

Department of Anthropology

ANTH 2245G-650: Anthropological Approaches to Language

COURSE OUTLINE

Winter 2024

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Instructor and course information:

Instructor: Dr. Lindsay Bell
Email: Lindsay.bell@uwo.ca
Credit Value: 0.5
Antirequisites: None.
Prerequisites: None.

Mode of Delivery:

This year, this course is offered online, (asynchronously). This means there will be weekly material available for you to work through. New content will be posted Tuesdays. I recommend you move through the week's content within seven days. The course is not self-paced. This means there are weekly deadlines for you to meet in order to be successful. In general, the week's activities should be done by Monday morning at 8am. **There will be two synchronous meetings which are mandatory.** There will be multiple time slots to choose from. These will be in weeks 4 and 8.

The course has components that require working with small groups. It is designed using principles of active learning. This approach puts a greater degree of responsibility on the learner than more passive styles of teaching. This style may not be for everyone. You may have chosen asynchronous in the hopes of being disengaged or doing more solitary work. If so, you may want to reconsider your choice to enroll in this course. I encourage everyone to read this syllabus carefully and decide if it is the best choice for their needs and capacity at this time.

The course will be delivered via Western's online learning platform, OWL. Students will be expected to have a working proficiency of OWL's main tools (tests and quizzes, assignments, gradebook, forums). Videos will be uploaded via YouTube so that you can watch at a speed that suits you and opt to use closed captioning if needed/preferred.

Course Description:

This is an introduction to the general field of linguistic anthropology. The foundation of an anthropological approach to language is the idea that language use and linguistic variation are central to understanding the social lives of individuals and communities. Language and culture are bound together because it is through language that our values and our ways of behaving and thinking are passed on, negotiated and changed. Linguistic anthropology is

concerned with the ways language shapes our understanding of the world and how people use languages in different ways to create multiple meanings and identities.

In order to achieve the learning outcomes, each week offers a close study of one to three core concepts in linguistic anthropology. We will learn to apply these concepts through a series of collective and individual activities. The concept application activities will help you develop the skills you need to produce the final paper.

This course is designed for you to experience linguistic anthropological analysis rather than just learning about it. The course builds towards a single paper based on original research that you will do over the course of the term. In short, you will be studying either reality television or some other popular media form. While it is easy to dismiss reality TV as “fluff”, it does provide us with ample interactions to observe and analyze. Don’t be fooled. While it is easy to zone out and watch these programs, thinking anthropologically about them will require a great deal of skill!

Learning Outcomes:

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

- Describe linguistic structures, patterns and practices using appropriate scholarly terminology.
- Demonstrate how linguistic practices are linked to social meaning and categories such as race, gender, ethnicity and class.
- Identify language ideologies at work in examples of discourse.
- Critically reflect on their own linguistic practices.
- Apply course concepts to real world observations of language in action.

Course Specific Conditions Required to Pass this Course:

In order to pass this essay course, students must submit and receive a passing grade (average score) on the final paper.

Course Materials:

Required Textbook: *Living Language: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology*, 3rd Edition by Laura Ahearn, 2021.

This book will be available at the Western Bookstore. [You can order it online here](#). The edition does not matter. Used copies of earlier editions are abundant. One new chapter was added to the third edition, but the full volume is available through Weldon.

All other course readings and materials will be accessed via OWL.

Evaluation:

Comprehension Questions	15%
Applying Concepts Group Discussions/Activities (4)	20%
Watch Party Practice Session	5%
Watch Party Video	25%
Essay Proposal/Outline	5%
Final Essay	30%

Comprehension Questions

There will be 4-5 open-book, comprehension questions most weeks starting in Week 1. The purpose of the questions is to encourage you to do the week's tasks and assess whether you have understood the main points of the readings/lectures. The questions will be multiple choice or true/false. Questions will be open from Tuesday night and be due Mondays at 8 a.m. There is a 48-hour grace period where you can do the questions late without penalty (by Wednesday at 8 a.m.).

No make-ups or extensions beyond the grace period will be offered on the comprehension questions, but the lowest three questions will be dropped.

