LING 3343/ENG 343-001 Descriptive Linguistics: Linguistics of ASL Syllabus
Department of Languages, Cultures, and Communication
Stephen F. Austin State University
Spring 2020 • MWF 12:00-12:50 p.m. • F181

Professor: Dr. Jessie Sams
Office: LAN 229
Email: samsj@sfasu.edu
Twitter: @quothalinguist
Remind: @lingasl

Open office hours
MW 2:15-3:00 p.m.
TR 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
F 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Appointment-only
MWF 11:00-11:30 a.m.
MF 3:00-4:15 p.m.

Finals week
MTW 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Required text: All required readings will be posted on D2L.

Course description
Linguistic analysis of a language or language family. May be repeated up to three times under different languages. The specific topic description for this semester is below:

Linguistic study of ASL, including the following: phonological features of individual signs (hand shape, orientation, location, movement) and how those features shift when placed in a stream of signs; morphological features of signs, including compounding and fingerspelling forms; grammar, focusing on typical word orders found in ASL sentences; meaning of signs and how those meanings have shifted over time and/or within particular dialects; and typical pragmatic features of conversation in ASL. Anyone interested in learning more about ASL is welcome—no prior knowledge of the language is assumed.

Student Learning Outcomes
By the end of this course, students will be able to
1. identify the goals of the major subfields of linguistic study: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics.
2. apply a variety of methods for analyzing naturally-occurring language texts.
3. justify the approaches taken to analyze those texts.
4. synthesize researched information from scholars with their own original data analyses.
5. create a final product that demonstrates an understanding of the concepts learned throughout the semester and incorporates aspects of both synthesis and analysis.

Course policies and requirements
The two overarching principles for the course are provided below; these principles are reflected in all the course policies:

(a) Adults make arrangements.
(b) Poor preparation on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part.

Student policies
1. Show up to class on time and be prepared for the day. Every class session, you will need to have your textbook, syllabus, and notes/daily work readily available to you.
2. Stay on top of the course schedule and course material.
   a. If you are absent, you need to contact fellow classmates to find out what you missed during class. You will also need to find the daily work assignment that is due the next class period.
b. If you miss class when I hand back graded work, you need to come to my office hours after that day to pick up your work.

3. Actively participate during class. Active participation includes joining in on class discussions, working in groups during in-class activities, asking questions, showing up to class prepared for the day’s lesson, and bringing the required materials with you to class.

4. Keep track of due dates and start the work early. Our course utilizes different types of assignments, each with specific guidelines for submission, which are outlined in the “Assignments” section of this syllabus.

5. Know when you need help and get help early and often.
   a. If you have a quick question about course content or an assignment, you can email me or send me a message via Remind with your specific question.
   b. If you have a complex question, need a concept explained further, want to practice analytic skills, or have a question about your grade, you need to see me during my office hours.

6. Visit me during office hours. There is a positive correlation between grades and the number of office hours visits—office hour visits provide a one-on-one teaching environment, which is often more productive and efficient than a one-on-twenty teaching environment. You never need to apologize for having questions; I am happy to visit with you multiple times about the same concept or skill until you feel comfortable completing the work on your own.
   a. During my open office hours, I will be in my office even if no students sign up or show up. I will honor 15-minute appointments during open office hours, but I will also see any student who shows up as a walk-in visitor.
      i. Students who have signed up for an appointment prior to the beginning of office hours get priority if there is a line of students.
      ii. On busy days, walk-in students will be limited to 10 minutes so I can see every student in line.
      iii. You do not need to make an appointment or wait in line if you only need to pick up work or drop something off to me.
   b. During my appointment-only hours, I will only be in my office if a student has made an appointment with me. The maximum time frame for appointments during these hours is 30 minutes.
   c. If you want to sign up for an appointment, which reserves a specific time allotted to you:
      i. You must request it at least 24 hours in advance (though I cannot guarantee you will get your requested time because someone else may have requested the same time before you); therefore, the earlier you sign up, the better.
      ii. Signing up for an appointment means you are reserving time for you that another student may have wanted; if you do not show up on time for a scheduled appointment without prior notification, you lose the ability to reserve future appointments.
   d. These general guidelines apply to all office hours:
      i. Because time is limited during office hours, show up prepared with your work/questions out and ready to go. If it takes your computer five minutes to start while you’re sitting in front of me, that is five minutes of potential work time wasted.
      ii. Unless you and other students have pre-arranged to come into my office as a group, I will see students one at a time.
      iii. I will not discuss your grades if another person is in the room.

7. Track your grades and course progress on D2L. All grades and necessary attendance information will be entered into D2L; if you believe there is an error, you need to reach out to me immediately.
8. Be considerate. Like the movies, classes can be disturbed by noisy phones and constant texting. If your phone habits regularly distract me or your fellow students during class, I will ask you to leave.
   a. Be considerate to your neighbors and professor by turning off your cell phone’s ringer when you come to class.
   b. Have the courtesy to wait until after class to text and/or update your social media page about the amazing lecture you just witnessed.

