

# LINGUISTICS 597: Language Endangerment & Language Death

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**Class Meetings:** Monday & Wednesday 11.30 – 1.18, in 201 Enarson Hall.

**Office Hours:** Monday (206 Oxley) 9.00 - 10.00 (AM)  
Wednesday (395 Cunz) 10.00 – 11.00 (AM)  
or by appointment

**Course Description and Goals:** Of the 6,000 or so languages in the world today, more than half are seriously in danger of losing all their speakers and dying out altogether. The chief goal of this course is to study the phenomenon of *language endangerment* — and by the same token, *dialect endangerment* — from a number of perspectives, considering such questions as:

- what are the social, economic, and political factors causing language/dialect endangerment?
- how does minority status for a language/dialect affect its speakers?
- what effects can endangerment have on the structure of a language/dialect?
- are there meaningful parallels to be drawn between language/dialect endangerment and the endangerment of biological species? Between linguistic diversity and bio-diversity?
- is language/dialect endangerment a new phenomenon or has it been going on for millennia?
- can language/dialect endangerment and death be reversed? Are revitalization efforts possible? Are they successful?
- what can be done to document languages/dialects that are threatened with extinction?

A secondary course goal is to expose students to the principles and methods of linguistics relevant to the study of language endangerment (e.g., the embedding of language in society, the interaction between language and culture, the relation of speakers to their language, how languages are structured, how languages change, etc.)

A tertiary course goal is to develop students' critical thinking and argumentation skills.

**A Few Words on Expectations:** Here is what I expect out of you, as members of this class — I expect that you will attend class regularly, stay for the whole class each time, listen attentively while you are here, show through your behavior that you respect the fact that others in the class are here to learn, put effort into your work for the class, and be honorable and truthful in your presentation of your work; please see the statement in the next section of the syllabus for more on this matter and see me if you have any questions. For my part, as instructor (and so also for the GTA), I promise to listen to and respond to your questions and comments, address issues that come up with regard to class assignments, provide you with interesting material to work on, return papers promptly to you, and generally do what is necessary so that you can achieve the objectives set out above for the class.

**Academic Misconduct:** To state the obvious, academic dishonesty is not allowed. Cheating on tests or on other assignments will be reported to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct. The most common form of misconduct is plagiarism (the representation of someone else's ideas or words as your own, without attribution). It is critical to recognize that any time you use the ideas or the materials

of another person or persons, you must acknowledge that you have done so in a citation. This includes material that you have found on the Web. The University provides guidelines for research on the Web at <http://gateway.lib.ohio-state.edu/tutor/>.

**Readings:** *Language Death*, by David Crystal (Cambridge University Press, 2002) [required]  
*Flutes of Fire*, by Leanne Hinton (Heyday Books, 1994) [required]

Plus: various articles, mostly from the journal *Language*, available in downloadable form via journals on-line through Main Library (for volumes 77-80) and via JSTOR ([www.jstor.com](http://www.jstor.com)) or to be provided by instructor (in electronic form if possible on class web-folder)

**Website for Class Materials:** Syllabus, written assignments, and some readings are posted and available electronically at [www.ling.ohio-state.edu/~bjoseph/Ling311](http://www.ling.ohio-state.edu/~bjoseph/Ling311) (dates of availability to be announced)

### Course Requirements (and percentage towards final grade):

1. Keeping up with assigned readings..... 0% (but crucial to the successful completion of other requirements)
2. Regular class attendance..... 0% (but crucial to the successful completion of other requirements, as material covered in class is not necessarily covered in the readings yet is critical to understanding concepts)
3. Adopt-a-language project (in-class presentation and write-up; details forthcoming; work in small groups (up to three students) will be permitted with approval) ... 30% (see below re homework policy)
4. Mini Written Assignments (details forthcoming):
  - a. Questions re 1<sup>st</sup> Movie..... 5%
  - b. Questions re 2<sup>nd</sup> Movie..... 5%
  - c. Field Experience Simulation report ..... 10%
  - d. Report on attendance at relevant outside events (approved list to be made available, covering lectures, panels, etc. on campus this quarter)..... 10%
5. Preparation for and Participation in Class Debate (details to be given later)..... 30%
6. Final exam (take-home essay) ..... 10%

I reserve the right to alter the number of assignments – and thus the value of particular assignments – as the course progresses; however, I will **not** add assignments, but will only delete some (if at all).

