

Language Myths

LING 2475-70
Spring 2024
3.0 credit hours

Class time	TWTHFS 8:00-5:00
Class location	SANDY 107
Instructor	Aniko Csirmaz
Contact information	aniko.csirmaz@utah.edu or message on Canvas

1 Basic course information

- There are no prerequisites for the course
- The course fulfills the following General Education requirements: QB, BF

1.1 Course description

This course investigates popular beliefs about language and discusses empirical studies concerning those beliefs. Students will learn to evaluate social science experiments, interpret quantitative data, and understand basic statistical concepts like hypothesis testing and statistical significance.

1.2 Content overview

The course will provide an overview and discussion of some myths about language. We will consider studies, supporting evidence, and information from different sources to approach commonly held myths.

1.3 Course outcomes

At the end of the course, students will be able to ...

- discuss whether some popular myths about language are, in fact, true
- describe the current state of the art description about language in several areas, including grammatical structures, how children learn languages, whether animals can learn languages, and
- discuss some of the fundamental issues related to statistics and experimental design in linguistics and social sciences more broadly

2 Course requirements and evaluation

2.1 Requirements

Students are expected to attend the classes in person; participate in class activities and discussions; and complete assignments on time. You are also expected to have access to the textbook (see section 3.1) and the course Canvas site. Online access will be required on occasion during classes. Requirements include the following:

- Participate in class, including discussions
- Be respectful of others in the classroom as well as of authors and others involved in the works discussed
- Complete readings on time
- Complete quizzes
- Collect data and information as discussed
- Write responses, letters to the editor, or posts discussing issues addressed in class (or related questions)

Please see section 4 for the schedules of the assignments.

2.2 Assignment weights

The approximate weights of assignments are given below.

Assignment	Weight
In-class assignments	10 %
Participation	22 %
Collect, present data on language varieties	12 %
Present summary and discussion of animal language study	12 %
Collect data from CHILDES and present results	12 %
Collect and categorize textese examples	12 %
Paper on language and thought / perception	20 %
Total	100 %

2.3 Grade scale

Assignments will receive points. The final percentage of the maximum points will be converted to a letter grade as follows:

Percentage	Grade
100-90.0%	A
89.9-88.0	A-
87.9-86.0	B+
85.9-79.0	B
78.9-77.0	B-
76.9-75.0	C+
74.9-71.0	C
70.9-69.0	C-
68.9-67.0	D+
66.9-59.0	D
58.9-58.0	D-
57.9-	E

For more information on grading at the University of Utah, see [here](#).

3 References

3.1 Required reading

The textbook for this course is

- Kaplan, A. 2016. *Women Talk More than Men: ... And Other Myths about Language Explained*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

The book is available online from the library website. It is also available from [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and most other bookstores.

3.2 Other resources

Other resources will be provided on the Canvas course webpage, as files or links posted there.

4 Schedule

The schedule may be revised before class starts. Assignments will be due by the beginning of the following meeting.

Date		Topic	Assignment
January	2	Languages and dialects	Statistics; collect data on language varieties
	3	Animals and language	Presenting a summary and discussion of an animal language study
	4	Learning languages	Collect data from CHILDES, present results in class
	5	Gender and language; dangers of texting	Collect and categorize examples of textese
	6	Language and thought beautiful and logical languages	Summarize and comment on a paper discussing language and thought / perception (due January 31)
	31	Paper on language and thought / perception due	

5 Additional policies

5.1 Academic code of conduct

It is expected that students adhere to University of Utah policies regarding academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. This includes the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools without citation, documentation, or authorization. Students are expected to adhere to the prescribed professional and ethical standards of the profession/discipline for which they are preparing. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty or who violates the professional and ethical standards for their profession/discipline may be subject to academic sanctions as per the University of Utah's Student Code: <https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-410.php>.

5.2 Attendance policy

Students are expected to attend class sessions. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

‘The University expects regular attendance at all class meetings. Instructors must communicate any particular attendance requirements of the course to students in writing on or before the first class meeting. Students are responsible for acquainting themselves with and satisfying the entire range of academic objectives and requirements as defined by the instructor.’ PPM, Policy 6—100III—O)

6 Important statements

6.1 Safety statement

The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit <http://safeu.utah.edu>. SANDY POLICE 801-799-3000.

