ENGL5385-001: Seminar in Applied Linguistics
Forensic Linguistics – Language and the Law
Tues/Thurs, 5:30-6:45, OCNR255

Instructor
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FC 262
Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 10-11am; Wed 9am-12pm; or by appointment

Course Overview
This course is an overview of the field of Forensic Linguistics, or linguistic science applied in legal settings. The class covers various topics including the nature of legal language, language and disadvantage before the law, the language of police and suspects, language crimes, linguistics as evidence in speaker/author identification, and the role of language in the legal process. Course activities include lectures, class discussions, small-group tasks, weekly reading responses, mini research tasks, one article presentation, participation in the class project, and a final paper.

Student Learning Outcomes
(1) To understand the relationship between language and the law by critically reflecting on weekly readings
(2) To demonstrate basic principles and terminology of language analysis into coursework
(3) To demonstrate ability to analyze language in the forensic context as measured by research tasks and the final project
(4) To develop effective oral and written communication skills

Readings
• Additional readings will be made available on Blackboard.

Course Expectations
• You are not allowed to use your cell phone during class. Your phone should be silenced and kept out of sight for the entire class time. Failure to comply with this policy will be reflected in your participation grade.
• Only in extenuating personal emergencies such as illness and death of the student’s immediate family will late work be accepted without point deduction. In all the other circumstances (e.g., technological issues), your grade will result in a 10 per cent per day point deduction. Assignments will not be accepted if submitted later than a week past the assignment deadline, resulting in a zero.
• Every written work that you submit or post on Blackboard should be free from any grammar or spelling errors. You are always expected to demonstrate your highest quality academic writing.
Requirements and Assessments

Attendance
- You are expected to attend all class meetings.
- Three tardies (arriving after 5:35pm) equal one absence.
- If you will be unable to attend class for some reason, please inform me well in advance of your absence.
- If you miss five class meetings, your grade goes down a letter (e.g. if you received an “B” in the class, but missed five classes, you will get a “C”). For each additional absence, I will deduct 2% from your final grade.
- Only excused absences or absences granted by the instructor (i.e. with a doctor’s note) will be accepted.
- You are responsible for any material covered and any homework assigned during your absence.
- Discussions of the topics and concepts covered in readings are an integral component of this course. Accordingly, students are expected to do the readings before each class meeting, and come prepared to talk. (Note: If you are concerned about speaking in class, please come talk to me so that we can find a solution.)

Reading Responses (130 points)
- For most of the classes throughout the semester, students will post responses to the assigned readings on Blackboard. There are a total of 15 responses you are required to post, and the lowest two scores will be dropped. Specific schedule is indicated on the last page of this syllabus. Responses are due on the date indicated in the syllabus by the start of class (the response must be time-stamped by 5:30pm). Each reading response (RR) should be around 200 words long (approximately two thirds of a page double-spaced), and should contain two parts: a) a summary of what you read, and b) your reflection to the reading(s). The summary part should be minimal (less than 30% of the entire response). In your reflection part, do one or more of the following: a) identify and discuss information or knowledge that you newly gained through the reading, particularly relating to events or observations in your own life, b) identify some parts of the reading that could be challenged, and c) discuss how you would explore the topic/issue in your own research.

Article Presentation (170 points)
- Each student will give one 15-minute presentation on a journal article of their choice. Articles should be drawn from a particular journal called ‘The International Journal of Speech, Language, and the Law’ (https://journals.equinoxpub.com/index.php/IJSLL/issue/archive). In order to avoid multiple students selecting the same article, I will create a sheet on Google on which everyone can indicate the article they would like to present on. In your presentation, you should briefly summarize the article you have chosen. Since it is impossible to cover all aspects of the article in depth in 15 minutes, you should focus on the points which you find most compelling. You presentation should include at least one question for class discussion. Please prepare a handout or Powerpoint slides to help structure the presentation.

Mini Research Tasks (200 points)
There are a total of 4 Mini Research Tasks (MRT) throughout the semester, due on Feb 5, Feb 26, Mar 19, and Apr 9. Each task is worth 5% of your total grade. Upon completion of each task, you will submit a short write-up: 2-3 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margin on all sides. Each MRT is specified below. Class readings and discussions leading up to each due date will facilitate your completion of MRTs.


- MRT #2: Compare the question forms in examination and cross-examination activities with a single witness appearance or across witnesses in the same trial. Are the question types similar or different? What cross-examination strategies are used and what are their pragmatic effects? Use the Shipman trial ([http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090808154959/](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090808154959/), [http://www.the-shipman-inquiry.org.uk/trialtrans.asp](http://www.the-shipman-inquiry.org.uk/trialtrans.asp)), where prosecution witness examination begins on Day 4, or the O.J. Simpson criminal trial ([http://simpson.walraven.org/](http://simpson.walraven.org/)) where the witness examination begins on Jan 31, 1995.