### Grading Policies

1. WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS: these must all be written in English that is *clear enough to allow me to be sure you know what you are talking about*. Thus, you should write in *complete sentences* and *coherent paragraphs* and make sure your writing is free from mechanical errors. Papers are graded primarily on content, but matters of style, diction, organization, and grammar count towards the grade, especially where errors and/or lapses interfere with the clear presentation of your ideas. Papers unacceptable due solely to poor writing *may be rewritten* (the two versions being averaged to yield the ultimate grade).

Where possible, you should feel free to turn in preliminary drafts (well before the due date) so that I can make suggestions on your writing.

2. POINTS ASSIGNED: All assignments are given a number of points out of a total of 1000 that they are worth, commensurate with their percentage towards the final grade (thus a 5% assignment is worth 50 points, a 30% assignment is worth 300, and so on). The larger assignments have points assigned to subparts (e.g. the class presentation for the adopt-a-language assignment is worth 150 points and the written report on the assignment is worth 150). Each assignment is given with very specific guidelines spelled out regarding what needs to be done and how the accomplishment and execution of the requirements contributes to the grade for the assignment; points are assigned in each category of requirement and added up to give the total grade. The final grade is based on the total points earned, with point totals corresponding to letter grades as follows:

940 - 1000 = A	740 - 769 = C
900 - 939 = A-	700 - 739 = C-
870 - 899 = B+	670 - 699 = D+
840 - 869 = B	640 - 669 = D
800 - 839 = B-	600 - 639 = D-
770 - 799 = C+	0 - 599 = E.

3. LATE ASSIGNMENTS: Late assignments automatically lose credit, though turning in a paper late is preferable to not turning it in at all, as a missing paper receives a zero. Papers more than two weeks late will **not** be accepted, however. Collaboration with classmates on individual assignments is perfectly acceptable, as far as discussing strategies and concepts is concerned -- often two can learn more about an assignment by discussing it together. However, any work you turn in must ultimately be defensible as your own effort and yours alone. Any work suspected of not adhering to this ethical standard will be referred to appropriate University disciplinary committees. Those assignments that are designed for small groups (the debate especially but some groups are permissible for the adopt-a-language assignment) of course permit sharing of ideas and to the extent that the final product is a group effort, the grade will reflect the overall group success but also individual contributions to the product (e.g. the individual presentations during the debate).

**Students with Disabilities:** Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor to arrange an appointment as soon as possible to discuss the course format, to anticipate needs, and to explore potential accommodations. The Office of Disability Services will be called in for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies. Students who have not previously contacted the Office for Disability Services are encouraged to do so (614-292-3307; [www.ods.ohio-state.edu](http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu)).

**Topic Outline, Readings, and Assignments (see attached list of articles, referred to here by author)**

**WK 1: Class 1a:** Introduction and organization; Discussion of course goals, expectations, assignments, etc.; Some basic concepts on language endangerment; Introduction of basic linguistic concepts, starting with language and social identity via in-class showing of "Tarheel Talk" video

**Class 1b:** More on basic concepts; counting languages; language vs. dialect; the geography and demographics of language endangerment and language minorities

- Reading: Crystal, Preface; Ch. 1; Hale et al. article (Krauss)

- Project assignments (debate, adopt-a-language, outside event reporting) to be handed out and discussed ••

WK 2: **Class 2a:** Linguistic minority status – by what criteria?

- Reading: Hinton, Introduction, Ch. 1 (optional: 6)

**Class 2b:** Minorities in our midst – in-class showing of video "Sound and Fury: The Communication Wars of the Deaf"

- Reading: Gramley & Wilson article; Keiser article
- Questions for Mini Written Assignment #4a to be handed out prior to movie ••

WK 3: **Class 3a:** Perspectives on Linguistic diversity (what different languages can tell us)

- Reading: Crystal, Ch. 2; Hinton, Ch. 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13; Hale et al. article (Hale)
- Mini Written Assignment #4a DUE ••

**Class 3b:** Causes of language endangerment; bilingualism, language contact, language collision, language coexistence

- Reading: Crystal, Ch. 3; Hinton, Ch. 15, 16, 17

WK 4: **Class 4a:** More on causation – in-class showing of "Between two worlds" video

- Questions for Mini Written Assignment #4b above to be handed out prior to movie ••

**Class 4b:** Some case studies of language endangerment and revitalization: Mam

WK 5: **Class 5a:** More case studies of language endangerment: Arvanitika; Ocracoke

- Reading: Wolfram & Schilling-Estes article
- Mini Written Assignment #4b DUE ••

**Class 5b:** Language endangerment and language death through the ages

- Reading: Kahane & Kahane article

WK 6: **Class 6a:** "Adopt-a-Language" presentations to begin

**Class 6b:** More "Adopt-a-Language" presentations

WK 7: **Class 7a:** What is to be done – language revitalization efforts revisited

