LING 3412: Language and Culture (CRN 13375)
Northeastern University, Spring 2014

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION
Instructor  H. Littlefield, Ph.D.
E-Mail  h.littlefield@neu.edu (preferred contact)
Office  548 Nightingale Hall; 617.373.3164
Office hours  Tuesdays, 8:30 – 9:40am and 11:35am – 1:30pm
Fridays, 8:30 – 9:40am and 12:50pm – 1:30pm
If these times are not convenient, please contact me to set up an appointment.

COURSE INFORMATION

Class meetings
Tuesdays and Fridays, 1:35 – 3:15pm; 3 Snell Library

Course description
This course will explore the complex, often inexplicit relationship between language and culture. We will investigate a variety of topics which are drawn from the fields of anthropological linguistics and sociolinguistics. The course will begin with a general overview of what constitutes language. We will then turn to examine the different proposed hypotheses which attempt to account for the nature of the relationship between language and culture. The remainder of the course will cover a variety of topics which explore language in its social context. Questions that we will address will include the following: How is language used to create and maintain social institutions and rituals? How do we use language to create different personae? How is language used by people of different genders, ethnicities, and social classes? How are social and linguistic roles acquired by children?

Prerequisites
This course is a high-level, writing intensive linguistics course, so you must have successfully completed the two prerequisite courses Introduction to Linguistics (LING 1150) and College Writing (ENGW 1111, ENGW 1102, ENGL 1111, ENGL 1102 or equivalent). An understanding of linguistic terminology and concepts will be assumed, as will the basic elements of essay writing. Please see me immediately if you haven’t completed these two courses.

COURSE RESOURCES

Blackboard website
The Blackboard site for the course is an excellent reference for course materials including the syllabus, assignment guidelines, lecture slides, and supplemental readings not found in the textbooks. Assignments may occasionally be turned in via Blackboard.

Required textbooks
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading of assigned literature
Because in-class lectures are designed to complement and augment the information in the readings, it is your responsibility to prepare the readings before class meetings so that you have a basic familiarity of the terms and concepts of each topic.

Regular attendance and active participation
Participation in class discussions and activities is essential to your progress in this course. To underscore the importance of this aspect of the class, you will receive a grade for your attendance and participation at midterm and at the end of the term. This grade will be based on the quantity and quality of your efforts in class discussions and activities. Reading, texting, surfing the web, etc. will negatively affect your participation, as will not preparing the required assignments before class. Lastly, it goes without saying that absences and tardiness will negatively affect your attendance and participation grade, and you are responsible for getting notes, solutions to in-class problems, etc. from a classmate for information missed. Please note that while it is not recommended that you miss any class meetings, you may be absent for two class meetings during the semester without penalty to your participation grade (one before midterm, one after midterm). This includes absences for any reason, including illness and emergencies. There are no “excused” absences, so be sure to plan and use your absences wisely.

Projects
Each of the four required projects will require you to analyze linguistic data with the goal of understanding the linguistic and cultural ideas that are covered in class. For most projects you will also be responsible for collecting the data that you analyze. Copies of the guidelines for these projects will be given in class and made available on blackboard. The expectations for each will be discussed in class the week before it is due. Please keep in mind that these projects will take some planning and effort; you should avoid waiting until the last day or two to complete them!

Final project, presentation and paper
In lieu of a final exam, you will complete a research project on a topic of language and culture of your own choosing. This will include a proposal, a final paper, and a poster presentation of your research to the wider linguistics community on Wednesday, December 3 (please save the date!). Complete details for each segment of the project will be provided in class.

Extra credit
Opportunities for extra credit may be available occasionally throughout the course. These opportunities must be taken when they are offered, and turned in on time.

COURSE GRADES

Calculation of grades
In calculating grades, I use a criterion-referenced grading system. That means that your final grade for the course is calculated by taking the total number of points that you have earned in the class (including extra credit points) and dividing by the total number of possible points (excluding extra credit points). This percentage is used to assign your letter grade according to the scale below (see “Grading scale”). The anticipated values for the course requirements are provided below. In the unlikely event of the need to shift the total points (i.e. drop an assignment due to lack of time at the end of the term), you will be notified in class. Importantly, all efforts will be made to keep the average weight of each requirement the same, so the relative value of each type of work is not altered.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects (4)</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final project, presentation, and paper</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total points:</strong></td>
<td><strong>680</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grading scale**

Because I am using a criterion-referenced system, I use an absolute scale (as shown below), and there is no curve. Note that “A” work is exceptional: it goes beyond just completing an assignment accurately and obviously exceeds the minimum requirements. It shows a clear attention to detail and demonstrates the highest levels of depth and breadth of conceptual comprehension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grade Range</th>
<th>Level of Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97 – 100%</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93 – 96.9%</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 92.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89.9%</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 – 86.9%</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 82.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grade Range</th>
<th>Level of Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 – 79.9%</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73 – 76.9%</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70 – 72.9%</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67 – 69.9%</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63 – 66.9%</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60 – 62.9%</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 – 59.9%</td>
<td>Failure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Course Policies**

**Academic integrity**

All work that you turn in must be your own: cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (the invention of data) of any kind will not be accepted. Any violation of academic integrity will be immediately reported to the Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) and will be given an automatic zero. If you are unsure as to what constitutes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, etc., please see me before you turn in any work. I strongly recommend that you read the information at the following sites: [www.northeastern.edu/osccr/](http://www.northeastern.edu/osccr/) and [www.lib.neu.edu/online_research/help/avoiding_plagiarism/](http://www.lib.neu.edu/online_research/help/avoiding_plagiarism/).

