

Introduction to the Study of Language — LIN 2403 — TTh 12:30-1:45 — Swalm 205

Instructor: Dr. Ginger Pizer **Email:** gpizer@english.msstate.edu

Office: Lee 2305

Office hours: Campus 1 M 1-3, Th 2-4 Central Time, or by appointment;

Campus 5 on Webex via Canvas, W 1:30-3 Central Time, or by appointment

Catalog Description

Three hours lecture. Students will be introduced to the subfields of linguistics to answer questions they have about language and to provide evidence about language acquisition and use. (Same as AN 2403).

Course Description

In this course, students will be introduced to the subfields of linguistics to answer questions they have about language and provide evidence about language acquisition and use. Language is an integral part of our lives both as individuals and as members of societies, 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? 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.

This is a general education course. General education provides a platform for fostering proficiencies that span all fields of study (e.g., social and ethical responsibility, critical thinking, evidence-based reasoning, communication, and problem solving) while also providing opportunities for hands-on experience with complex questions and problems. By facilitating students' exploration of issues and questions that bridge multiple fields of study, general education helps students build the broad and integrative knowledge they need for careers, while also preparing them directly for questions and issues they will confront as citizens in a globally engaged democracy. Because language is central to almost every aspect of daily life, the understanding that is developed in this course of what language is and how it functions for both individuals and societies will have broad applications across academic areas as well as students' non-academic lives.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to

- examine and question common assumptions and attitudes about language and language use for both individuals and societies
- describe the basic theoretical trends and ideas associated with the study of language
- use basic terminology associated with linguistics
- perform basic linguistic analysis

Required Text

Yule, G. (2023). *The Study of Language* (8th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 9781009233408

A few additional articles and resources are linked on Canvas.

The readings listed on the course schedule are to be done **before class on the day they are listed**. Please bring your copy of each day's readings to class for reference.

Technology

I regularly post course materials on Canvas and email students course reminders and announcements. Class assignments are turned in through Canvas. It is your responsibility to check Canvas and your email account regularly. For technical help, contact the ITS service desk at <https://servicedesk.msstate.edu>, servicedesk@msstate.edu, 662-325-0631, 108 Allen Hall.

Grading Policies

All grades will be posted on Canvas and weighted automatically.

Assignments must be typed and turned in electronically through Canvas. Please do not email assignments. Assignments that are late due to a reason covered by AOP 12.09 will be accepted without penalty. Projects that are late for any other reason (no justification required) will be accepted up to 48 hours late with a deduction of one letter grade.

Final letter grades will be determined based on the following ranges for the overall average:
A = 89.50 – 100% B = 79.50 – 89.49% C = 69.50 – 79.49% D = 59.50 – 69.49% F = 59.49% and below

Attendance Policy

Campus 1

This section is a face-to-face instructional class. Please refer to Academic Operating Policy 12.09 (<https://www.policies.msstate.edu/policy/1209>) regarding university policies for attendance expectations and accommodations. Absences that are excused under AOP 12.09 will not directly affect your grade. Please provide reasons and documentation for excused absences as soon as possible.

Attendance counts for 5% of your grade. Every unexcused absence will lead to half a percentage point deduction, up to five percentage points.

If you miss class, get notes from a classmate. If there is information in those notes that you do not understand, please come to office hours or make an appointment for a meeting so I can clear up points of confusion.

Campus 5

Attendance in this online class consists of watching all assigned lecture videos and posting the required comments elicited in the videos by 11:59 PM Central Time on Sunday each week. Each video fully watched with all required comments will get a grade of 5/5. Each video incompletely watched/commented but at least half complete will get a grade of 3/5. Videos less than half complete will get a grade of 0/5. The overall viewing grade average will count for 5% of your grade. If viewing is incomplete because of a reason covered by AOP 12.09 that extended for enough of the daylight hours of the week as to disallow viewing, please provide an explanation and documentation as soon as possible, and late viewing will be accepted without penalty.

AI Policy

Generative AI tools are allowed for help with style but not content. As appropriate for each assignment, all content must come explicitly from your personal experience, your own analysis of specific data, or a reputable cited source. Note that AI tools tend to invent quotes and sources; all sources will be verified during grading. Any written submission that does not explicitly include the type of evidence required by the assignment will not be accepted and will receive a grade of zero, even if it satisfies other criteria in the assignment's grading rubric.

University Syllabus

The Mississippi State University Syllabus contains all policies and procedures that are applicable to every course on campus and online. The policies in the University Syllabus describe the official policies of the University and will take precedence over those found elsewhere. It is the student's responsibility to read and be familiar with every policy. The University Syllabus may be accessed at any time on the Provost website under Faculty and Student Resources at <https://www.provost.msstate.edu/faculty-student-resources/university-syllabus>.

