

Course Syllabus

Linguistic Anthropology Online (Asynchronous)

Instructor: Ashidhara Das, PhD

This introductory course will mainly be a cross-cultural exploration of the relationship between language and culture, that is between words and the world. Language is the principal tool of human communication. Culture refers to symbols, social norms, values, and beliefs that provide guidelines about the ideal manner in which to conduct oneself. Culture encourages its members to follow behavioral patterns that previous generations have found useful. In this way, culture and social mores actually help to fulfill biological drives such as hunger, thirst, the need for shelter and sleep etc.. This course will examine language as a human attribute which is both cultural as well as biological. Starting out with a focus on language structure, this will be followed by an investigation of historical origins, diversification, and change of language. This course will also study gender and cultural variations in linguistic usage. Moreover, there will also be an attempt to engage in comparative analysis and classification of world languages. Furthermore, the origins and development of writing will be traced. Lastly, the course will take a look at microelectronics and the advent of the information age, and how globalization and language affect each other. Language data from conversations, stories, religion, media, rituals etc. will be collected and analyzed to explain the way we understand ourselves as individuals and as members of society and of social/cultural groups. Linguists agree that all languages have certain common features: shared rules about patterns of sound, formation of words, assigned meanings, and organization of sentences and texts (Cruz-Ferreira and Abraham 2020). In addition, almost everything we know about our language—our mental grammar—is unconscious knowledge that is acquired implicitly as children (Allard-Kropp 2011). This course will study all the above-mentioned aspects of language and language-usage in diverse cultures.

Aims and Objectives:

Provide insight into the organic whole constituted by human spoken language;
encourage a principled approach to independent querying of language-related issues.

Major Topics:

Human spoken language; the scientific study of language; language as object and tool of research; linguistic form and meaning: sounds, words, sentences; language acquisition, change and loss; language uses and varieties; language, mind and thought; language, society and culture; the organic whole of human spoken language.

Prerequisites:

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Method of Assessment:

Class participation (online), essays (online), discussions (online), class quizzes(online), final exam (online).

Please note this class uses Canvas.

Student Learning Outcome Statements (SLO):

- Evaluate value of each different language and dialect, and its relationship to different cultural backgrounds, in which social conflicts and stereotypes often originated from misunderstanding different rules of language practice even when using the same language.
- Analyze different sound systems of different languages which make non-native speakers speak foreign languages with accents.
- Analyze patterns of linguistic change by investigating historical changes in different languages.
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze languages in social and cultural contexts, to build a lot of verbal and nonverbal characteristics to illustrate cultural uniqueness.
- Demonstrate the similarities and differences in various linguistic practices and its relevance to anthropological concepts.

Course Objectives:

- A. Recognize the immense scope of the multi-faceted discipline of anthropology and explain the relationships between its basic areas of inquiry: physical anthropology, cultural anthropology, archaeology/prehistory, and linguistic anthropology.
- B. Assess the historical development of anthropology as a western academic discipline, giving particular attention to the significant contributions and perspectives of women, minority, and non-Western linguistic anthropologists.
- C. Examine the conceptual framework of an anthropological study, identifying the crucial distinction between ethnocentrism and the practice of cultural relativism, particularly as applied to the study of language and culture.
- D. Evaluate language and language assisted systems of thought as unique human attributes by examining the physiological basis of language and by contrasting the nature of human communication to that of other primates.
- E. Assess the importance of culture both in the acquisition of language and in the shaping of the mind and thought by studying the stages of early childhood language learning and the development of self-awareness.
- F. Analyze the structure of language as a distinctive system of symbolic communication and compare its phonemic, morphemic, and syntactical components from a cross-cultural perspective.
- G. Analyze the socio-cultural inequality in stratified societies as evidenced by the variation in the societal evaluation of different language-use patterns based on gender, class, race, and ethnicity.
- H. Examine the origin and evolution of a variety of language families through the method of glottochronology utilizing historical linguistic data to obtain clues to culture history.
- I. Understand the essential variance between non-written and written languages by comparing their different learning styles, cognitive emphases, and degree of cultural conservatism.
- J. Examine the historical origins and development of writing, literacy as a marker of civilization, and the importance of writing in the hierarchy of state societies.
- K. Evaluate the revolutionary economic, political, and social impact of computer technology as it relates language use in the information age.
- L. Examine the impact of globalization on world languages: whether globalization means Englishization, or, whether it is more likely to lead to an increase in individual

and societal multilingualism, and the preservation/revival of currently endangered languages.

About the Instructor:

I have completed a PhD in Cultural Anthropology from the University of California, San Diego. In recent years, I have continued my research on immigrant experience, and I have also taught anthropology for more than a decade by now. Lastly, I have published a book about the bi-cultural negotiations of white-collar professional working women in the Indian American community in the San Francisco Bay Area: *Desi Dreams: Indian Immigrant Women Build Lives Across Two Worlds* (Primus Publishers 2013).