**Students with disabilities**

If you have a documented disability (learning or otherwise) and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please meet with me as soon as possible so we can work out a plan to meet your needs.

**Electronic devices**

Using personal electronic devices in the classroom can hinder instruction and learning, not only for you, but also for your classmates, and for me, your instructor. Please be courteous to all, and make sure to turn your cell phone off and keep it put away during class. Laptops, tablets and other electronic equipment are not allowed in class except for the express purpose of taking notes.

**Expectations for participation**

You should come to class prepared to contribute your perspectives and opinions, be open to engaging in hands-on learning, and be prepared to listen respectfully to others. This includes being sensitive to the opinions and observations of others, and everyone’s right to participate: participants should not dominate class time or engage in disruptive behaviors (chatting with a neighbor, texting, surfing the web, etc.).
Submission of coursework
All work must be submitted in hardcopy or electronically, as directed. Electronic submissions of work that is to be submitted in hardcopy will only be accepted if you have organized with me in advance. I will not print papers that you have e-mailed me—you must supply the hardcopy; please plan in advance, as InfoCommons is often busy just before the start of classes.

General formatting guidelines
All work must be typed with a standard 12-point serif font, be single-spaced, and have 1-inch margins; a stylesheet will be provided for more specific formatting guidelines.

Late work
All work must be turned in on time or ahead of time. “On time” for work due in class means at the beginning of class on the day that it is due; other deadlines will be specific as to date and time. If you will be absent, you must submit the assignment before the deadline. Late work will be deducted by 20%; assignments more than one week late will not be accepted, and will receive a score of ‘0’.

WHERE TO FIND HELP

Instructor
I am always happy to help answer questions, and provide extra assistance. Drop by anytime during my office hours, or make an appointment, if those aren’t convenient. I’m also happy to answer questions via e-mail (be sure to allow for a day or so, as I may not be able to respond immediately).

Study groups
Many students find that discussing their work with their fellow classmates helps them to understand the material more fully. Small study groups of two to four people are ideal, as they allow for everyone to contribute their ideas and questions to the discussion.

Peer tutors
Peer tutors are students (usually linguistics majors) who have excelled in the course in the past, and have been recommended by Linguistics professors for their ability to explain the material to others. These tutors are paid for their time by the college, so their services are free to you. You’ll need to sign up through the CSAS Tutoring Program at 101 Lake Hall (http://www.northeastern.edu/csastutoring/; 617-373-8931). Please note that it usually takes a week or two to be assigned a tutor and work out a schedule, so plan ahead.

Blackboard
The slides from class are posted once a topic is completed; these will be helpful for reviewing the material and filling in your notes.

COURSE SCHEDULE
This schedule is tentative and may be revised over the course of the semester. If revised, you will receive an updated copy in class, and it will be posted on Blackboard. Due dates for assignments will be specified in class; the weeks when work is expected to be due are indicated here for general planning purposes.

| September 5 | Introduction |
September 9, 12  | Defining Language: Defining Culture
Readings:          | Bonvillain: Chapter 2: The Form of the Message

September 16, 19  | Defining Culture; Conducting Field Work; Writing Linguistics Papers
Readings:          | In Shopen, Grinevald Craig: Jacaltec: Field Work in Guatemala

**Universalism and Relativism**

September 23, 26  | Structuralism
Readings:          | Bonvillain: Chapter 3: Language and Cultural Meaning
Turn in:            | Fieldwork Report (1): Language: Gathering linguistic data

Sept 30, Oct 3    | Cognitive Anthropology and its applications: Kinship, Color; Relativism
Readings:          | Atran: Folk biology and taxonomies
                    | In Shopen, Bird & Shopen: Maninka

October 7, 10     | Linguistic Relativity: The Whorfian Hypothesis; Space; Classifier Systems; Metaphors

**The Ethnography of Communication**

October 14, 17    | Ethnography of Communication
Readings:          | Bonvillain: Chapter 4: Contextual Components
                    | In Shopen, Keenan & Ochs: Becoming a Competent Speaker of Malagasy
Recommended:       | °Fasold: The Ethnography of Communication (available on Blackboard)
Turn in:            | Fieldwork Report (2): Linguistic Relativism: Noun Classification of Shona

October 21, 24    | Discourse Analysis: The Construction of Personhood: Politeness and Face
Readings:          | Bonvillain: Chapter 5: Communicative Interactions
                    | In Shopen, Inoue: Japanese: A Story of Language and People

**The Construction and Maintenance of Social Differences**

October 28, 31    | Register and Dialect; Social Class: Race
Readings:          | Bonvillain: Chapter 9: Societal Segmentation and Linguistic Variation
Turn in:            | Research Project Proposal
                    | Fieldwork Report (3): Ethnography of Communication
November 4, 7
Gender
Readings: Bonvillain: Chapter 10: Language and Gender
In Shopen, Haviland: How to talk to your Brother-in-Law in Guugu Yimidhirr
Turn in: Fieldwork Report (4): Language Variation: English Dialects

Culture and Language: Change and Maintenance

November 11, 14
No class Nov 11 for Veteran’s Day; Multilingualism
Readings: Bonvillain: Chapter 11: Multilingual Nations
Bonvillain: Chapter 12: Bilingual Communities

November 18, 21
Multilingualism: Acquisition of Language and Communicative Competence
Readings: Bonvillain: Chapter 7: Language Learning
Bonvillain: Chapter 8: Acquisition of Communicative Competence

November 25, 28
Acquisition; No Class Nov. 28 for Thanksgiving Break!

December 2
Course Wrap-up and Conclusions
Turn in: Final Project Papers

December 3
Final Project Poster Presentations (5:00 – 6:30pm)
Turn in: Final Project Poster and Presentation