

**LING 1100:
Language, Thought, and Reality: Creating the Science of Language**

Course Syllabus

Instructor: Zac Smith
Class: T/R 10:10–11:25am, 102 Morrill Hall
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Office Hours: TBA and by appt.

Course Description

What makes a science science? Is it the methodology used or the subject of study? We will consider these questions by exploring the development of linguistics as a science. We will have many questions to write about and discuss concerning science and linguistics as a science: Can the mind be a domain of scientific study? Is our conception of science biased by history or culture? In addition to readings from linguists such as Steven Pinker and Noam Chomsky, we will draw from historical and contemporary sources. We will look at the writings of Galileo and his contemporaries to learn what controversies beset the establishment of physics as a science; to examine current conceptions of science and language, we will turn to sources such as newspaper articles, magazines, and blogs.

Learning Outcomes/Rationale

Language is a natural phenomenon. In linguistics, we study language as a science. The goal of this class is to have you (the student) discuss what science is, and how and why we apply it to the study of language. More specifically, this class will improve and develop your skills as a writer by demonstrating that you can:

- recognize and discuss the organization, key components, and argumentation of written text
- develop a thesis
- recognize and make use of evidence, data, and citable work in supporting your thesis
- proofread and rewrite your own work, as well as revise and critique the work of others in a respectful way
- make use of appropriate style and mechanics for academic writing and elsewhere
- think critically about the scientific method and how we can apply it to human language

Tentative Course Outline

This calendar is subject to change! Please read everything when you're supposed to have read it. Essays and drafts are assigned and due on Tuesdays. Smaller homework assignments will be assigned. Reading and discussion questions will be due most days. Note that this is tentative, as class discussion and students' interests will affect how we proceed throughout the semester.

Date	Topic(s)	Essay Due
8/26	What is science? What's a thesis?	
9/2	What is language?	Essay 1
9/9	Language usage and style	Essay 2 draft
9/16	Descriptivism and Facts	Essay 2 final
9/23	Linguistic Subfields	Essay 3 proposal
9/30	Citation and Summary	Essay 3 draft
10/7	Presentations	Essay 3 final
10/14	Evolution and Language Change	
10/21	History of Linguistics	Essay 4 draft
10/28	Scientific Theory	Essay 4
11/4	Academic Debate	
11/11	Data and Argumentation	Essay 5
11/18	Being concise	Essay 6
11/25	Special topics, Fall break begins	
12/2	Special Topics	
12/9	No class	
12/16	Final week	Final essays due

Epilogue

Just because this is a required course doesn't mean it has to be boring! Due to the small class size and specialized subject matter, in-class participation will not only be key in meeting these goals and getting a good grade, but also in ensuring that your input can shape the progression of the class to suit your strengths, weaknesses, interests, and goals.