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MB 610 Learning a Language and Culture

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MB 610 / 710: Learning a Language and Culture
Course Syllabus – Spring 2005

Tuesdays and Thursdays: 8:00 – 9:15

Instructor: Dr Dale F Walker

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SPO: # 899

Course Description:

(From the ATS Catalog): "The developed generic methods of applied linguistics which equip the cross-cultural worker with methods of acquiring a field language with maximum efficiency."

This course is a follow-up to MB 600/700: Anthropology for Christian Mission, and a bridge to MB 720: Cross-Cultural Communication of Christianity. We will be concerned with several aspects of cross-cultural living and learning, in order to facilitate communication in our various ministries.

The course has several facets, each of which could be expanded into at least a full semester's course. Being put together here, they will serve as introductions to areas of life-long interest, learning, and possible research. These facets are:

An introduction to language and linguistics, as the scientific study of language;

An introduction to field methods in cultural anthropology and linguistics;

An introduction to learning strategies in language study.

Books and Materials:

Required books for the course:

Abbott, Edwin A. (1884; 1979) *Flatland: A romance of many dimensions*. NY; Dover.

Agar, Michael (1994) *Language Shock: Understanding the Culture of Conversation*. NY: Quill.

Brewster, E Thomas, and Brewster, Elizabeth S (1976) *Language Learning Made Practical*. Pasadena: Lingua House

(This book plus cassette is available from the instructor for \$21.00)

Marshall, Terry (1989) *The Whole World Guide to Language Learning*. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.

Nida, Eugene A. (1960; 1990) *Message and Mission: The communication of the Christian Faith*. Pasadena: Wm Carey.

Sandoz, Mari (1953; 1992) *Cheyenne Autumn*. Lincoln: Univ of Nebraska Press.

Recommended:

Larson, Donald A. (1998) *The Story of Sam the Sojourner: Living and learning well where you don't belong*. Fresno: Link Care Center.

(1999), *The Story of Olaf: Learning a language again – First steps in barefoot learning*. Fresno: Link Care Center.

(These books are available from the instructor for \$20.00 per set)
Lingua Links Library (on CD-ROM). (2000). Dallas: SIL International.
(This CD-ROM is available on several computers in the Fisher Library. It is also recommended for home use, and for your future use too).

Required Writing Assignments:

1. An interaction paper with *Cheyenne Autumn*:

This book is an incredible account of a desperate attempt by an oppressed people to keep their way of life in the face of the massive opposition of the encroaching culture. The account is full of ethnographic information about the Cheyenne culture. But it isn't given in a systematic way; you have to dig it out. For this assignment, follow these steps:

a. Review the lists of "ethnographic questions" given in the last part of Jacob A. Loewen's "Missionaries and Anthropologist Cooperate in Research" (One of the MB 600/700 readings; also reprinted in Smalley, *Readings in Missionary Anthropology, II*). These are starting pointers to the things to look for in investigating another culture.

b. Read *Cheyenne Autumn*. While reading it for the 'story,' take note of all the ethnographic information given. You could mark in the margin the places where you find this information; use different symbols to refer to various aspects of the culture. For example, mark anything about marriage and family structure with F; material about tribal leadership with L; information about religion with R; about healing with H; about the ways of carrying on warfare with W; information about material culture with M.

c. After you read the book, choose one of these areas, or perhaps a sub-division of the area. Collect all of the information given, and present it in a connected way. Think about what you have not been given in the book, and some further questions you would want to ask a Cheyenne about. You might speculate as to what directions further research in this area might turn. Write up your presentation in about 5-6 pages. The report is due on Thurs, March 3.

2. An interaction paper with *Flatland*:

This book is a short classic which everyone should read. You may find it rough going, but persevere; you will remember this story longer than almost any other book you read during your seminary days! The theme is very simply the impossibility of "cross-cultural" communication! Yet we believe that this *can* be carried out, and it can be done successfully. We are called to do just this.