9. Communicate, and check your SFA email regularly. As in any relationship, the student/professor relationship is strengthened by communication. If I send something out, pay attention to it. If you have a question/concern/emergency, communicate that to me immediately. The best way I have of getting in touch with the class is your school email address; make sure you check your SFA email regularly.

10. Set your priorities, and manage your time accordingly without excuses or apologies.
   a. As the old adage goes, “If it is important to you, you will find a way. If it is not, you will find an excuse.” If you truly care about earning a particular grade in this course, you will have to set this course and its required work as a higher priority this semester.
   b. You never need to apologize to me for having higher priorities than this course. When I look at you, I do not see a letter grade or a number, nor do I spend my evenings stewing over students who did not earn a particular grade on an assignment or test. I will repeat this statement again and again: Your grade does not define you; you are much more than a grade.

Attendance
Attendance is—by and large—linked to grades; very few students who miss a high number of classes make an above-passing grade in this course. I allow four absences before it affects final grades; after that, each day’s absence results in a 0.5% deduction from the final grade. The tenth absence results in a failing grade for the course.

1. I take attendance once at the beginning of class; a tardy is recorded as an absence.
2. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, which means you do not need to bring me any notes for missing class.
3. I begin taking attendance on your first day of class.
4. If you have to miss class, make sure that you ask a classmate what you missed and that you understand the material covered. You must get any missed information (lecture notes, handouts, guidelines, etc.) from a classmate.
5. Any disruptions, unacceptable behavior toward other students, and/or lack of active participation (e.g., sleeping) will result in a recorded absence.

Assignments
This semester, you will be graded on two areas:

1) Analyses
Throughout the semester, you will have eight take-home assignments to practice concepts being covered in the readings and the class discussions/activities. Specific guidelines for each analysis will be provided during the semester, and all due dates are on the course schedule. You will submit these assignments on D2L in their associated dropboxes. While the deadline is the beginning of class on the due date listed, you have a grace period for all assignments until 11:59 p.m. CST on the due date listed to allow for any technological glitches; if you wait to submit an assignment until the grace period, you are gambling and no concessions will be made for problems that occur within that time frame. Submit drafts as you work to ensure you have submitted something prior to the
deadline. The chapter exercise dropboxes are set up to overwrite previous submissions, so only the most recent document will be visible to me when I grade.

While you may work with other students on the assignments, you may not submit the same work to be graded for chapter exercises; that is, any students working together need to find their own examples to analyze.

Each student is allowed one “shit happens” extension of 72 hours past the listed due date. You must request special access to the dropbox you need in writing before class begins on the listed due date—no additional details are necessary when requesting this access. Simply write, “I need an extension on this assignment,” and one will be granted. Regardless of whether you need an extension of 20 minutes or the full three days, you only get one extension during the semester. There are no rewards for not using the SH extension because that would essentially result in punishing students who experience a rough patch during the semester. If you need an extension, request one.

(2) Final paper
A final project, consisting of research and data analysis, synthesizes information from the entire course and is due before our course’s scheduled final exam time begins, but you will have a grace period to submit before 11:59 p.m. CST on the due date listed; no extensions can be granted on the paper.

There will be an extra credit opportunity for students this semester, which will be explained in class. If completed, the extra credit will be applied in one of three ways, all of which affect the final grade equally: (1) an added 10% bonus to the lowest analysis grade; (2) an added 5% to the final paper grade; or (3) two forgiven absences.

Grading
Each assignment will be graded out of a score of 100; each major assignment area is weighted differently:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyses</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I round all grades to the nearest tenth of a decimal point and then assign letter grades according to the following scale of percentages:

A 90-100  Earning an A indicates the student mastered all the necessary concepts and skills for the course and exceeded expectations on submitted work throughout the semester.
B 80-89.9  Earning a B indicates the student did well with all necessary concepts and skills for the course and mastered some of them; it also indicates the student exceeded expectations on some assignments/tests but not others.
C 70-79.9  Earning a C indicates the student did well with some of the concepts and skills but not as well with others; it also indicates the student met all required guidelines throughout the course. In other words, a C is the average grade.
D 60-69.9  Earning a D indicates the student did not do well with a majority of the concepts and/or skills required for the course; it also indicates that not all minimum requirements or standards were met throughout the semester.
F 0-59.9  Earning an F indicates the student regularly did not meet minimum requirements or standards.
Final grades are final. Grades do not reflect my personal feelings about students, nor do they reflect students’ personal worth; they solely reflect a student’s demonstrated mastery of the concepts and skills introduced in class through completed work on assignments. A grade does not define a student: you are much more than your grade.

D2L submission policies
You will be using D2L to submit all work, and the following policies apply to all D2L submissions.

