Communication	
	2/10		Language and the Brain	Yule Ch. 12
6	2/15	Reaction Piece 3	Guest Lecture	
	2/17		Language and the Brain	
7	2/22	Reaction Piece 4	Sounds of Languages	Yule Ch. 3 (last day to drop with a W)
	2/24		Sounds of Languages	
8	2/29	Reaction Piece 5	Sounds of Languages	
	3/2	Practice Set 2	Sound Patterns	Yule Ch. 4
9	3/7		Sound Patterns Wrap-up and Review	
	3/9	MIDTERM EXAM		
10	3/14	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK		
	3/16			
11	3/21		Words and Word Formation	Yule Ch. 5 – 6
	3/23		Words and Word Formation	
12	3/28	Position Statement	Words and Word Formation	
	3/30		Phrases and Sentences	Yule Ch. 7 – 8
13	4/4	Evidence	Phrases and Sentences	
	4/6		Phrases and Sentences	
14	4/11		Signed Languages	Yule Ch. 15
	4/13		Signed Languages	
15	4/18	1st Draft	Assumptions Project Peer Review Self-reflection	
	4/20		Individual Meetings	
16	4/25	Practice Set 3	Language Acquisition	Yule Ch. 13 – 14
	4/27	Assumptions Project	Language Acquisition Wrap-up and Review	
FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, May 3, 3:00 – 6:00 PM				