6.2 ADA statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act. The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability & Access, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581—5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability & Access.

6.3 Basic Needs Student Support Statement

Success at The University of Utah includes learning about and using available resources. The Basic Needs Collective (BNC) is a coordinated resource referral hub. They educate about and connect students to campus and community resources to help them meet their basic needs. As a central location for resource referrals related to food, housing, health insurance, managing finances, legal services, mental health, etc., any student experiencing difficulty with basic needs is encouraged to contact them. Drop into their office located in the Union basement or schedule with them online for an in-person or virtual visit through their webpage: <https://basicneeds.utah.edu/>. In compliance with ADA requirements, some students may need to record course content. Any recordings of course content are for personal use only, should not be shared, and should not be made publicly available. In addition, recordings should be destroyed at the conclusion of the course.

6.4 Sexual misconduct

Addressing Sexual Misconduct. Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which Includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran’s status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801—581—8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801—581—7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, SSB 328, 801—581—7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801—585—2677(COPS).

6.5 Student names and personal pronouns

Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name as well as "Preferred first name" (if previously entered by you in the Student Profile section of your CIS account, which managed can be managed at any time). While CIS refers to this as merely a preference, I will honor you by referring to you with the name and pronoun that feels best for you in class or on assignments. Please advise me of any name or pronoun changes so I can help create a learning environment in which you, your name, and your pronoun are respected. If you need any assistance or support, please reach out to the LGBT Resource Center: <https://lgbt.utah.edu/resources/index.php>.

6.6 Diversity and inclusivity statement

Our classrooms provide opportunities to embrace diversity and promote equity. As educators, we commit to engaging all students in higher education. This commitment requires that we are willing to listen, learn and change; that our classrooms challenge assumptions; and that all members of our community are responsible for creating and maintaining a safe space for learning and growth. Respectful debate and civil disagreement are encouraged and expected; mocking, belittling, and bullying will not be tolerated.

I stand in support of compassion, dignity, value-of-life, equity, inclusion and justice for all individuals regardless of color, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, language, socioeconomic status, ability, gender, gender identity or expression, immigration status, or any type of marginalization. I stand in support of making our society more inclusive, just, and equitable for all individuals. I stand against individual and systemic racism in all its various forms.

6.7 Wellness statement

Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross—cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness at <http://www.wellness.utah.edu> or 801—581—7776.

6.8 Veterans Center

If you are a student veteran, the U of Utah has a Veterans Support Center located in Room 161 in the Olpin Union Building. Hours: M—F 8—5pm. Please visit their website for more information about what support they offer, a list of ongoing events and links to outside resources: <http://veteranscenter.utah.edu/>. Please also let me know if you need any additional support in this class for any reason.

6.9 Learners of English as a second / additional language

If you are an English language learner, please be aware of several resources on campus that will support you with your language and writing development. These resources include: the Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.utah.edu/>); the Writing Program (<http://writing-program.utah.edu/>); the English Language Institute (<http://continue.utah.edu/eli/>). Please let me know if there is any additional support you would like to discuss for this class.

6.10 Undocumented student support

Undocumented Student Support. Immigration is a complex phenomenon with broad impact—those who are directly affected by it, as well as those who are indirectly affected by their relationships with family members, friends, and loved ones. If your immigration status presents obstacles to engaging in specific activities or fulfilling specific course criteria, confidential arrangements may be requested from the Dream Center. Arrangements with the Dream Center will not jeopardize your student status, your financial aid, or any other part of your residence. The Dream Center offers a wide range of resources to support undocumented students (with and without DACA) as well as students from mixed-status families. To learn more, please contact the Dream Center at 801.213.3697 or visit <https://dream.utah.edu>.

6.11 Non-contract note

Note: This syllabus is meant to serve as an outline and guide for our course. Please note that I may modify it with reasonable notice to you. I may also modify the Course Schedule to accommodate the needs of our class. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas under Announcements.