Course Overview
Welcome to our course! The goal of this class is to introduce you—our class participants—to the necessary analytical tools and techniques to study language. Everybody speaks a language, and everybody has ideas about the nature of language. Many common ideas about language are not shared, however, by linguists, who study language from a scientific perspective. In this course we will look at some common misconceptions about languages (the “myths”), and contrast them with the basic ideas and hypotheses (the “concepts”) that linguists work with. We will also explore how these myths affect the lives of people all over the world (e.g. linguistic minorities such as Nahuatl speakers in Mexico and Guatemala).

The study of these myths and concepts is the content part of this course and we will aim to reflect on language as an object and appreciate its complexity. We will also attempt to describe this complexity in our goal to account for and dispel common language myths about language differences. Lastly, we will explore ways in which these language myths can affect issues like educational and language policies.

Recommended course preparation: SPAN 211 or any other third semester language course.

Course Description
This course will examine common language myths and linguistic concepts to evaluate them critically and examine how language myths can negative affect the lives groups such as linguistic minorities

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)
Primary outcome: to gain the knowledge and expertise that is necessary to account for common language myths. Students will be able to:
Analyze the similarities and differences between languages and language learning contexts in a systematic manner;

- Critically evaluate common language ideas and myths;
- Analyze various fundamental concepts about language via written essays and oral presentations;
- Articulate the way in which language myths influence the lives of groups of people (e.g. linguistic minorities);
- Integrate information related to linguistic myths and contemporary issues such as linguistic discrimination and linguistic profiling.

**CO10**

“Students will demonstrate an understanding of diversity through courses that focus on topics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, physical ability, language, and/or social class with an emphasis on the analysis of equity. Students will apply and evaluate approaches or modes of inquiry used to analyze diversity and equity and the social barriers to these goals.”

In this course, we will seek to investigate how language can constitute a central player in establishing social identities and, moreover, how it can lead to social conflict, especially when related to questions of race and gender. Students will demonstrate an understanding of diversity through the course material which focuses on the study of language, examining the differences and similarities among languages and dialects with an emphasis on the analysis of equity. We will discuss how bi- and multilingualism, language variation, linguistic diversity can be used to construct individual and social identities and boundaries between social groups. Class participants will also discuss issues related to linguistic profiling and linguistic discrimination in public and private contexts.

In this class, we will also analyze sociolinguistic conditions that have been used to create spurious divisions between social groups based on language, language variety, race, and ethnicity. In particular, we will explore how language myths affect the lives of people all over the world (e.g. linguistic minorities such as Nahuatl speakers in Mexico and Guatemala or African Americans in the U.S.). Students will apply and evaluate approaches or modes of inquiry used to analyze linguistic diversity and barriers to achieve equity. Finally, we will explore the so-called universal language learning mechanisms in order to highlight the connections between how disparate languages and language varieties work.

The SLOs related to this Core objective will be assessed via written reactions, short essays, in-class assessments and reading entries based on our course readings.

**Course Materials**

The materials will consist of a course pack of language readings that will be available on Canvas. We will also read portions of the following textbook.

Purchasing the book is not required.

## Course Requirements

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Class activities will consist both of discussion of the topics and of practice in linguistic analysis. Class attendance and active participation is therefore very important, and class participation is expected. Discussing the material from different angles serves an important purpose in the understanding and retention of the material. I expect you to come prepared and ready to contribute!</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. In-Class Assessments</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>During our class, we will have two in-class assessments where class participants will have the opportunity to showcase knowledge of the course material as well as to apply said knowledge. The assessment will include material from chapters 1-6 of the textbook.</td>
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<td>3. Reflections</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>This component will consist of two 1-2 page reflections focusing on a prompt that we will discuss in class. The purpose of the assignment is multifold: a) to familiarize yourself with real-life media depictions of language phenomena, b) to prepare you for the evaluation of conflicting arguments (something you will develop more in the short essays), and c) to foster reflection regarding the possible ways to address both the potential limitations or the argument presented in the prompt. The rubric for this assignment can be found in Canvas.</td>
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| 4. Short Essays      | 25%    | We will have two short essay assignments. Each assignment will require you to review two sources (typically articles in social science magazines) that are directly relevant to tour class discussions to critically evaluate their arguments. Your essay should:  

