

SYLLABUS

Course: ELM 210.XXXX (XXXXXX) Sign Language Linguistics, 3 credits
Thursdays, 5:45 to 9:05 pm, Room
XX/XX/YY-XX/XX/YY – No class XX/XX

Course Description: This course compares the fundamental linguistic structures of American Sign Language, English and other signed languages. The phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics of each language will be examined. Students will use a descriptive framework to identify and analyze the linguistic features across both spoken and signed languages. Course will utilize theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of sign languages. Fluency in American Sign Language not required.

Performance Objectives: At the end of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Explain the unique features of sign languages with respect to phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics.
2. Describe how the perspectives of sign language structure and use have changed over time.
3. Illustrate sign languages' historical changes.
4. Compare the features of spoken and sign language discourse.
5. Identify the impacts of bilingualism and language contact on the Deaf community.
6. Illustrate how corpora are utilized in sign language research.
7. Analyze the artistic use of sign language from a variety of perspectives.

Flexible Core: Scientific World

In this course you will:

1. Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
2. Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
3. Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.
4. Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of linguistics exploring the scientific world.
5. Demonstrate how tools of science, mathematics, technology, or formal analysis can be used to analyze problems and develop solutions.
6. Understand the scientific principles underlying matters of policy or public concern in which science plays a role.

Required Texts:

Valli, C. and Lucas, C. (2011) *Linguistics of American Sign Language, 5th Edition*. Washington, D.C.:Gallaudet University Press, ISBN: 978-1-56368-507-1

Recommended Text:

Liddell, S. (2003). *Grammar Gesture and Meaning in American Sign Language*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, ISBN: 978-0521016506

Course Requirements:

1. **Tests:** 40 points; 4 tests, ten points each.
Three tests will take place during the semester. The fourth test will be administered during Final Exam week. Test dates are as follows: XX/XX, XX/XX, XX/XX, and XX/XX. There are no make up dates.
2. **Short Papers:** 20 points; 4 papers, 5 points each.
Select four articles on any aspect of signed languages that interests you from the linguistic literature. For each short paper (2-3 pages each) present a typed, clear, well organized discussion and critique of your article's central argument.

The short papers should address each of the following topics. The order and combination of topics is up to you.

- At least one paper focusing on linguistic structure (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics...)
- At least one paper focusing on language in society (education, social context, variation, dialects, gender...)
- At least one paper on a (natural) signed language other than ASL

The fourth short paper will serve as your research paper proposal to further explore one of the previously presented topics. You may revisit one of your previously used articles or an entirely new article. For your short papers, use APA format.

Papers 1 and 2 are due: XX/XX.

Papers 3 and 4 are due : XX/XX.

3. **Research Paper & Presentation:** 20 points

a. **Research Paper** (15 points)

One research paper (5-7 pages) with cited references. The topic will be based on your fourth short paper research proposal. The topic can be anything you like as long as you discuss some aspect of the linguistics of (one or more) signed languages. Topics could include description of a particular complex grammatical phenomenon, comparison of some aspect of linguistic structure across multiple signed languages, acquisition or processing of signed languages, linguistic aspects of education or language policy, or anything else. This final paper may relate to any or all of your first three short papers, or it may be an entirely new topic. Due to its length, the research paper is expected to be a more in depth exploration of your topic than the short papers.

For your research paper, use APA format.

Papers are due: XX/XX.

b. **Presentation** (5 points)

You will give a five minute Powerpoint presentation summarizing your Research Paper findings for the class. Presentations are limited to five minutes. Exceeding the time limit will result in point deductions. Presentation date: XX/XX.

Email me your file on XX/XX with your name in the file name. Do not send a link to a Google Drive document.

4. **Quizzes:** 8 points

There will be 8 short quizzes through out the semester on the class and reading material. Quizzes will be taken online using Blackboard. Further details will be given during the first class.

5. **Homework:** 7 points

Four Homework packets will be assigned to help you apply the concepts learned in the course content and become ready for each test. Homework packets are due XX/XX, XX/XX, XX/XX and XX/XX.