1. You are responsible for ensuring you are submitting the correct version of the correct document to the correct dropbox.
2. You are responsible for ensuring your submission was successful, so you should check for successful submissions in your dropbox.
3. You are responsible for completing and submitting all work in a Microsoft Word document. SFA students receive Microsoft Office for free; you need to download it (do not rely on the online app version) and use it complete work for this course.
4. You are responsible for making sure your document looks the way it should—I can only assess what I can see.
   a. If you want to include an image, add a 1x1 table in the document where you want the image, and put the image into the table cell. That will keep it in place. Do not attempt “wrap text” around the table/image, as that will likely result in a free-floating image.
   b. Use headers to insert your last name and page numbers.
   c. Liberally use YouTube and Google to learn how to use Word’s features.
5. Only one document is allowed per submission, so if there are multiple parts of an assignment, you need to make sure they are all in one document.
6. Each dropbox is set so that only the most recent submission is kept; every new submission to that dropbox overwrites any earlier submissions, so the only document I see when I grade is the final one that was successfully submitted.
7. D2L adheres to the D2L clock—not yours. All dropboxes close at 11:59 p.m. CST on their listed due dates, and once they close, they stay closed.
8. Submissions may take a while to upload—it could even take a few hours, depending on your file size and internet speed.
9. When the dropbox closes, it only retains the submissions that were successfully completed prior to its closing. If you are in the process of submitting a document when it closes, your submission will be lost.
10. I will wait until the grace period has ended before I begin grading.

Post-semester policy
You need to download any documents you need from our course’s D2L, whether you want to retain content or assignments you submitted. The D2L course closes a week after the semester concludes, and you will no longer have access to the course after that time. Make sure you have checked grades and feedback prior to its closing.

SFA Policies
Acceptable student behavior
Classroom behavior should not interfere with the professor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic, or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The professor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be
referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance available to help SFA students succeed.

**Academic integrity**

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism. Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism.

- Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism.
- Plagiarism is presenting words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit.
- Please read the complete policy at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp).

Any problems with plagiarism or cheating in this course will result in a grade of negative 10% on the assignment/test in question. This policy applies to verbatim plagiarism, mosaic plagiarism, improper citations, missing quotation marks, auto-plagiarism (using your own past work and turning it in for this course), and copying another student’s work to present as your own. All work must be original, completed on your own, and written specifically for this course. A grade of negative 10% means that not only do you lose all points for the work in question but also lose an additional 10% from your overall grade. Furthermore, use of excessive direct quotations (higher than 40% of your work) will result in a grade of zero on that assignment.

**Withheld grades: Semester grades policy**


At the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

For this course, a grade of WH must be requested by the student, negotiated between the student and professor, and approved by the professor before the final week of classes begins (i.e., before “dead week”). Not all requests will be granted; each request will be taken on a case-by-case basis. For the request to be granted, the student must have completed all work prior to the WH request and must be passing the course with a grade of a B or higher. If the WH is approved, all work for that WH must be completed by the end of the first week of the following academic semester.

**Students with disabilities**

To obtain disability-related accommodations, alternate formats, and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) as early as possible in the semester. ODS is located in the Human Services building, room 325; their number is 468-3004 (or 468-1004 for TDD). Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For
additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/. For this course, if you are registered with ODS and have an accommodation and/or auxiliary aids, you need to speak with me during office hours about the accommodation/aids. Please do this as soon as possible during the semester.
## Course Schedule: January 15-May 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/15</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Introduction to linguistics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hockett’s design features</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1/20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>NO CLASSES</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1/22</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Sign language typology</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1/24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Adopt-a-SL day</td>
<td>Analysis I: ASL as a language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/27</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Language change</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1/29</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>ASL history and origins</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1/31</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>ASL language change</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>ASL phonology: parameters</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Stokoe notation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2/7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Liddell &amp; Johnson MH model: XMH</td>
<td>Analysis II: ASL variation</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Liddell &amp; Johnson: movements, focal sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Practice Liddell &amp; Johnson MH model</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/14</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Phonological processes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2/17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Fingerspelling: a history</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/19</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Allophonic variation within fingerspelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Lexicalized fingerspelling</td>
<td>Analysis III: Transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/24</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Sign-formation processes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2/26</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Nouns &amp; inflections</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2/28</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Verbs &amp; inflections</td>
<td>Analysis IV: Fingerspelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Adjectives and adverbs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Pronouns: referential space</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Other function signs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/9-3/13</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SignWriting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/18</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Glossing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>SignWriting-to-gloss</td>
<td>Analysis V: Morphology</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/23</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Syntactic role of NMSs</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/25</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Basic word order</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/27</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Markedness and word order</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/30</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Form-Meaning connection</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4/1</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Aspectual marking</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4/3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Conceptual mapping</td>
<td>Analysis VI: Word order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Referential, social, affective meaning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4/8</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Lexical relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>NO CLASSES</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/13</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Metaphor</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/15</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Directional signs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4/17</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Directional signs practice</td>
<td>Analysis VII: Semantics</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Deaf culture &amp; brief history</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/22</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Surrogates in storytelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Storytelling and poetry day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/27</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No Ordinary Hero</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/29</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>No Ordinary Hero</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>No Ordinary Hero</td>
<td>Analysis VIII: Storytelling/poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Paper due on D2L before 1:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Final paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Due**

- **Analysis I: ASL as a language**
- **Analysis II: ASL variation**
- **Analysis III: Transcription**
- **Analysis IV: Fingerspelling**
- **Analysis V: Morphology**
- **Analysis VI: Word order**
- **Analysis VII: Semantics**
- **Analysis VIII: Storytelling/poetry**

**Paper deadlines**

- **Final paper**