- Explain the main purpose of the two sources;  
- Describe the authors’ particular viewpoint or ideological framework;  
- Briefly describe the contents, which might include summary of the details of the studies invoked in the articles  
- Note any special features as well as any weaknesses or problems;  
- Compare the contrasting arguments and provide your own views  

The rubric for this assignment can be found on Canvas. |
| 5. Reading cards     | 10%    | For each language reading: Buy a pack of 3.5 x 5” index cards. Each time a reading is scheduled to be discussed in class, write on a card (in ink) a one paragraph synopsis of the essential ideas of the reading. You will also make a copy of the summary for your reading notebook (see below). The index cards will be collected on a random basis at the start of class. That is, I will sometimes collect them, and sometimes not, from all the students present that day. Think of them as prepared pop quizzes on the readings. If you happen to be absent on a day that the cards are collected, you will receive a 0 (exactly as would happen if you were absent from class for a pop quiz). |
6. Reading notebook 15%

Reading notebook: This will be a notebook that you keep during the semester in which you write material related to the readings. At the end of each reading there is a list of essential concepts from linguistics and related sciences which appear in the reading, and a list of useful vocabulary. Accordingly, the reading notebook will have 2 sections: (1) a section in which you keep the one-paragraph synopses of each reading, (2) a section for linguistic concepts. For the concept section, from each reading you should select two concepts and record them in the notebook with a concise definition of each. You can consult definitions in dictionaries, but the definition you write should be in your own words. At periodic times (a schedule will be distributed in class, dividing the class into groups for this purpose) you will be asked to hand in your notebook for assessment, although the definite grade will be assigned based on the final version, to be turned in on Wednesday of the last week of class. The notebook entries, like all written work for the class, should be done by computer and should be kept in a binder or a report cover of the type that material can be added and taken out, as you revise. This is not a notebook of all of your materials from the class. (In other words, please do not turn in a binder that has everything you have done for the class, including assignments, notes from class, etc.)

7. Short presentation 10%

The class will be divided into groups of three, and each group will be assigned a topic to explore and on which to give an oral presentation (approximately 10 minutes) to the rest of the class. The oral presentations will be spread out over a period of several weeks starting in the 9th week of the semester. About three weeks before, I will give you more information and we will set up the groups. The grade will be based on a number of factors, including your attempt to interest the audience (the rest of the class) and your use of supplementary materials to aid in comprehension of the topic.

Grading Scale

Grades will not be assigned using a statistical curve, which means that your grade will be calculated using percentages. The percentages will be equivalent to the following letter grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64-66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59%</td>
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Submitting Assignments and Receiving Feedback

Unless otherwise noted, assignments should be submitted as MS Word documents (.docx) which will be shared with me through Canvas. You will also receive your individual assignments through this platform. Please save assignments using this system: Lastname_AssignmentName. I will make comments on your assignments. Once I do that, I will change the title so that you know it has been reviewed (I will add my initials (TL) to the file name). On occasion, I will also provide some editing assistance using the Track Changes function in MS Word. If you are unfamiliar with these functions, please read about them online, for instance here: http://www.wikihow.com/Edit-a-Document-Using-Microsoft-Word%27s-Track-Changes-Feature.

A NOTE ON WRITTEN WORK: All written work must be double-spaced with ample (one inch) margins so that I can add comments. Most submissions (unless noted) will be completed online, so make sure you have plenty of time in order to avoid computer trouble. In case there are any Internet issues, I will try to be flexible and accept written (i.e. printed) work—just make sure to check in with me before. I will only accept assignments through email in extreme situations—it is very difficult to keep track of these. Late work will be penalized 10% per day. After the third day, the work will receive zero points.

