STANFORD UNIVERSITY
LINGUISTICS 143: SIGN LANGUAGES

Kathryn Flack Potts
Spring 2011

Class  Monday, Wednesday  11:00 – 12:15
       Building 110, room 114

Instructor  Kathryn Flack Potts
           Email:  kfotts@stanford.edu
           Office:  Building 460, room 118
           Office hours:  By appointment (I’m available most of Mondays and Wednesdays)
           Appointment sign-up:  http://www.jifflenow.com/grp/Kathryn_Flack_Potts

Course website  http://www.stanford.edu/~kfotts/s11-linguist143.html

Things you'll find on the website:
• A summary of each day’s class (check here first, if you miss class)
• In-class activities and materials
• Homework assignments (assignments are all listed on the days that they're due)
• Reading assignments  (and PDFs, for readings not in the textbook)
• Paper information, grading rubrics, and due dates


Description  The linguistic structure of sign languages. How sign languages from around the
              world differ, and what properties they share. Accents and dialects in sign languages.
              How sign languages are similar to and different from spoken languages. How and
              why sign languages have emerged.
GRADING CRITERIA

23% reading responses and other short assignments

You’ll typically be asked for at least one short written assignment per week. These may be open-ended reading reactions, or may ask you to reflect on a particular question.

EXTRA CREDIT: Turning in a thoughtful, 2-3 paragraph response to an optional reading assignment will add 0.5% to your final class grade. These optional responses are due at class time on the day that the optional reading is assigned. Selections from Language Files are generally hard to discuss in depth; these are usually not good choices for thoughtful responses.

40% short papers: 4 × 10% each

For each of 4 short papers (roughly 3 pages each), you will be asked to select an article on any aspect of signed languages that interests you from the linguistic literature; you will present a clear, well-organized discussion and critique of your article’s central argument.

The following topics should each be addressed in one (or more) of your short papers; the order and combination in which you address these topics is up to you.

- At least one paper focusing on linguistic structure (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics…)
- At least one paper focusing on language in society (education, social context, variation, dialects, gender…)
- At least one paper on a (natural) signed language other than ASL

You should have at least one paper focusing primarily on ‘linguistic structure’ and at least one on ‘language in society’ (rather than always blending both types of topics), to allow for deeper engagement with these topics. A paper on either of these topics, or a different paper entirely, may address a non-ASL signed language.

Your fourth short paper will also serve as your final paper proposal. You are encouraged to explore topics of potential interest for your paper in earlier short papers as well.

7% class presentation

Each student will lead a 15-20 minute class discussion about an article that you chose for one of your short papers. Each presenter needs to meet with me at least 2 days before your presentation to discuss your plans. Your presentation should give an overview of key ideas from the article and include open-ended questions to stimulate discussion. Your article will be provided as an optional reading.

25% final paper

This will be on a topic of your choice; this can be anything you like as long as you discuss some aspect of the linguistics of (one or more) signed languages. Topics could include description of a particular complex grammatical phenomenon, comparison of some aspect of linguistic structure across multiple signed languages, acquisition or processing of signed languages, linguistic aspects of education or language policy, or anything else. This final paper may relate to any or all of your first three short papers, or it may be on a new topic.

5% class participation and engagement

This class will be largely discussion-based; everyone should make an effort to participate in ways that enhance your own educational experience and that of others. Attend regularly, arrive promptly, be attentive to and respectful of others, prepare for discussions via thoughtful reading, share your own perspectives with the group, and help ensure that everyone feels comfortable participating.
OTHER COURSE POLICIES

Assignments

It is your responsibility to be aware of when assignments are due.

All assignments will be posted on the course website by no later than 6:00 PM on the previous class day, as well as being announced in class. If you aren’t sure whether there’s an assignment due, check: if it’s 6:30 on Monday night, all of Wednesday’s assignments will be posted; if nothing is posted by then, nothing is due.

Like you, assignments are expected to appear promptly at the beginning of class (11:00) on the day they are due. I’m happy to accept assignments by e-mail (PDFs strongly preferred) or turned in to my mailbox in the linguistics department office (460-127), as long as they arrive no later than the start of class.