Write a short interaction response with this book, discussing the impossibility, along with what God has done, and something of what you have experienced in attempts at cross-cultural communication. The paper should be 4-5 pages, and is due Thurs, March 17.

3. An interaction paper with *Message and Mission*:

You have read Nida's *Customs and Cultures*. This book is also a classic, and it should be known by anyone concerned with the worldwide communication of the faith. In this book, Nida is concerned with the aspects of culture that we are most concerned with in this course: language and communication. You have been "involved" with a very different culture, the Cheyenne; you have wrestled with a parable of the communication

problem, in *Flatland*; you are in the midst of assessing your own attitudes to another language and culture (Marshall, and other readings). What insights does Nida give to all of this? How does this apply to your own life and ministry? Write about this in a creative way, about 6-7 pages. This paper is due Thurs, April 7.

4. An Interaction Paper with *Language Shock*.

How do your own cross-cultural experiences match up with what Agar describes in this book? Write about some of these, using Agar's framework for description. The paper should be about 6-7 pages, and is due Tuesday, May 10.

5. Language and Culture research: (For MB 710 students)

Delve into one of the classic problems of the Language and Culture field (the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, Emic-Etic Theory, Language and Gender, Sociolinguistic variation, Language change, Bilingualism, Universals of Language/Culture, etc). The topic should be chosen by the end of March, in consultation with Dr. Walker. Read some of the discussions about your topic, and try to apply the discussions to a language you know.

Write a paper (10-12 pages) which introduces the topic, presents the main currents of thought, the relevance of the problems involved, and some directions for the future, along with your application to a particular language. The paper is due Thursday, May 5.

5. Reports on your language work through the semester:

An essential part of this course is practical experience with a language which is new to you. You will be working with an informant outside of class time, using techniques we are learning during class. The goal for informant work is an hour per week, for 10 weeks. You will find out as much as you can about this language (sounds, forms) and do some of the beginning language-learning tasks.

After each informant session, write up what you have learned (i.e. a language-learning diary), and give a copy of this to the instructor, for comment and further direction. These will be returned to you in time for you to plan your following informant session.

Daily Assignments:

Language problems will often be given during the course. Some of these will be worked on together in class; others will be studied outside of class, either individually or in groups. Auditors are expected to participate in these problems, including the ones worked on outside of class.

Course Evaluation: (MB 610)

Your grade for the course will be based on the following:

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|---|-----|
| Each of four short papers | 15% |
| Language and Culture paper | |
| Weekly language learning diary | 20% |
| Class participation and daily assignments | 20% |

Class Schedule:

| | | | |
|----------------|----|-------------------------|---|
| February | 8 | Introduction; Phonetics | LAMP, 247-312; Marshall, ch. 1 |
| | 10 | Phonetics | |
| February | 15 | Phonetics | |
| | 17 | Phonetics | Marshall, ch. 2 |
| February | 22 | Phonology | |
| | 24 | Phonology | |
| March | 1 | Morphology | LAMP, 9-102; Marshall, ch. 3 |
| | 3 | Morphology | <i>Cheyenne Autumn</i> paper due |
| March | 8 | Morphology | |
| | 10 | Morphology | |
| March | 15 | Syntax | LAMP, 313-67; Marshall, ch. 5 |
| | 17 | Syntax | <i>Flatland</i> paper due. |
| (Reading week) | | | Marshall, ch. 6-7 |
| March | 29 | Syntax | |
| | 31 | Syntax | |
| April | 5 | Semantics | |
| | 7 | Semantics | <i>Message and Mission</i> paper due. |
| April | 12 | Language in Society | |
| | 14 | Language in Society | |
| April | 19 | Child language | |
| | 21 | Child language | |
| April | 26 | Other language topics | |
| | 28 | Other language topics | |
| May | 3 | Language and Culture | |
| | 5 | Language and Culture | Language and Culture paper (MB 710) |
| May | 10 | Language and Culture | <i>Language Shock</i> paper due. |
| | 12 | Language and Culture | Final language report due. No Final Exam. |