

LING 3040 – FALL 2019
POLITICS OF LANGUAGE

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Course Overview

This course will explore language rights and relate them to human rights in general, surveying language conflicts worldwide between those trying to secure and those trying to deny language rights. An understanding of linguistic conflict and competition requires a basic understanding of linguistics, and by using linguistics to understand the systematicity and value of language, we can identify how popular ideas about language are often not merely misinformed but also misleading – a reflection of ideological interests rather than scientifically based claims. Accordingly, the course will cover:

- a non-technical introduction to language structure and the mechanics of linguistic conflict
- the role of language in the formation of personal, cultural, and national identity
- an overview of theories of ethnicity and theories of ethnic conflict
- an informal typology of language conflicts
- discussions of language vitality, revival, planning, policy, and rights

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain how language is a key symbol of identity and resource for cultural maintenance
- Discuss how linguistic differences can result in political and personal conflict
- Identify different cultural and moral values that underlie debates about language conflicts and rights
- Discover sources of information about these ideological conflicts and evaluate them for credibility, reliability, bias, and currency
- Discuss language rights struggles in the larger context of human rights issues across the world
- Apply linguistic concepts to analyses of language rights cases

Course Requirements

Course grades will be determined from the following:

1. 25% Class Participation/Required Discussion Posts on Canvas

Class Participation: Much of what you will learn in this class will come from class interactions, discussions, and presentations. Therefore, attendance is required. If you know of any circumstance that will cause you to miss class please let me know in advance so we can make any arrangements necessary. If you are too ill to come to class, you must contact either Jessica or me before class to let me know.

Discussion posts: You are required to submit a question or comment (minimum 200 words) each week PRIOR to the lecture, based on the readings for that day. Your comments should make insightful points or critiques or raise thought-provoking questions. I will select some of your comments/questions to include in our class discussion. You must post your comments/questions to Canvas by 9:00pm on the day before the lecture. Posts that are fewer

than 200 words or that are late will receive 50% credit. Posts that are more than 24 hrs. late will receive no credit.

2. 20% Journal Assignments

These are 2-3 page observations on some aspect of language related to our readings and class discussions. Your **FIRST** journal assignment should be introspective. You should reflect upon your own experiences, recent or past, and report what you remember and what you learned from them. Your **SECOND** journal assignment will be outwardly focused. You will observe linguistic interactions between yourself and others, between those around you, or from your observations of radio, television, and newspapers, and you will report what you observe.

In writing your observations, you should reflect on the cultural and moral values that underlie the situations and issues that you are reporting and reflecting on. You will need to articulate why and in what ways community values, ethics, and notions of social responsibility matter to the issue at hand, and you should consider how values shape personal and community ethics and decision-making.

3. 20% Data Mining Assignments

These assignments will teach you to find sources of information appropriate to an issue, to evaluate information and information sources on the basis of credibility, reliability, bias, and currency, and to effectively report on information collected and evaluated in this manner. For each of these two assignments you will need to find two articles relevant to your topic. One article should be “objective” (e.g., news articles, academic journal articles, etc.) and one should be polemical (e.g., advocacy websites, opinion columns, official government websites, etc.).

The articles should pertain to the topic of your case study presentation. For example, if your topic is the language conflict between Slovakia and that country’s Hungarian minority, you might find a news story about the imposition of Slovak as an official language upon the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, and also find an official Hungarian government reaction to this situation.

Each assignment will be a 2-3 page report on what you have found. The report should include the following information for each article:

- a summary of the content (250-500 words each)
- an evaluation of the source (250 words giving information about the author; e.g., what is their background and expertise, what is their agenda, how current is the information presented, what sources do they cite, how much of the piece is presented as fact and how much is presented as opinion, who is the intended audience, etc.)
- proper citation: title, author, source, and date
- a working URL (must be a URL that will allow anyone to click through to the article itself)

4. 35% Semester Project in lieu of final exam

This is a case study about a language conflict. Each project will involve completing a Language Conflict Project template and an in-class PowerPoint presentation.

Students are required to attend all presentations, and to provide their own short evaluation and grade of the presentations they hear on a given day (failure to be present for other students’ presentations will reduce a student’s own presentation grade by 5% for each presentation missed).

5. 5% Extra Credit

Students who choose to complete this assignment will research and report on the origins and meanings of their own given and family names, and on the origins and meanings of their parents' given and family names. The report should be at least two pages, and not more than three.