Attendance and Other Class Policies

1. Attendance: You are allowed three absences from class. At the fourth absence, your course grade will be lowered by one notch (for example, A- to B+), and every two absences after that will result in your course grade being lowered by an additional notch. The only exception to this policy is for absences due to representing the University in a University-sponsored activity, for which the appropriate documentation will be required. You should consider these three allowable absences as potential sick leave and use them accordingly. I do not want documentation for these absences. Unusual circumstances such as serious illness or family emergencies will be taken into account. If you habitually arrive late, this will also affect your attendance grade. You are expected to stay in class during the entire 50 minutes; do not leave in the middle of class and then return.

2. On class readings: Please use the study guide and follow it carefully. It is essential that you read before the class (and, for the most part, you should have read this material even before the summer starts).

3. Technology: The use of computers (laptops, tablets, etc.) in class is strictly forbidden. This includes note-taking, without exception. If you routinely take notes on the computer, this might take some adjustment, but I hope I can convince you that, in the end, taking notes by hand is actually better for your comprehension and retention of the material. I can make this research available to you if you'd like!

Late Work Policy

All work is due by the means I have specified in the assignment description and in the schedule (see Canvas for updated versions); submission by any other means is unacceptable. This means that, if I have specified that you must submit a hard copy, and you cannot physically make it to campus on the due date, you must turn the hard copy in early or send it with a friend or classmate. For the most part, I will require online submissions so please plan ahead in terms of technology issues. Canvas will help you remind you of these assignments—we will prepare for real-world teaching: deadlines (for grants, for grades, for applications, etc.) matter.
I generally do not accept late work, with some exceptions made for extenuating circumstances. **Communication is the key here.** If you know you have to miss class for any reason, I need to be apprised of that in advance. Contact me via my UNR email or see me before or after class or during office hours. Barring very special circumstances, late work will be subjected to penalties—if it is not turned in by the designated due date, you will be penalized 10% per day. After three days, the assignment will not be accepted. **Again, please communicate early if you have any issues.**

**Changes to Syllabus and Class Schedule**
Both this syllabus and the class schedule are tentative and subject to changes at my discretion. I will notify you of any changes such as class cancellations, room changes, and revised due dates or reading assignments. Canvas will always be our guide for due dates.

**E-Mail**
Check your email address every day. Contact me via my unr.edu address only. Any email sent to another email address will be treated as if it doesn’t exist. Please indicate to me your course in the SUBJECT line of the email. This means that every single email you send me needs to have the subject header: “SPAN 340: (Insert Reason for Emailing).” Every email should also contain your full name somewhere in the body. Every email should start with either *Dear Profe* or *Estimada Profe* just as a matter of good practice.
I have a 24-hour rule when it comes to answering email, meaning that if you send me an email and do not hear back within 24 hours, you may send another email. On the weekends, this is a 48-hour rule. What this means is that the frenzied email you send me at 11 PM the night before an assignment is due at midnight will not be answered in time.

**Academic Conduct**
We will define “academic misconduct” as any activity which compromises the academic integrity of the institution and undermine the educational process. This includes cheating (the use of unauthorized materials, assistance, etc. during exams), plagiarism (presenting ideas and statements of another person as one's own), and facilitating academic misconduct (helping another student do any of the above). With this in mind consider the following: all assignments for this course should be your own work. (and only your own work!) Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling a student's enrollment without a grade, giving an F for the course or for the assignment.

**University Policies**
**On Disability Services:** "Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with the Disability Resource Center (Pennington Student Achievement Center, Suite 203) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations."

**On Audio and Video Recording:** "Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded."

**On Academic Success Services:** "Your student fees cover usage of the Math Center (775) 784-4422, Tutoring Center (775) 784-6801, and University Writing Center (775) 784-6030. These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student."

**On Online Course Evaluations:** "Your chance to evaluate this course will appear two weeks before the last day of classes in the form of a new course on your Canvas home page. This new course contains only the evaluation survey. These online course evaluations are extremely important to your instructor and to the Department of WLL, so please take a few minutes to complete your course evaluation when it becomes available. The evaluation is completely anonymous and your comments can never be connected with your name. Instructors cannot see the evaluation course on Canvas and will not have access to the contents of these evaluations until after final grades have been posted."