- MRT #3:
  
  **Option 1)** Record a natural conversation between yourself and a friend or family member. Now, with that same family member, perform and record a structured interview that you have designed. The interview can be about anything, but it is important that they are answering questions that you ask them. Now, find ten participants for an experiment. Choose short sections of both the natural conversation and the interview, ideally parts that don’t include your own voice. Give these sections to your participants, and ask them to compare the person’s voice across the two different types of recording. Are they able to identify the voices they hear as being from the same speaker? How confident are they? What are they basing their comparison on? You might like to also run a similar test, but in which the speaker in the natural conversation and the interview have similar voices but are actually different speakers. Are your participants able to distinguish between the voices?

  **Option 2)** Text messages are now used as evidence in criminal trials. Individual texting styles can differ markedly. The following message comes from a real case:

  
  _Hiya Stuart what are you up to. I’m in so much trouble at home at the moment. Everyone hates me even you. What the hell have I done now? Why wont you just tell me. Text back please. Love Danielle. Three kisses_

First, collect ten authentic text messages from a friend; analyze them and then describe the linguistic rules your friend is subconsciously following. Now try to text the above message in your friend’s style. Now ask your friend and nine other people (six from your own generation and three from a different generation) to text the message to you in their usual style. Analyze all 11 messages.

  (a) Can you distinguish between the styles of the two generations?
(b) Can you group individuals according to their texting style, in particular the extremeness of idiosyncrasy of their abbreviations?
(c) Which of the 11 versions of the text could not have been produced by your friend and why?
(d) How close was your text message to your friend’s? Were any of the differences the result of poor analysis on your part?

- MRT #4: Collect a set of warnings from ‘over the counter’ medicines and household cleaning products. How clear are they and how much inferencing is required of the reader? What changes would you propose to ensure that the average customer fully understand the warnings and what changes would you suggest to the manufacturer in order to make the warnings proof against claims for damages? (useful reading for this: Hagemeyer and Coulthard 2015)

**Class Project (200 points)**

- As a class, we will work on a project together. First, we will build a dataset, with all of us collecting an allocated amount of data (Due Mar 7). Secondly, we will read some of the scientific sources that are relevant for our topic, after which we will synthesize the sources in a way that situates our project (during Apr 2-4, in class). Thirdly, I will briefly present the preliminary analysis on our data in class, after which we construct our narrative as to how to best interpret the data (on Apr 18). We will ideally attempt to submit an abstract of our study for a conference at the end of the semester.

**Final Paper (250 points) + Final Presentation (50 points)**

- For your final paper, you will submit a formal paper in 10-12 double-spaced pages, 12-point font sized, 1-inch margin on all sides. The number of pages does not include excerpts, charts, tables, figures, or references list. This project must be carried out individually. Your final paper has to be informed by at least eight sources (not including the readings for the class) that are directly related to your topic. There are three options for your final paper:
  - **Option 1** Choose one of your MRTs and expand it.
  - **Option 2** Use the data collected for the Class Project, while exploring a different topic of your choice.
  - **Option 3** Conduct a small-scale research project of your own, dealing with any topic covered in the class.

- The paper should read as a coherent text, with five distinct parts: a) an introductory roadmap in which you introduce your topic, b) critical review of your sources, particularly addressing the gap previous studies have not filled yet, c) introduction to your data and methods, d) results, findings, or analyses, and e) discussion and conclusion. Your final paper should also have a title, and a list of references. A title page is not needed.

- You will give an in-class presentation on your project, in which you will introduce your topic, progress, and preliminary results/arguments you have found/formed thus far. This will be a good opportunity to get feedback from your peers and from me as well.

- Before the Spring Break, each student must meet with me, at least once, to discuss the final paper. A meeting sign-up sheet will be circulated.
Grading Summary

- **Reading Responses** 130 points
- **Article Presentation** 170 points
- **Mini Research Tasks (50 points x 4)** 200 points
- **Class Project** 200 points
  - ✓ Data collection (100 points)
  - ✓ Sources discussions (50 points)
  - ✓ Participation (50 points)
- **Individual Final Project** 300 points
  - ✓ Presentation (50 points)
  - ✓ Final Paper (250 points)

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**TOTAL** 1000 points

Grading Scale (in points)

- A: 900-1000
- B: 800-890
- C: 700-790
- D: 600-690
- F: below 600

**Disabilities Accommodations**
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**Academic Advising**
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.
Dropping a Class
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Friday, April 5, 2019 is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Grade Appeals
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.

Classroom/professional behavior
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a grade of 0 and may result in a failing grade for the course.

- Definition of plagiarism: In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source. Plagiarism is a violation academic expectations, but it is sometimes
difficult to understand what plagiarism actually is. Often, students commit unintentional plagiarism (not citing sources properly, for example), because they are unaware of the standards that apply. Plagiarism includes:

- Using the work of another as your own,
- Downloading or purchasing ready-made essays off the web and using them as your own,
- Using resource materials without correct documentation,
- Using the organization or language of a source without using quote marks and proper citation.
- Turning in a researched project without citing sources in an appropriate documentation style.

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<th>Assignment / Activity</th>
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<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>Distribute syllabus</td>
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<td>S&amp;T Ch 1&amp;2</td>
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