All completed assignments and Semester Project slides should be uploaded to Canvas

Required Text and Other Reading

Davies, William D. and Stanley Dubinsky. 2018. *Language Conflict and Language Rights: Ethnolinguistic Perspectives on Human Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
All other course readings will be uploaded to Canvas

Course and Reading Schedule

Unit #1 – Language and the Speaker

Week	Date	Topic	Reading(s) for Class Lecture and Discussion / Assignments
1	8/27	Course overview; what is language? Review: sounds and sound systems of language	DD chap. 1; Lippi-Green (2012) chap. 1
	8/29	Review: grammar and the organization of words. Language variation and change	DD chaps. 2-4 <i>Discussion post due 8/28 by 9pm</i>
2	9/3	Meet in Willis Library rm. 136. Kevin Hawkins will go over Linguistics resources and how to access the for your research projects.	<i>Short library assignment due 9/3 (see assignment on Canvas)</i> <i>Discussion post due 9/2 by 9pm</i>
	9/5	Spanish in the US (video <i>Spanish Voices</i>)	Carter (2014) <i>Journal assignment #1 due (see assignment on Canvas)</i> <i>Discussion post due 9/4 by 9pm</i>
3	9/10	What is standard? “Standard” vs “non-standard varieties”; language attitudes	Lippi-Green (2012) chaps. 3-4; Dubinsky and Holcomb (2011) chap. 11 <i>Discussion post due 9/9 by 9pm</i>
	9/12	Language attitudes cont.	Preston (2004) <i>Discussion post due 9/11 by 9pm</i>
4	9/17	Cross-cultural communication conflicts	Dubinsky and Holcomb (2011) chap. 10; Tannen (1984) <i>Discussion post due 9/16 by 9pm</i>
	9/19	Gender and language	Meyerhoff (2014) <i>Discussion post due 9/18 by 9pm</i>

Unit #2 – Language in the World

Week	Date	Topic	Reading(s) for Class Lecture and Discussion / Assignments
5	9/24	Language and personal identity	Cuhna (1998); DD chap. 5; Liebkind (1999) chap. 10 <i>Discussion post due 9/23 by 9pm</i>
	9/26	Work on data mining assignment #1	<i>Language Conflict topic due</i>
6	10/1	Language and cultural identity	DD chap. 6; Pullam (1991); Woolfson (1981) <i>Data Mining assignment #1 due (see assignment on Canvas)</i> <i>Discussion post due 9/30 by 9pm</i>
	10/3	Language and national identity	Coulmas (1988); DD chap. 7; Dieckhoff (2004) <i>Discussion post due 10/2 by 9pm</i>
7	10/8	Language and national identity <i>Indonesia, India, and South Africa</i>	DD chap. 7; Docrat and Kaschula (2015); Faingold (2004) <i>Discussion post due 10/7 by 9pm</i>
	10/10	Ethnicity and conflict	Cordell and Wolff (2009); Esteban et al. (2012) <i>Discussion post due 10/9 by 9pm</i>
8	10/15	Ethnicities and the politics of language	Fearon and Laitin (2003); May (2008) <i>Discussion post due 10/14 by 9pm</i>
	10/17	The role of writing systems	DD chap. 8 <i>Discussion post due 10/16 by 9pm</i>

Unit #3 – A Typology of Language Conflicts

Week	Date	Topic	Reading(s) for Class Lecture and Discussion / Assignments
9	10/22	Indigenous minorities: Sámi in Norway/Ainu in Japan/American Indians in the US	DD chap. 10; Bull (2002); Magga (1994); Dubinsky and Davies (2013) <i>Discussion post due 10/21 by 9pm</i>
	10/24	Geopolitical minorities: Hungarians in Slovakia/Hispanics in Southwest US (California)	DD chap. 11; Daftary and Gál (2000) <i>Discussion post due 10/23 by 9pm</i>
10	10/29	Geopolitical minorities: Kurds in Turkey	Skutnabb-Kangas et al. (1994) <i>Data Mining assignment #2 due (see assignment on Canvas)</i> <i>Discussion post due 10/28 by 9pm</i>
	10/31	Minorities of migration: Roma in Europe/Koreans in Japan/Puerto Ricans in the US	DD chap. 12; Dubinsky and Davies (2013) <i>Discussion post due 10/30 by 9pm</i>
11	11/5	Intra-linguistic (dialectal) minorities: Okinawans in Japan/ African American English	DD chap. 13; TBA <i>Discussion post due 11/4 by 9pm</i>
	11/7	African American English cont.	

12	11/12	Competition for linguistic dominance: Belgium: Flemish vs. Walloons/Sri Lanka: Tamil vs. Sinhalese/Canada: French vs. English	DD chap. 14; Iqbal (2 articles); Pahi (2009); Saunders (2007) <i>Journal assignment #2 due (see assignment on Canvas)</i> <i>Discussion post due 11/11 by 9pm</i>
	11/14	Presentation day – 3 presentations	
13	11/19	Language rights and linguistic accommodations; English and language rights in the US	DD chap. 9; May (2005); Wee (2011); Frese (2005); TESOL position paper <i>Discussion post due 11/18 by 9pm</i>

Unit #4 – Language Endangerment, Extinction, and Revival

Week	Date	Topic	Reading(s) for Class Lecture and Discussion / Assignments
	11/21	Language vitality, revival, planning, and policy	DD chap.15, 16; <i>Discussion post due 11/20 by 9pm</i>
14	11/26	Presentation day – 3 presentations	
	11/28	Happy Thanksgiving – No Class!	
15	12/3	Presentation day – 4 presentations	<i>Extra Credit assignment due</i>
	12/5	Presentation day – 4 presentations	
16	12/10	Presentation day – 4 presentations	**Class meets 10:30-12:30