- Reading: Crystal, Ch. 5; Hinton Ch. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22; Hale et al. article (Watahomigie & Yamamoto; Jeanne); Ladefoged article; Dorian article

**Class 7b:** More on revitalization efforts: A Navajo case-study

**WK 8:** **Class 8a:** What is to be done – documentation and field work

- Reading: Bird & Simons article; Crystal, Ch. 4, Ch. 5
- Adopt-a-Language assignment write-up DUE ••
- Field work simulation experience mini-assignment #4c to be given out ••

**Class 8b:** Politics of language endangerment and linguistic minorities

- Reading: Crystal, Ch. 2 (again); Hinton, Ch. 18 (again); Kramer article; Hale et al. article (Craig; England)

**WK 9:** **Class 9a:** Birth of new languages: dialects and dialect split; pidgins and creoles; in-class preparation for debates

**Class 9b:** More In-class preparation for debates

- Mini Written Assignment #4c DUE ••
- Final Essay assignment to be given out ••

**WK 10:** **Class 10a:** Summation – what have we learned?

**Class 10b:** In-class debates

**EXAM WEEK:** Scheduled time for Final Exam:

- Outside event report (mini-written assignment #4d) due; Final Exam essay due ••

## DETAILS ON READING SELECTIONS:

### Required Books (chapters and length):

*Language Death*, by David Crystal (Cambridge University Press, 2002)

Preface	pp. vii - x	[4 pages]
Chapter 1	pp. 1 - 26	[26 pages]
Chapter 2	pp. 27 - 67	[41 pages]
Chapter 3	pp. 68 - 90	[23 pages]
Chapter 4	pp. 91 - 126	[36 pages]
Chapter 5	pp. 127 - 166	[40 pages]

*Flutes of Fire*, by Leanne Hinton (Heyday Books, 1994)

Introduction	pp. 13 - 19	[7 pages]
Chapter 1	pp. 20 - 33	[14 pages]
Chapter 4	pp. 48 - 59	[12 pages]
Chapter 5	pp. 60 - 69	[10 pages]
Chapter 7	pp. 86 - 93	[7 pages]
Chapter 9	pp. 100 - 105	[6 pages]
Chapter 10	pp. 112 - 121	[10 pages]
Chapter 12	pp. 133 - 137	[5 pages]
Chapter 13	pp. 138 - 143	[6 pages]
Chapter 15	pp. 156 - 163	[8 pages]
Chapter 16	pp. 164 - 171	[8 pages]
Chapter 17	pp. 172 - 179	[8 pages]
Chapter 18	pp. 181 - 187	[7 pages]
Chapter 19	pp. 190 - 209	[20 pages]
Chapter 20	pp. 210 - 219	[10 pages]
Chapter 21	pp. 220 - 233	[14 pages]
Chapter 22	pp. 234 - 247	[14 pages]

### Required Articles (author, title, length):

- Bird, Steven & Gary Simons. 2003. "Seven dimensions of portability for language documentation and description". *Language* 79.3.557-582. [26 pages]
- Dorian, Nancy. 1993. "A response to Ladefoged's other view of endangered languages". *Language* 69.575-579. [5 pages]
- Gramley, Chuck & Christine Wilson. 2003. "ASL in Central Ohio". To appear in *State Linguistic Profiles* (Ed. by B. Joseph, C. Preston, & D. Preston). Michigan State University Press (2005) [10 pages]
- Hale, Kenneth; Michael Krauss; Lucille Watahomigie & Akira Yamamoto; Colette Craig; La Verne Jeanne; Nora England. 1992. "Endangered languages". *Language* 68.1.1-42. [42 pages]
- Kahane, Henry & Renee Kahane. 1979. "Decline and survival of Western prestige languages". *Language* 55.1.183-198. [16 pages]
- Keiser, Steven H. 2003. "Pennsylvania German in Ohio". To appear in *State Linguistic Profiles* (Ed. by B. Joseph, C. Preston, & D. Preston). Michigan State University Press (2005) [30 pages]
- Kramer, Christine. 2004. "Minority Language Rights in Primary Education: A Century of Change in the Balkans". Manuscript of Fifth Annual Kenneth E. Naylor Memorial Lecture (May 2002); to

appear in Naylor Memorial Lecture Series, #5 (2004). [35 pages]

Ladefoged, Peter. 1992. Another view of endangered languages". *Language* 68.809-811. [3 pages]

Wolfram, Walt & Natalie Schilling-Estes. 1995. "Moribund dialects and the language endangerment canon: The case of the Ocracoke Brogue". *Language* 71.4.696-721. [26 pages]