Applying Concepts Group Discussions/Activities (4)

In the first half of the course, there will be four discussion activities (asynchronous) that will allow you to practice applying the week's key concept. This is a way to practice the skills you need for the watch party video and the final paper. In short, you will be given questions that will ask you to analyze a video clip that relates to the week's topic. These aren't meant to be long. Some weeks you may be required to engage the others in your discussion group.

You will self-select the group you want to be in based on when you think you will likely work on the course. This will help posts come in around the same time and not leave the early birds waiting for the last-minute learners (no shade!).

These must be done in the week they are assigned for full points. These are graded for quality of participation and not "getting it right". This will free you up to be open when you don't understand.

Watch Party Practice Session

To prepare you for the watch party video creation assignment, we will do a group watch party led by the professor or TA in week 4. You will have four time slots to choose from. The activity will be an hour. By attending and participating (camera on unless otherwise negotiated) you will receive full points. Part of the activity is to learn about the GENRE of a watch party so that you better understand what is expected when you create your own video.

Watch Party Video

In small groups, you will create a video where you use anthropological concepts to analyze a 10-15 segment of a reality television episode (or other piece of popular media). The first step will be to record yourselves watching and talking about the episode. After this you will debrief and consider what are the strongest analytical points. You may watch more and collect more examples of something you want to focus on. Then time to create! Your final product will be a watch party style video that is between 10-15 minutes.

Essay Proposal / Outline

In week 10, there will be a forum for you to propose a paper topic and then work through how to organize the essay. There will not be anything to “turn in” but we will go back and forth in conversation to get you prepared to write the paper. Our conversation online will be what is graded. For those who do better talking it out, we will have 1 on 1 meetings to talk through ideas.

Final Essay

The purpose of this assignment is to assess how well you can apply what you are learning to the language you hear and use every day. You will be conducting a detailed analysis of interactions on a reality television show (or other approved example of popular media). You may choose the same media you analyzed with your group. The paper should have a focus which could be either a single course concept, or specific interaction type (compliments, apologies, gossip). The paper will require you to write a detailed descriptions of interactions that illustrates how language use is shaped by the sociocultural context and then analyze those interactions using concepts and theories from the course. In this assignment, you are looking at language from “above” or “outside” and explaining what is going on from different perspectives. We are learning to show what “work” language is doing in the world.

Note: you will not have to do any additional research beyond the course readings in order to write the essay. The time you would otherwise spend exploring paper topics, looking for sources, etc., should be spent doing a careful review of the assigned readings to pull out the concepts and theories related to the essay topic and to polish your written analysis. There will be some optional supporting readings available that can be used to ground the analysis.

The essay should be approximately 1,500 words. More instructions will be provided as the process unfolds.

Academic Statements and Policies:

Use of AI and other writing software

FOR THE LOVE OF ALL THINGS GOOD IN THE WORLD PLEASE DON'T PLAGIRIZE OR USE AI. It makes my job feel hopeless.

One of the key take-aways of the course is that language is deeply linked to context. When you use AI (**even Grammarly**) you strip away YOUR knowledge of the course context. This jeopardizes the value of the learning and the quality of your assignment. Thinking and writing are connected, as we will see. When you don't do the writing, you lose the chance to think and experience ideas. This is sad to me.

I understand you may have concerns about spelling, grammar or organization. The best way to address those is 1) use the writing center. The staff are so qualified and will give you the skills you came here for 2) use basic spell check in word, it catches most things.

It is also important to note that I do NOT penalize papers for grammar/spelling or any writing styles that may seem colloquial. I am wanting to access how you are thinking not how much access you have had to prestigious forms of expression.

Academic Rights and Responsibilities

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current [Academic Policies in the Academic Calendar](#) which include, but is not limited to, academic consideration for medical illness, accommodation for religious holidays, academic appeals, academic accommodation for students with disabilities, as well as scholastic discipline.

Academic Consideration for Student Absences

No accommodations will be granted retroactively more than 10 days after an assignment's due date or a missed quiz or test. Please see your academic counsellor immediately if you will be seeking accommodations based on medical or compassionate grounds.

For students who have missed, or will miss, any course work, whether it be for medical related or non-medical related, please read the details and instructions on "[What is Academic Consideration](#)".

Academic Integrity - Statement on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

Accessible Education:

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. Please see [Accessible Education](#) for information.

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