

LIGN 8: Languages and Cultures of America

Tu-Thu 2:00 - 4:50 in Peterson 103

Teaching Team:

Instructor: **Savi Namboodiripad**

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Office hours: Thursdays 10-12 in AP&M 2432 (or by appointment)

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Course description

This course presents a history of the languages spoken in the United States, and the language ideologies and policies surrounding them. As you are all users of at least one “American language”, your personal language backgrounds and language ideologies are a fundamental part of this course. We will also study the politics of language in the United States through the history of language policy and issues of current debate such as indigenous language reclamation, bilingual education, and whether English should have official status.

Content warning: This course deals with issues of language stigma, political correctness, and language as identity. As such, some of the material covered has the potential to make you (and/or the instructor) uncomfortable. We expect that everyone abide by UC San Diego’s Principles of Community and work together to foster a safe environment within which we can learn from one another.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Explain (in abstract, but using examples) the difference between an empirical observation about language and an opinion about language.
2. Identify and debunk myths about:
 - (a) Indigenous Languages of America
 - (b) Dialects of English
 - (c) Contact-varieties of English
 - (d) Bilingualism
3. Situate their own language experiences in the context of American history.
4. Evaluate arguments for and against adopting an official language in various public domains, with specific focus on the California Multilingual Education Act.

Course Requirements

- Attendance and Participation: 35%

- Pre-class activities and surveys: 15%
- Midterm 1: 15%
- Midterm 2: 15%
- Linguistic Autobiography: 20%
- Sona Experiment: 2.5% Extra Credit

Deliverables

Every class:

- Before class (via TritonEd):
 - Complete the reading and/or watch a short video and/or listen to a short podcast (see Detailed Schedule)
 - Respond to a pre-class survey
- In-class discussions (recorded on notecards):
 - Share examples from own experience or pop culture
 - Take on perspectives of those involved in the topic of the day
 - Connect concepts across classes

Exams and Assessments:

1. Two take-home Midterms (multiple choice and short answer)
2. Linguistic Autobiography (draft and final)

Unforeseen circumstances

If events arise which prevent you from attending class, turning in assignments on time, or completing any other requirement of the course, please email the instructor (snambood@ucsd.edu) with the relevant documentation (submission receipts from TritonEd, doctor's notes, timestamped snapchat screenshot of your broken leg, etc.) as soon as possible. Extensions, make-up assignments, and excused absences will be given on a case-by-case basis. Communicate early and often!

Schedule

Week	Day	Date	Topic
1	1	6/28	Looking at Language Scientifically
	2	6/30	Indigenous Languages of America
2	3	7/5	Dialects of American English <i>Linguistic Autobiography Draft Due</i>
	4	7/7	Non-English European Languages <i>Midterm 1 Assigned</i>
3	5	7/12	Post-1950s Immigrant Languages <i>Linguistic Autobiography Draft returned</i>
	6	7/14	Heritage Languages and Bilingualism <i>Midterm 1 Due</i>
4	7	7/19	English-Only Education
	8	7/21	English as an Official Language <i>Midterm 1 Returned</i> <i>Midterm 2 Assigned</i>
5	9	7/26	Language Policy and Linguistics
	10	7/28	Language Policy in California <i>Midterm 2 Due</i>
		7/30	Linguistic Autobiography Final Due (before 6 PM)

Detailed Schedule*

*subject to change; all changes will be announced in class as soon as possible

Class 1: 6/28

“Looking at Language Scientifically”

- Complete pre-class survey.
- Read:
 1. Info for Linguistic Autobiography Draft (due 7/12)
 2. Five-Minute-Linguist: What’s the difference between dialects and languages?
 3. Five-Minute-Linguist: What’s the right way to put words together?

Class 2: 6/30

“Indigenous Languages of America”

- Read:
 1. Five-Minute-Linguist: How many Native American languages are there?
 2. Five-Minute-Linguist: What is Gullah?
 3. Five-Minute-Linguist: Can a threatened language be saved?

- Complete pre-class activity: Find a Native American language revitalization project, and answer the following questions in the pre-class survey:
 1. What language is being revitalized?
 2. In what state is this taking place?
 3. Can you find any information about who is spearheading this project? Is it a member of the indigenous community?

Class 3: 6/28

“Dialects of American English”

- Read:
 1. Five-Minute-Linguist: Why do American Southerners talk that way?
 2. Five-Minute-Linguist: Are dialects dying?
 3. Is Black English a Dialect or a Language? (or listen to the podcast)
- Complete pre-class survey:
 1. *Is* Black English a dialect or a language? Support your answer.
 2. Identify and debunk one misconception about Black English which is discussed in this article.
- Submit **Linguistic Autobiography Draft** (via TurnItIn)

Class 4: 7/7

“Non-English European Languages”

- Read:
 1. Five-Minute-Linguist: Is Spanish taking over the United States?
 2. Five-Minute-Linguist: Did German almost become the language of the U.S.?
 3. Living in Two Worlds, but with One Language
- Complete pre-class survey:
 1. Watch at least two videos from thewhitenessproject.org, and read the Artistic Statement.
 2. What are three things you learned, or which surprised you?

Class 5: 7/12

“Post-1950s Immigrant Languages”

- Read:
 1. What It’s Really Like to Work in Hollywood
 2. For Some Filipino-Americans, Language Barriers Leave Culture Lost in Translation
- Complete pre-class survey:

1. Pick an article to read from Code Switch: Word Watch. Via online survey, tell us which word you picked. Come to class prepared to discuss the word.
2. From “What It’s Really Like to Work in Hollywood”, find a quote relating to language and identity.

Class 6: 7/14

“Heritage Languages and Bilingualism”

- Read:
 1. Five-Minute-Linguist: What does it mean to be bilingual?
 2. Five-Minute-Linguist: What causes foreign accents?
- Complete pre-class survey: Find an example of Mock X from popular culture. Give a brief description of your example, and come prepared to discuss it.
- Hand in **Midterm 1** (at the beginning of class)

Class 7: 7/19

“English-Only Education”

- Read:
 1. Five-Minute-Linguist: Do deaf people everywhere use the same sign language?
 2. Five-Minute-Linguist: Is elementary school too early to teach foreign languages?
 3. The Costs of English-Only Education
- Pre-class survey:
 1. From The Costs of English-Only Education, identify one disadvantage of ‘dual-language education’
 2. What is one reason that dual-language programs are increasing in popularity?

Class 8: 7/21

“English as an Official Language”

- Read:
 1. Five-Minute-Linguist: How has our thinking about language learning changed throughout the years?
 2. Marriage
- Pre-class survey:
 1. Find an article or blog post which advocates for English as being the official language of the United States.
 2. Identify 1 testable hypothesis from the article/blog post, and state how you would test this hypothesis.

Class 9: 7/26

“Language Policy and Linguistics”

- Read the Ballotpedia entry about California Multilingual Education Act
- Bring in-progress Linguistic Autobiography to discuss in class

Class 10: 7/28

“Language Policy in California”

- Hand in **Midterm 2** (at the beginning of class)
- Complete Final Survey

Final

Submit **Linguistic Autobiography Final** (via TurnItIn)