LING 4338_001 Forensic Linguistics
TR 9:30-10:45 in F373
Fall 2021
Stephen F. Austin State University

Instructor: Dr. Chris Sams
Office: Liberal Arts North (LAN) 255
Office phone: (936) 468-2270 (no voicemail activated)
Email: samsc@sfasu.edu (please indicate ENG 4438 in the subject line of your message)

Office hours: MWF 8:00-9:00, TR 8:00-9:30, and other times by mutually convenient appointment

Please give me at least a 48-hour notice and all the times you have available—not just those most convenient for you.

Course Description

Linguistic study of texts and recordings to determine authorship, evasion strategies, possible coercion in writings/recordings, stylistic changes, deception and so on. Linguistic tools include phonetic analysis and word choice. Texts analyzed include hate mail, suicide letters, ransom notes, and confessions; recordings include interviews, interrogations and confessions.

This course is 3 credit hours and meets 150 minutes per week for the full semester, typically twice per week for 75 minutes or three times per week for 50 minutes. Students complete a variety of formal and informal assignments, which require, on average, six hours of work outside the classroom each week and may include outside readings, data analyses, written responses, projects, and/or exams.

Prerequisite(s) None.

Required Texts

All course materials will be provided by the instructor.

Student Course Learning Outcomes

1. The student will demonstrate the ability to think critically about the scientific study of language and the major subfields covered in the course: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

2. The student will demonstrate higher-order thinking skills (application and synthesis/correlation) by observing how the core areas of linguistics work within the various subfields.

3. The student will demonstrate the ability to comprehend and apply both traditional and contemporary methods in linguistics to language.
4. The student will demonstrate the ability to integrate theories and methodologies of the linguistics course with that of other disciplines taught at the university.

5. The student will demonstrate the ability to perform data analysis relevant to linguistic study.

6. The student will demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate results of data analysis in a medium appropriate for the academic level.

Coursework Requirements and Grading Policy

- The final course grade will be determined by 4 take-home assignments which will be announced in class and posted on D2L at least one week in advance of the due date (indicated on the tentative schedule below).

- Take-home assignments are due to the D2L Dropbox by the beginning of class on the due date. I only accept late work under extreme circumstances (which almost always will include prior notice) and for a penalty of my discretion.

- Assignments are based on my lectures and classroom discussion. General discussion among students regarding assignments is fine, but students are to submit their own work with their own wording and unique examples. Students must type the name(s) of any student(s) with whom they worked at the top of the assignment (this includes my name if students see me in office hours). If you work with another student, I do not discuss their grade if it differs from yours. It is possible that students who work together receive different grades since often times one student may go back and polish or add more examples to clarify their work. Outside sources should only be used when specifically directed and they must be properly cited. I am not interested in a summary of an outside source; I am interested in each individual student’s understanding of the material based on what was covered in class. Failure to comply with any of the above will result in a violation of SFA’s Academic Integrity policy (see below). I reserve the right to change all take-home assignments timed exams at any time.

- Students are encouraged to go over drafts of assignments with me in office hours. I am here to clarify directions on the assignments—not to do them. I do not pre-grade and I do not look at assignments via email; however, questions that I can answer in a sentence or two via email are fine.

Final Course Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>100%-90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>99.9%-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>89.9%-80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>79.9%-70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>79.9%-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>69.9%-60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>69.9%-60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>69.9%-60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>59.9% and below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excellent          Good                   Average         Below Avg.

Each assignment is worth 100 points and will be graded as follows:

A+ 100; A 95; A- 92; B+ 88; B 85; B- 82; C+ 78; C 75; C- 72; D+ 68; D 65; D- 62
Scores lower than 62 will receive a score in accordance with the quality of work which was submitted.

When I go over the assignment in class a week before it is due, I highlight what I am looking for. I take the assignment as a whole; I have found that using a rubric in this course to grade assignments consistently results in lower scores as it doesn’t allow me to look at the big picture.

**Definition of Grades**

An assignment which receives an A far exceeds my expectations. It shows mastery all of the content, it is well organized and professionally presented, offers plentiful critical analysis and original insight, and contains plenty of examples. I think, “This is exemplary work.”

An assignment which receives a B exceeds my expectations. It shows near mastery of all of the content, it is generally well organized and presented, it offers some critical analysis and insight, and contains sufficient examples. I think, “This is excellent work, but needs some polish.”

An assignment which receives a C meets my expectations. It shows more or less a general mastery of most of the content, has organization and some facets of a professional presentation, relies more on repeating information rather than offering critical analysis and insight, and could benefit from examples. I think, “This is the average of what I expected.”

An assignment which receives a D falls below my expectations. It shows a sketchy mastery of content, isn’t very well organized or presented professionally, doesn’t offer much (if any) critical analysis or insight, and lacks sufficient examples. I think, “This doesn’t demonstrate that the student is confident in the material.”