Communication

Campus 1

If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please let me know! During class, tell me if you'd like more explanation or if something is interfering with your access to the material. Outside of class, don't hesitate to come to office hours to go over class material, prepare for tests, or work on projects; I enjoy working with students one on one. No appointment is needed during office hours, but if you have classes at those times, just set up an appointment to meet at another time. For appointments or quick questions, email is the best way to reach me; I will always respond within one business day and often more quickly.

Assignment and grading policies have been designed to handle temporary or small-scale problems; if you're dealing with long-term or larger-scale problems, the sooner you let me know, the more likely it is that we'll be able to find a way for you to succeed in the class despite them.

Campus 5

If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please let me know! Don't hesitate to come to my Webex office hours to go over class material, prepare for tests, or work on projects; I enjoy working with students one on one. Also feel free to email me with any questions; I will always respond within one business day and often more quickly.

Assignment and grading policies have been designed to handle temporary or small-scale problems; if you're dealing with long-term or larger-scale problems, the sooner you let me know, the more likely it is that we'll be able to find a way for you to succeed in the class despite them.

Assignment Weighting and Descriptions

	Campus 1	Campus 5
<p><i>Attendance (150 min./week)</i></p> <p>Campus 1 Absences that are excused under AOP 12.09 will not directly affect your grade. Please provide reasons and documentation as soon as possible. Attendance counts for 5% of your grade. Every unexcused absence will lead to half a percentage point deduction, up to five percentage points.</p> <p>Campus 5 Attendance in this online class consists of watching all assigned lecture videos and posting the required comments elicited in the videos by 11:59 PM Central Time on Sunday each week. Each video fully watched with all required comments will get a grade of 5/5. Each video incompletely watched/commented but at least half complete will get a grade of 3/5. Videos less than half complete will get a grade of 0/5. The overall viewing grade average will count for 5% of your grade. If viewing is incomplete because of a reason covered by AOP 12.09 that extended for enough of the daylight hours of the week as to disallow viewing, please provide an explanation and documentation as soon as possible, and late viewing will be accepted without penalty.</p>	5%	5%
<p><i>Reading Quizzes (13 total)</i></p> <p>Campus 1 Every class day with an assigned reading will begin with a short quiz consisting of a few fill-in-the-blank or multiple choice questions covering that reading. The quizzes will be open-book but tightly timed; you should read closely enough to be able to answer many questions without looking and to find the answers to any others quickly. Reading quizzes missed for tardiness or unexcused absences cannot be made up, but your three lowest quiz grades will be dropped. For absences that are excused under AOP 12.09, let me know and provide documentation as soon as possible (preferably ahead of time), and I will make the relevant reading quizzes available to you on Canvas.</p> <p>Campus 5 For every assigned reading, there is a reading quiz consisting of a few fill-in-the-blank or multiple choice questions covering that reading. The quizzes will be open-book but tightly timed; you should read closely enough to be able to answer many questions without looking and to find the answers to any others quickly. Your three lowest quiz grades will be dropped.</p>	5%	5%
<p><i>Real-World Example Presentations (2 total)</i></p> <p>Campus 1 The real-world example presentations are a kind of show-and-tell of things that you have found in the real world to illustrate concepts relevant to the class. Beginning in the second week of class, most class meetings will begin with real-world example presentations. Over the course of the semester, each student will give two 5-minute presentations accompanied by a slideshow and will post the contents of the slideshow in a discussion board on Canvas, where classmates will give feedback. Feedback may be posted at any time but will be evaluated at two points in the semester, once midway through the course and once at the end of the course. The posting of constructive feedback on at least two classmates' presentations by each of the two posting deadlines will provide 2 points of the 10-point grade on each of the students' own presentations. The presentation dates are not listed on the course schedule because they differ for each student.</p> <p>Campus 5 The real-world example presentations are a kind of show-and-tell of things that you have found in the real world to illustrate concepts relevant to the class. Each student will post two real world example presentations, one mid-way through the course and one at the end of the course. Each real-world example presentation will be a Canvas discussion board post including a write-up of your example and an embedded video showing yourself talking through your example for no more than 5 minutes. In the week</p>	10%	10%