6. **Class discussion and participation:** 5 points

You are expected to be an active participant in class discussions.

This is a student-centered learning experience. Each student is responsible for his/her learning. It is essential to work with peers as a support team so learning can be advanced. In this class, we will use the direct approach. It is highly encouraged that you become an active learner and participant in this class. Cultural values play important role in this class. As such, each culture is respected and incorporated into the language.

Note: Additional readings may be assigned for specific classes as needed. Your pre-class preparation will factor into the class discussion and participation grading.

Grading:

Tests (4x10)	40 points
Short Papers (4x5)	20 points
Research paper & presentation	20 points
Quizzes (8x1)	8 points
Homework	7 points
Class Participation	5 points
Total: 100 points	

The following Grading Scale shall be used:

A+	96-100	B+	86-89	C+	76-79	D+	66-69	F	00-59
A	93-95	B	83-85	C	73-75	D	63-65		
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62		

Course Calendar

Week #	Date	Topic	Readings *	Assignments
1	XX/XX	Introduction	1,2	Quiz 1
2	XX/XX	Phonology Part I	3,4,5	Quiz 2
3	XX/XX	Phonology Part II	6,7,8	Test #1 , Homework Pack 1
4	XX/XX	Morphology Part I	9,10,11	Short Paper 1, Quiz 3
5	XX/XX	Morphology Part II	12,13	Short Paper 2, Quiz 4
6	XX/XX	Syntax Part I	14,15	Test #2 , Homework Pack 2
7	XX/XX	Syntax Part II	16,17,18	Short Paper 3, Quiz 5
8	XX/XX	Syntax Part III	19,20	Short Paper 4, Quiz 6
9	XX/XX	Semantics	21,22	Test #3 , Homework Pack 3
10	XX/XX	Language Use Part I	23,24	Quiz 7
11	XX/XX	Language Use Part II	25,26	Quiz 8
12	XX/XX	Review & Paper Presentations		Research Paper, Presentation
F	XX/XX	Final Exam		Test #4 , Homework Pack 4

* Units from Linguistics of American Sign Language

Rules of Conduct:

1. Sign language interpreters will be presented in class for everyone's access to communication. It is important to follow the one speaker rule. Only **one** person will talk at a time. Do not overlap or interrupt the speaker.
2. All cell phones and pagers are to be turned off.
3. Class starts promptly at 5:45 pm. Please arrive on time.
4. This class will feature a variety of opinions.
Listen respectfully and if necessary disagree with civility.

Class schedule: www.lagcc.cuny.edu (check College's Academic Schedule)

Instructor will inform students a week prior regarding class schedule changes.

Cancellation of the class meeting: In case of an emergency, instructor will inform students by posting in the announcement section of the BlackBoard at least three hours before class.

Attendance Policy

LaGuardia Community College's attendance policy limits students' unexcused absences to 15%. The Department of Social Science subscribes to this policy and enforces it as follows:

The absolute maximum of unexcused absences in this course is **5** hours. There is no need to present any documentation for unexcused absences. Excused absences are at the discretion of the instructor. If there

are extenuating circumstances that warrant being excused, consult the instructor. Tardiness is disruptive to the learning process; therefore, after ten (10) minutes students are marked absent for that hour.

Students who exceed the maximum number of unexcused absences will receive a failing grade (F or WU) in the course.

The Academic Dishonesty Policy:

As stated in the catalog: "Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in the City University of New York and is punishable by penalties ranging from a grade of 'F' on a given test, research paper or assignment, to an 'F' in the course or suspension or expulsion from the College. Academic Dishonesty includes:

- Cheating
- Plagiarism
- Internet Plagiarism
- Obtaining Unfair Advantages
- Falsification of Records and Official Documents
- Misconduct in Internships" (117)

Policy on late papers, assignments and missed exams: There will be no make-ups. Students are responsible to perform assignments and submit papers on time, and be presented for exams. If a situation arises before the exam, student must confer with the instructor (at least a week prior to the exam)

Policy on incompletes: Students are responsible to confer with the instructor and fill out the INC form. If the student does not complete the work and does not confer with the instructor at the end of the course, the final grade will be recorded. See college catalog for details.