Email: dasashidhara@fhda.edu

Office Hours Meeting:

This is an **asynchronous online class** that does not have scheduled meetings. Students can log in anytime to do the required weekly course work. Students must have access to a computer, the internet and an individual email address. A laptop or desktop computer to successfully complete the course is recommended; a tablet or phone may not be adequate for all assignments and tests. Like most De Anza classes, this class will use the Canvas course management system. Information about Canvas and Online Education Orientation can be found in Canvas on the Student Resources page:

<https://deanza.instructure.com/courses/3382>. The Student Online Resources hub with extensive information and tips can be found at deanza.edu/online-ed/students/remotelearning

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There won't be any live classes, but in case students have any concerns or queries, or if there is anything they want to discuss with me, please remember that I will be available to meet with them during my **Zoom Office Hours**, which are on Fridays from 11: AM to 1:00 PM (on Zoom). Attendance at the Zoom Office Hours is **not compulsory every week**, but every student must meet up with me **at least once in the Quarter**. The meeting will be to check up on the student's progress in class, to discuss any queries/concerns/doubts the student might have, as well as to make a note of the student's progress on the Final Essay Project. Students must email me at dasashidhara@fhda.edu and set up an appointment (preferably within my Office Hours). If certain students are not free during my Office Hours, then I can meet with them (also via Zoom) at any other time convenient to them on any other day they like. If need be, I can even meet students in-person; students should please write to me about their preference.

Readings:

Required Textbook :

Allard-Kropp, Manon. Languages and Worldview. Open Educational Resources Collection. 2020. <https://irl.umsl.edu/oer/17>

Optional Textbook:

Cruz-Ferreira, Madalena & Abraham, Sunita. The Language of Language: A Linguistics Course for Starters. 2020.

<https://www.oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/65331/student/>

The textbooks that we will use are both open source textbooks, they are freely available online. Languages and Worldview by Manon Allard-Kropp, and The Language of Language: A Linguistics Course for Starters by Cruz-Ferreira and Abraham, are both excellent textbooks which happen to be free and available at no cost online. Please print them out in case you don't want to read them on the computer screen (or a Kindle tablet might work for you). I have come to adopt e-textbooks because they are perfect for online teaching and learning, something we have to get used to in our current pandemic related challenging times!

Optional Articles:

Boellstorff, Tom. Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human. Princeton University Press, 2008. (Library has this edition; GN 307.65 .B64 2008).

Huddart, David. "Grammars of Living Break Their Tense: World Englishes and Cultural Translation." Involuntary Associations: Postcolonial Studies and World Englishes,. Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2014, pp. 32–51. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt18kr776.5.

What is Expected From Students:

1. Read the weekly online notes, slides, and the relevant chapters in the textbook.
2. Complete the weekly online homework assignments/online quizzes/online examinations.
4. Complete the online Final Essay Project, which is a 500-1000 word essay on a chosen topic, as well as the online Final Multiple Choice Exam.

Assignments, Quizzes, and Exams:

a) A Short Essay OR a Discussion Topic (with one original posting and separate responses to at least two classmates) OR a multiple answer choice Quiz every week (25% of grade). The Quiz is a multiple-choice quiz, it must be completed in 30 minutes, and three attempts are allowed.

b) Midterm Essays: Two Rough Drafts of Final Essay (15% of grade).

c) Final Project Essay: Students will be required to write a 700 to 1000 word comprehensive essay (choice of essay topics be provided) whose final version they must submit in Finals Week (15% of grade). All students must provide primary sources (audio or video recordings which can be original or taken from the internet), academic references, published texts, books, articles, etc. as evidence presented in order to support the student-thesis.

d) Final Exam (multiple choice, online) (20% of grade)

Students should not hesitate to email or call me with any questions or concerns they might have about the course curriculum, grading etc..

Grades:

Weekly Quizzes OR Weekly Essays OR Discussions (25%) Midterms (Rough Drafts of Final Project) (15%). Final Project Essay (15%), Final Multiple Choice Exam (online) (20%).

A+ 98>, A 94-97, A- 90-93.

Late work:

Students are requested to write to the instructor in case they cannot submit their work on time. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, but as a rule, a whole grade point will be dropped as a penalty for turning in late work.

Extra credit:

Students are requested to please contact the instructor to find out about Extra Credit Assignments (available in Week Eleven)

Classroom Etiquette:

Usual college policies (such as rules concerning academic integrity, accommodations etc.) will apply. Students are requested to maintain courteous and professional behavior in their interactions with their classmates and the instructor and cooperate with them in order to further civil and productive online discussions.

Academic Honesty:

The Oxford English Dictionary defines plagiarism as “The action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own; literary theft”. (OED Online. Oxford University Press, August 2017). The ancient Greeks perceived plagiarism as a form of kidnapping! Like all high schools, colleges and universities, De Anza College too has strict rules in place to penalize those who attempt plagiarism. Students are advised to go to www.plagiarism.org/ .

in order to make sure they know exactly what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Works Cited:

Allard-Kropp, Manon. *Languages and Worldview*. Open Educational Resources Collection. 2020.

<https://irl.umsl.edu/oer/17>

Bagchi, Tista - "Grammar of Kharia: A South Munda Language". *Himalayan Linguistics*, 2012 - escholarship.org

Boellstorff, Tom. *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*. Princeton University Press, 2008. (Library has this edition; GN 307.65 .B64 2008).

Cruz-Ferreira, Madalena & Abraham, Sunita.

The Language of Language: A Linguistics Course for Starters. 2020.

<https://www.oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/65331/student/>

Das, Ashidhara. *Desi Dreams: Indian Immigrant Women Lives Across Two Worlds*. Primus Publishers, 2013.

Huddart, David. “Grammars of Living Break Their Tense: World Englishes and Cultural Translation.” *Involuntary Associations: Postcolonial Studies and World Englishes*, ,

Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2014, pp. 32–51. JSTOR,
www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt18kr776.5.

Oxford English Dictionary <https://www.oxforddictionaries.com>