Instructor: Prof. Eric Henry

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Office Hours: MW 11:15-1:00; Th 9:00-11:30
Email: eric.henry@smu.ca
Course meets: MW 10:00 – 11:15, Burke 207
Prerequisite: ANTH 1202, ANTH 1290 or LING 1200

Course Description and Objectives

If anthropology is the study of what it means to be human, linguistic anthropology examines the role that language plays in human interaction. And its role is central: almost everything we do with others (and even by ourselves) is mediated through language, from our first moments to our final days. Our perspective in this course will be quite broad, focusing not just on the familiar but on multiple languages used in locations from around the world. We will examine the intersections between language and culture, describing how people make sense of what is going on around them through words.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:
• Describe the main principles and theories of linguistic anthropology
• Analyze and evaluate ethnographic materials that illustrate language in use
• Effectively communicate scholarly ideas in written essays
• Apply insights from the anthropological study of language to their own lives

Textbooks and Articles

There is one required textbook for this class available for purchase through the Bookstore:


Note: the 1st Edition is acceptable, but one chapter is not included in the earlier version and some chapter numbers may differ. There is a digital copy of the 2nd Edition on reserve in the library.

In addition, several articles have been posted to Brightspace (smu.brightspace.com). Please consult the Class Schedule for the weeks in which readings will be discussed. Students arrive at university with differing levels of preparation. If you feel that you do not have an adequate background in writing or composition, I would advise you to also purchase a writing guide.
Grades and Grading

20% Midterm Examination There will be a midterm exam scheduled in class (see below for date). It will cover material from lectures and readings up until that week.

20% Film Response A response to the film Speaking in Tongues which we will view in class. If you are absent, alternate viewing arrangements should be made with the professor.

30% Language in the News An essay analyzing language in current events.

30% Final Examination There will be an examination scheduled during the final examinations period. The exam will cover content from the entire semester (but with more emphasis on the second half of the course) and will be similar in structure to the midterm.

Assignment Guidelines: All written work should be prepared in accord with the conventions of scholarly writing. Assignments should:

- be properly formatted (1” margins, 12pt. Times New Roman, double-spaced, numbered pages).
- be rigorously checked for spelling and grammar
- include a title, your name, student #, course # and the name of the professor
- rely on scholarly sources for facts and analysis, and provide citations for all sources and quotations – see Writing & Citing on the library website (libguides.smu.ca/anthropology)
- include a complete bibliography at the end that includes only works cited in the text

Submission Policy: Assignments can be submitted on the day they are due by one of the following methods: Brightspace dropbox, in class, or through the departmental drop box (outside MS218). Under no circumstances should an assignment be slipped under my door or sent by email (these tend to get lost). You must retain a copy of all submitted material. I cannot grant extensions on the basis of a busy schedule or lack of planning.

Late assignments are subject to a deduction of 10% of the total grade per week beginning the day after they are due, unless the student has a documented medical or personal emergency.

Academic Regulations, Accommodations, Plagiarism, Etc.

Regulations: University rules regarding registration, withdrawal, appealing marks, and most anything else you might need to know can be found in the current undergraduate calendar, particularly Section 2 – Academic Regulations: www.smu.ca/servicecentre/calendar.html

Accommodations: To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the Fred Smithers Centre of Support for Students with Disabilities (3rd Floor, Student Centre). If you have a letter from your Smithers Centre counsellor indicating that you have a disability which requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to me so we can discuss the accommodations that you might need. Accommodations due to religious obligations or pregnancy should be discussed with me as soon as possible.
**Academic Integrity:** The success and reputation of Saint Mary’s depends upon the integrity and honesty of all its members. Violations of academic integrity, including practices such as plagiarism, cheating, falsification, and tampering are serious offenses. Penalties can range from repeating an assignment to failure of the course to expulsion from the university. For details on what constitutes violations of academic integrity, the procedures for investigating offences and the penalties, refer to Section 2 – Academic Integrity and Student Responsibility in the Undergraduate Calendar. If you do not feel comfortable yet writing in a scholarly style, bring any questions or concerns to me or a research librarian as soon as possible. See also the library’s publication, A Student’s Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism (www.smu.ca/academics/avoiding-plagiarism.html).

**Important Information**

- All course-related email communication should include the course code in the subject line. Due to privacy concerns, personal information will not be transmitted by email.
- If you are experiencing significant personal or medical issues that are adversely affecting your performance in the class, it is important that you notify me as soon as possible. I can only assist you if I know about these issues before due dates for assignments, exams, etc.
- Class cancellations or other changes to the syllabus will be announced as early as possible in class and online. If you miss a class, check for updates or announcements on the course website.

**Class Schedule**

The table below indicates the topic and readings for each class. Come prepared each class having already done the readings, and the lectures and discussion will make a lot more sense.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings/Videos</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Sept. 4 Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Sept. 23 Language Socialization Ahearn Ch. 4  <strong>Film: Speaking in Tongues (Sept. 25)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Reading/Activity</td>
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<td>Oct. 9</td>
<td>Through Navajo Eyes</td>
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<td>Oct. 16</td>
<td>Speech Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 11-17</td>
<td>Fall Break – No Classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 18</td>
<td>Literacies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 25</td>
<td>Multilingualism and Globalization</td>
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**Assignments**

Two written assignments will be submitted over the course of the semester. Papers should conform to the conventions of scholarly writing outlined in the syllabus, providing citations for all sources and quotations, as well as a bibliography. If you do not yet feel familiar with these academic practices, please consult one of the research librarians or come speak to me.

**Film Response**

The film ‘Speaking in Tongues’ documents the bilingual language learning experiences of four different individuals and their families. As Ahearn points out, “social contexts and linguistic practices mutually constitute each other” (Ahearn 2017:8). In other words, their experiences are part of a broader understanding of language and its social uses.
In a 3-4 page paper (about 1000-1300 words), use the texts, concepts and ideas we have covered so far in the class to highlight issues raised in the film. Some possible topics are: what language ideologies and socialization practices are the students being exposed to in the performance of bilingual identities? How does linguistic anthropology allow us to understand the debate about second language teaching shown in the film?

Note: A summary of the film is not necessary. Be sure to explain what concepts you are using and what they mean. References to or quotations of the film do not require a citation. Citations are required for any other sources.

If you miss the film showing in class, contact the instructor to make alternative arrangements.

Language in the News

The linguist Geoffrey Pullum has written that, in terms of the presentation of linguistic knowledge in the media, “in no other subject could such self-contradictory idiocy be accepted, or subjected to so little fact-checking.”

Find a recent news, opinion or editorial article where issues of language, languages, or language use play a significant role (you can choose from a range of media sources including newspapers, magazines, and online publications). This could include issues such as the use of particular words, accents or speech patterns, misunderstandings, controversial speech, language policies, bilingualism, language education and so on. Make sure you include a link to the article or a copy of it as part of your paper.

In a 4-5 page paper (about 1400-1800 words), describe the issue and analyze it from a linguistic anthropological perspective. How might the scholars, concepts and ideas discussed in this course help us to understand this issue or the way the media presents it? How have linguistic anthropologists discussed similar issues in the literature? What do you think is really going on with this issue?

Successful essays will demonstrate familiarity with the relevant course readings as well as some independent research of the scholarly literature (contact the instructor or a librarian if you require assistance finding additional material).