Refer to College's catalog and website for: academic integrity, plagiarism, student rights and responsibilities, support services and other policies.

Detailed Outline

I. Week 1

- A. Introduction
- B. Defining Language
 - 1. Features of Languages
 - 2. Unique Features
 - 3. ASL as a Language
- C. Defining Linguistics
 - 1. Object of Study
 - 2. Methods of Inquiry
 - 3. Subfields
- D. Gestures vs Signs
 - 1. Gesture Types
 - 2. Sign Types
 - 3. The Difference
- E. Quiz 1

II. Week 2

- A. Sign Parameters
 - 1. 5 Parameters
 - 2. Notational Systems
 - a) Glossing
 - b) Transcription
 - c) Translation
- B. The Stokoe System
 - 1. Cheremes

- 2. Notation Order
- C. Sequentiality
 - 1. Stokoe's Model
 - 2. Minimal Pairs
 - 3. Stokoe's Transcription Problems
- D. Quiz 2

III. Week 3

- A. Movement-Hold Model
 - 1. Sequential Moves and Holds
 - 2. Contrast to Stokoe's Model
 - 3. 4 Components
- B. Phonological Processes
 - 1. Movement epenthesis
 - 2. Hold reduction
 - 3. Assimilation
 - 4. Weak hand deletion
- C. Test 1

IV. Week 4

- A. Building New Signs
 - 1. Derivational Morphology
 - 2. Inflectional Morphology
- B. Noun Verb Derivation
 - 1. Noun-Verb Pairs

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2. Movement epenthesis
3. Reduplication

C. Compounds

1. Word formation process
2. Changes
 - a) Morphological
 - b) Phonological

D. Short Paper 1 Due

E. Quiz 3

V. Week 5

A. Fingerspelling

1. Lexicalization Processes

B. Numerical Incorporation

1. Rule of 9

C. Corpus Linguistics

1. Corpora
2. Techniques
3. Application to Sign Language
4. Current Research Problems

D. Short Paper 2 Due

E. Quiz 4

VI. Week 6

A. Intro to Syntax

1. Sentence formation
2. Rules: Prescriptive vs Descriptive
3. Grammar vs Syntax
4. Competence vs Performance
5. Major Theories

B. Basic Sentence Types

C. Test 2

VII. Week 7

A. Lexical Categories

1. Open vs Closed
2. Open
3. Closed

B. Word Order

1. Basic
2. Intransitive Verb Word Order

C. Time and Aspect

1. Time & Tense
2. Expressing Time in ASL
3. Temporal Aspect

D. Short Paper 3 Due

E. Quiz 5

VIII. Week 8

A. Verbs

1. Plain
2. Indicating/Directional
3. Depicting/Classifiers
4. Agreement

B. The Function of Space

Sign Language Linguistics: Professor, Term Year

1. The 10 Functions

C. Sign Language Assessment

1. Purpose
2. Validity
3. Reliability
4. 3 Tests
 - a) ASLPI
 - b) SLPI
 - c) ACTFL OPI

D. Short Paper 4 Due

E. Quiz 6

IX. Week 9

A. The Meaning of Individual Signs

1. Semantics=?
2. Determining Meaning
3. Types of Meaning
4. Lexical Item relationships

B. The Meaning of Sentences

1. Word Order
2. Semantic Roles
3. Morphemes
4. Context

C. Test 3

X. Week 10

A. Variation and Historical Change

1. Sociolinguistics
2. Variation
3. Historical Change

B. Sign Language Discourse

1. Discourse = ?
2. Language Functions
3. Skilled Work
4. Language Use: Norms & Structure

C. Quiz 7

XI. Week 11

A. Bilingualism and Language Contact

1. Interest to Deaf Community
2. Reasons for Bilingualism
3. Language Contact

B. Language as Art

1. Storytelling Formats
2. Percussive Signing
3. Drama
4. Deaf Humor
5. Poetry
6. Film

C. Quiz 8

XII. Week 12

A. Paper Presentation & Submission

B. Review & Future Directions

XIII. Week 13 - FINAL EXAM