An assignment which receives an F usually doesn’t follow the assignment directions, is plagiarized, or is incomplete. It shows little or no mastery of content, lacks organization and professional presentation, relies only on repeating what others have said, and offers very few or no examples.

**Course Policies**

- Adults make arrangements. They also take responsibility, are held accountable, and accept the consequences of their actions.

- Attendance, Participation, and Preparation
  - Regular, prompt attendance, active participation, preparation, and adherence to the syllabus policies are expected.
  - If a student misses class, they are responsible to find out from a classmate what they missed. Do not ask me. Students can get notes from them and find out if you missed any announcements. After speaking to a classmate, if they have specific questions, they can see me. I will not give private lectures over what was missed in class. Period.
• I post all assignments on D2L. I do not monitor or respond to emails sent via D2L; all emails should be sent to samsc@sfasu.edu. For D2L technical support, contact student support in The Center for Teaching and Learning at d2l@sfasu.edu or 936-468-1919. If you call after regular business hours or on a weekend, please leave a voicemail.

• Students should check their SFA email account daily during the week. I return most emails within 24 hours. If you don’t hear back from me within 24 hours on a weekday, please resend your email--I may not have received it. This is a professional atmosphere; emails should have a subject, salutation (if for initial contact), body, and signature.

Some important notes about this particular class:

• For every assignment that you do for this class, please make sure to write the following at the top of each page in 18 pt bold font:

LING 4338 FORENSIC LINGUISTICS CLASS EXERCISE

• This course is largely about detail and objectivity; avoid being vague and be sure to offer examples for any claims that made. Assignments should be clear, precise, and professional.

• Our job as forensic linguists is to evaluate language; we are not responsible for the role of the legal system, law enforcement, or, to a large extent, psychologists. The less extra information we know about a case, the better. Please don’t spend time in class discussing specifics and outcomes of cases that we examine.

• Some of the material in the course is profane, graphic, melancholy, controversial, or violent in nature; I do not censor the material.

• None of the material used in this class is to be published in any form (e.g., online, as part of a story, a research paper) without my express permission. Material is not to be discussed with or shown to anyone not in the class without my express permission.

• There is an understanding that students will not use any of the skills you acquire in this course to directly or indirectly violate the law.

Acceptable Student Behavior

Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’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 instructor 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.

- Habitually arriving late to class, text messaging, sleeping, or working on material for another class makes you look unconcerned and disrespectful.

**Academic Integrity (A-9.1)**

Academic integrity is the 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 the 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).

**In cases where there exists a violation of academic integrity (whether intentional or unintentional), I reserve the right to fail a student for part of or the entire assignment in question or the entire course.**

**Withheld Grades Policy (A-54)**

The following is taken from SFASU’s Policy Manual (2012), “Semester Grades Policy” (A-54). 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.

**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), Human Services Building 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. 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/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).
Mental Health Resources

SFASU values students’ mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. SFA provides a variety of resources to support students mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

On-campus Resources:
SFASU Counseling Services
www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices
3rd Floor Rusk Building
936-468-2401

SFASU Human Services Counseling Clinic
www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp
Human Services Room 202
936-468-1041

Crisis Resources:
Burke 24-hour crisis line 1(800) 392-8343
Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1(800) 273-TALK (8255)
Crisis Text Line:  Text HELLO to 741-741

Tentative Course Outline

This course is an introduction to Linguistics—the scientific study of language. We will spend approximately 1/5 (3 weeks) of the semester examining each of the following core areas of Linguistics: Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, and Semantics/Pragmatics. Throughout, we will make extensive use of examples from other languages and we will also examine areas of Applied Linguistics (e.g., First and Second Language Acquisition, Language and Culture, Sociolinguistics, Forensic Linguistics).

Authorship Assignment due: Thursday, September 16
Discourse Analysis and Transcription Assignment due: Thursday, October 7
Veracity Assignment due: Thursday, October 28
Forensic Semantics Assignment due: Thursday, December 2

End-of-Semester Procedures

For final course grades, an 89.9 is a B and a 79.9 is a C and so on. Students should not expect or request that grades be rounded up. All grades are final and students should not email asking to redo an assignment, do corrections, do extra credit etc. I do not take into special consideration loss of scholarships, financial aid, financial assistance from parents, program admission requirements, probation, suspension, athletic requirements etc. Final assignment and course grades will be posted on D2L and uploaded to mySFA during finals week.
“JackText grade notification is available to students who sign up for it. This service sends a text to the student each time a grade is posted to their account. This should eliminate some of their anxiety when awaiting grades posting, as they will be notified the moment the grade is rolled into their academic history. Instructions for signing up for JackText can be accessed at 
http://www.sfasu.edu/5418.asp.”