<p>following each presentation deadline, you will post feedback on at least two of your classmates' presentations. The posting of constructive feedback on your classmates' presentation by each posting deadline will provide 2 points of the 10-point grade on your own presentations.</p>		
<p><i>Projects (6 total)</i> Many units will include a project that requires you to put the information from that unit into practice. Write-ups will typically be 2-3 pages. The projects will include the analysis of a non-human species' communication system, the gestures made by a storyteller, your own writing style in different contexts, videos of children at different stages of language development, words that are new to the English language, and your own variety of English as compared to others. The content and format of each project varies according to the topic; details will be provided in class and on Canvas.</p>	30%	30%
<p><i>Tests (2 total)</i> The two tests will cover terminology, theoretical concepts, and previous research findings as presented in class and in the readings. You are responsible for information in the readings whether or not it is addressed in class. The second test will cover only material since the previous one; they are not cumulative. Make-up tests will be given only for absences that are excused under AOP 12.09. Campus 1 Tests will be given on paper in class. Campus 5 Tests will be given on Canvas, proctored by Honorlock.</p>	30%	30%
<p><i>Signature assignment: Final essay with research proposal</i> What is language? How do we know? How can we find out more?</p> <p><i>Part I: Essay</i> In 3-5 double-spaced pages, write an essay that defines what human language is based on your work in this class this semester. Focus your discussion on weighing the degree to which language is a characteristic of individuals' minds, the degree to which it is a characteristic of social groups, and the ways in which individuals and social groups interact in its creation and use. Support your points with evidence from previous research and analysis, including your own. Refer to specifics from 1) at least three of your projects, 2) at least three real-world example presentations (your own and/or your classmates'), and 3) at least three readings (textbook chapters, additional assigned readings, and/or other relevant scholarly sources). You are welcome but not required to also refer to specifics from class lecture that were not included in readings. Cite all of these sources in APA style. Use accurate linguistic terminology throughout, and write explicitly enough that your essay could be understood by a reader with no background in linguistics.</p> <p><i>Part II: Research Proposal</i> Propose a hypothetical research project to answer a specific question you have about language that has not been fully answered by what you have learned in this class. Your proposal should include 1) a specific research question, 2) methods for data collection (assume unlimited time, money, and expertise; design your methods ethically), and 3) methods for data analysis, including a brief explanation of how these methods will provide evidence to answer your research question. Write up your research proposal in a slideshow that can be understood in isolation.</p> <p>Campus 1 Students will present their research proposals during the final exam period. Campus 5 Students will post video presentations of their research proposals on Canvas.</p>	20% (each part 10%)	20% (each part 10%)
<p>Total</p>	100%	100%

COURSE SCHEDULE

2250 total contact minutes (37.5 hours)

180 minutes final exam (3 hours)

4500 total indirect contact minutes (75 hours)

WEEK	CLASS TOPIC	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS Campus 1	ASSIGNMENTS Campus 5
1 Direct: 150 minutes Indirect: 300 minutes reading	Introduction			
	Origins of language	Yule ch. 1	Reading quiz	Reading quiz
2 Direct: 150 minutes Indirect: 150 minutes reading; 150 minutes writing	Animals and language	Yule ch. 2	Reading quiz; Animal project	Reading quiz; Animal project
3 Direct: 150 minutes Indirect: 150 minutes reading; 150 minutes writing	Gestures and sign languages	Yule ch. 15	Reading quiz; Gesture project	Reading quiz; Gesture project
4 Direct: 150 minutes Indirect: 150 minutes reading; 150 minutes writing	Written language	Yule ch. 16	Reading quiz; Writing project	Reading quiz; Writing project
5 Direct: 150 minutes Indirect: 300 minutes reading	Language and the brain	Yule ch. 12; Rosen	Reading quiz	Reading quiz
6 Direct: 150 minutes Indirect: 300 minutes reading	Finish/review			
	Test 1			
7 Direct: 150 minutes Indirect: 270 minutes reading; 30 minutes writing	First language acquisition	Yule ch. 13	Reading quiz; RW peer feedback deadline 1	Reading quiz; RW presentation post
8 Direct: 150 minutes Indirect: 150 minutes reading; 150 minutes writing	Second language acquisition	Yule ch. 14; Smith; Schmid; Chiu	Reading quiz; Language acquisition project	Reading quiz; Language acquisition project; RW feedback posts
9 Direct: 150 minutes Indirect: 300 minutes reading	Pragmatics	Yule ch. 10	Reading quiz	Reading quiz

10 Direct: 150 minutes Indirect: 300 minutes reading	Discourse analysis	Yule ch. 11	Reading quiz	Reading quiz
11 Direct: 150 minutes Indirect: 150 minutes reading; 150 minutes writing	Language history & change	Yule ch. 17	Reading quiz; Language change project	Reading quiz; Language change project
12 Direct: 150 minutes Indirect: 300 minutes reading	Finish/review			
	Test 2			
13 Direct: 150 minutes Indirect: 300 minutes reading	Regional variation	Yule ch. 18	Reading quiz	Reading quiz
14 Direct: 150 minutes Indirect: 150 minutes reading; 150 minutes writing	Social variation	Yule ch. 19; Rickford	Reading quiz; Variation project	Reading quiz; Variation project; RW presentation post
15 Direct: 150 minutes Indirect: 270 minutes reading; 30 minutes writing	Language & culture	Yule ch. 20	Reading quiz; RW peer feedback deadline 2	Reading quiz; RW feedback posts
Final Exam period Direct: 180 minutes	Final presentation		"What is language" essay; Research proposal slideshow and presentation	"What is language" essay; Research proposal slideshow and presentation video