If dire circumstances will keep you from completing an assignment on time, you must make alternate arrangements before the assignment is due. Unexcused late work will not be accepted.

On written work

Unless I say otherwise (as for papers), I don’t care whether written work is typed or handwritten. However, all work should be easy to understand. This means it must be:

...legible. If you have messy handwriting, you should make a serious effort to write clearly, or consider typing. If your printer is running out of ink and prints only in yellow and pink stripes, please find another printer. If I can’t comfortably read your work, it won’t receive a grade.

...correctly spelled and punctuated. Linguists don’t care about spelling; however, readers do.

...clearly organized. When you’re explaining complex data or making an intricate argument, it takes a fair amount of thought to make sure you express your ideas clearly. Think about what points you want to make, and how you want to explain them, before you start writing.

Academic honesty

You are expected to be familiar with, and to uphold, Stanford’s honor code (http://www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/guiding/honorcode.htm). Any student whose behavior in this course is found to be in violation of the honor code will not receive credit for the course; penalties for violation can also go beyond the bounds of this course (e.g. suspension, or even expulsion). Please feel free to ask, in class or in private, if you have any questions about how the honor code relates to this course.

Students with documented disabilities

Students who may need an academic accomodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). SDRC staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accomodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the SDRC as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066). Students are also encouraged to meet with faculty in private to discuss specific needs and/or to make arrangements for accomodations.
SCHEDULE

NOTES: Assignments listed here are subject to change. It is your responsibility to be aware of when assignments are due; the course website will always show an up-to-date list of deadlines.

Reading details follow.

Readings may be required or optional (OPT). Optional readings may give additional background, or may expand on the main ideas of the required readings.

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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
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<td>W 3/30</td>
<td>History, structure of arguments that sign languages are ‘real’ languages</td>
<td>Info sheet Reading response</td>
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<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
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<td>M 4/4</td>
<td>Phonological features: handshape, movement, etc. Features vs. segments vs. morphemes</td>
<td>Reading response</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 4/6</td>
<td>Phonological features, processes, structures</td>
<td>Short paper 1 Presentation: Mayberry (1993)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 3</strong></td>
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<td>M 4/11</td>
<td>Iconicity vs. transparency, across sign languages</td>
<td>Reading response</td>
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<td>W 4/13</td>
<td>Syllables in speech and sign</td>
<td>Presentation: Zhao et al.</td>
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<td>M 4/25</td>
<td>Word formation: borrowings, numeral incorporation, lexicalized fingerspelling</td>
<td>Reading reaction</td>
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<td>W 4/27</td>
<td>Classifiers: Typology, iconicity, origins</td>
<td>Reading reaction Presentation: Emmorey (2002) ch. 8</td>
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<td><strong>Week 6</strong></td>
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<td>M 5/2</td>
<td>No class</td>
<td>LASL: Emmorey (1999), esp. §5.1.5-5.3 OPT: Emmorey (2002) ch. 8: <em>The impact of sign language use on visuospatial cognition</em></td>
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### Week 8

**M 5/16**
- **Homesign systems**
- Reading reaction

**W 5/18**
- **Sign language emergence:**
  - Grammatical consequences of different social contexts
- **Short paper 4** (aka final paper proposal)
  - Presentation:
    - Klima & Bellugi (1979), ch. 14

**OPT:**
- **Goldin-Meadow (2003):**
  - ch. 8 *(Words)* or ch. 9 *(The parts of words)*
  - ch. 12 *(Building a system)*
- **OPT:** ch. 6 *(Background on deafness and language-learning)*; ch. 7 *(How do we begin?)*

**M 5/23**
- **Where do sign language come from?**
- **Morphological properties as a consequence of language age?**

**W 5/25**
- **Historical change in ASL**

**OPT:**
- **Aronoff et al. (2005)**

### Week 9

**M 5/30**
- **No class – Memorial Day**

**W 6/1**
- **Wrap-up**
- **What have we learned from sign languages?**

### Week 10

**F 6/3**
- Final paper due by 11:30 AM

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**READINGS**


Includes, as supplemental readings:


Other readings:


