

Handbook for Teaching Assistants  
Linguistics 101  
Fall, 2008

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You will also receive a free hard copy of the course pack, which contains the syllabus, calendar, assignments, and lecture notes. The course pack is included on the CD in pdf and doc formats.

## **1. Guide to Course Policies for TAs (JJM)**

These guidelines cover many of the issues you're likely to encounter during the term. If anything is unclear or if some new problem arises, contact me.

### **1.1. My general philosophy about these policies**

My general philosophy is to have strict rules and enforce them leniently. Being lenient is often your job. I will always back you up if you're lenient with a student, even if you depart from policy. (I may ask you not to do it again, however.) I can't absolutely guarantee that I'll back you up if I think you've been too strict, however.

### **1.2. Homework assignments**

#### *1.2.1 Timeliness of submission*

Each homework assignment has a date-and-time deadline and a lock-out date exactly one week later. Students can submit assignments between the deadline and the lock-out date, but there are points-off penalties. It is within your power, without consulting me, to waive part or all of these penalties for any good reason, such as illness, break-up of a relationship with a high school bf/gf (common with freshmen), death in the family, computer problems, etc. You *must* waive the penalty if the student's excuse is based on a religious holiday or an official event (like an athletic event or the marching band). We don't usually require students to document their excuses in writing.

It is also my policy not to impose lateness penalties on students who have notified us of a learning disability.

After the lock-out date, late assignments cannot be submitted. Any student who wants an exception to this policy should email me.

#### *1.2.2 Timeliness of grading*

In the past, when homework assignments were submitted and returned in person, TAs had only one week to grade each assignment. The move to online submission and feedback will allow you to have about 10 days to grade most of the assignments. The first assignment is an exception; the students need feedback in a week because of the option to revise.

Here are the deadlines for the assignments and for you to complete the grading:

Homework	Due date (for students)	On-time submissions should be graded by	Late submissions should be graded by
#1	September 19, 5:00PM	Thursday, September 25, 5:00PM	Monday, September 29, 5:00PM
#1 revision	October 3, 5:00PM	Monday, October 13, 5:00PM	Tuesday, October 14, 5:00PM
#2	October 17, 5:00PM	Monday, October 27, 5:00PM	Tuesday, October 28, 5:00PM
#3	November 7, 5:00PM	Monday, November 17, 5:00PM	Tuesday, November 18, 5:00PM
#4	November 21, 5:00PM	Monday, December 1, 5:00PM	Tuesday, December 2, 5:00PM
#5	December 12, 5:00PM	Wednesday, December 24, 5:00PM	also Wednesday, December 24, 5:00PM

Recall that the cut-off date for late assignments is exactly one week after the due date. These deadlines give you less time to grade the late assignments, but presumably there will be a lot fewer of them.

The grade, grading form, and your comments become available to the student as soon as you click “Submit” on the grading form. Students can go online at any time and check in My Grades whether you’ve graded their assignment. The grading deadlines will also be disclosed to the students. This will avoid lots of emails asking “When are you going to grade my assignment?”

### *1.2.3 Academic honesty*

You will undoubtedly receive some essays that include plagiarism in the technical sense, such as direct quotations from the reading assignment that lack proper punctuation and/or citation. Obviously, there is no intent to deceive here — the student surely does not think you will not recognize prose lifted from the reading assignment — so we don’t treat this as a case of cheating. Instead, we deal with it on the grading form as bad writing mechanics and lack of originality. Even properly punctuated quotations are dealt with as lack of originality. Extreme excesses of quotation may leave very little identifiable work by the student, in which case most of the categories on the grading form will be marked down considerably. In short, treat this sort of “plagiarism” as a teaching opportunity rather than a cause for discipline.

If two students submit the same assignment, then that is true academic dishonesty. Bring the evidence to me and I’ll handle it. Don’t give a grade and don’t discuss it with the students involved; UMass has specific procedures that need to be followed.

## **1.3. Tests**

### *1.3.1 Procedures*

We’ll go over procedures in detail before the first test. You’ll need to bring some sharpened #2 pencils and a sharpener, since not all students will arrive with the necessary accoutrements.

### *1.3.2 Timing*

Tests should start right at the scheduled beginning time of the discussion section and run for 30 minutes. Give the students regular warnings of the passage of time, particularly if the room lacks a functioning clock. If any student seems to have a lot of difficulty completing the test in the allotted time, send them to me. I may be able to arrange for them to have extra time in the future.

Be gentle in ending the test if students are still working. Don't rip the papers from their hands. It's OK to let a few students continue working while you go ahead with the class, since you won't be talking about material on the test.

### *1.3.3 Test security*

Students are never allowed to take the tests with them. That's because the same test questions are used at all of the discussions, in the make-up test, and in later years. So collect the tests from the students at the same time that you collect the answer sheets.

### *1.3.4 Academic honesty*

Students should not have anything on their desks when they take a test except pencils, the test, and the answer sheet. No electronics allowed. Exception: students whose native language is not English are allowed to use a translation dictionary (paper or electronic). Students needing auditory isolation can wear their headphones with the device disconnected.

To make it hard for students to copy answers, there are three versions of the test on different colored paper. (They have the same questions, but in different orders.) Try not to have students with the same color test next to each other.

Stay alert and vigilant. Look at the students. Keep your gaze for a long time on any student who acts suspiciously.

In the extremely unlikely event that you have clear evidence of cheating, bring it to me. Don't confront the student(s) yourself.

## **1.4. Make-up tests**

This is explained in detail in the syllabus. Students might ask you for clarification of the policy, but any requests for exceptions have to go to me.

There are eight dates for make-up tests. One of you has to be in the Partee room at 8:30AM on every make-up date with copies of the test, answer sheets, and pencils. Work the schedule out among yourselves. Use the same color test for all of them, even if this increases the risk of copying. This makes the grading easier.

## **1.5. Questions and complaints about grades**

### *1.5.1 Tests*

Any student has the right to request that you go over the test with him/her. They don't get back the answer sheet or the test itself, but they can sit with you in your office and go over all the questions. Very few students will avail themselves of this privilege. (Fortunately. The answer sheets aren't sorted, so just finding a student's answer sheet requires digging through the stack of 330.)

If a student has a complaint about a specific test question, they should email it to me. In the past, I have occasionally tossed out a question or made some other modification to the grades in response to a student complaint.

### *1.5.2 Homework*

Any student has the right to request a review or explanation of their essay grade. Unless it's just a quick question, this discussion should take place in your office — not in a moment captured immediately before or after class. You and the student should go over the essay and the grading rubric together. In the course of this discussion, you might decide that a higher grade is appropriate. If so, don't hesitate to make the change (and be sure to change the grade in Spark). You also have the option of offering the student a chance to rewrite the essay. This is appropriate for a student who is sincerely trying to do better and seems to have learned something from meeting with you. You and the student should agree on a deadline for the rewrite, which will have to be submitted on paper rather than online. If the rewrite is an improvement, the new grade replaces the old one. (Again, be sure to make the change in Spark. It maintains an audit history, so you'll see the ^ symbol before the changed grade.)

### *1.5.3 Court of last resort*

Problems with grades that you can't resolve get bumped up to me. The student should write out the details of their complaint and the specific relief they seek.

## **1.6. Classroom decorum**

Students are expected to participate in the class for the full 50 minutes. Tell students that, if they need to leave early on a particular day, they should speak to you at the beginning of class and explain why. On test days, some students may be inclined to leave after finishing the test. So, on test days, tell them before the test what important and interesting stuff you'll be doing after the test, and remind them of the policy and the role of class participation in their final grade.

Be alert to incivility between students. Students shouldn't laugh at, disparage, or insult other students. Students should take turns talking. Discourage interruptions, particularly men interrupting women. If you need to introduce a raise-your-hand-to-talk policy, do so. Try not to let one or two students dominate.

Of course, you may find that getting *any* students to talk is the hardest part. That's one reason why we've introduced a significant class participation component of the final grade.

### 1.7. Class participation

You need to track student participation in discussions. We'll be working out methods of doing that.

### 1.8. Emailing students

Spire will generate class email lists for you. Use them to make announcements. If you need to email a subset of your students about something, use the BCC field rather than the TO field for the addresses. This prevents them from seeing the other addressees of the message. That's important because of the federal privacy law FERPA, particularly if the message is "You're failing. Come see me!".

### 1.9. Students with Disabilities

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students with disabilities have a right to "reasonable accommodations" in their classes. At UMass, the Disability Services office decides what those accommodations are, and they inform us in writing of what we are required to do for each student. This comes to us as a form delivered by the student. The syllabus tells students to bring the form to me, but they often bring it to the TA, in which case it should be passed along to me.

These are some typical accommodations and how we deal with them:

*Extra time on tests and/or quiet place to take tests.* Students take the tests at Disability Services rather than in the discussion section. When there is a test on Friday, I email the test to D'Ann Kelty at Disability Services on Wednesday. Students make an appointment with her to take the test, untimed, at any time on Thursday and on Friday prior to 3:20PM. (NB: Test must be *finished* by 3:20PM.) D'Ann Kelty's office is close to where we drop off the scantron forms, so we pick them up from her on Friday afternoon after the last discussion. (Students who take tests at Disability Services should still go to the second half of their discussion section.)

*Extra time on homework assignments.* With these students, we waive the grade penalty for being one to seven days late. I'll enter a zero in the grade penalty column for these students as a reminder that you should not give them a penalty. (If you try to, Spark will warn you that you're trying to override a grade. You have the power to do that, but you shouldn't in this case.)

*Notes.* This doesn't always come up. If it does, I'll talk to the individual student about what he/she needs. The recorded lectures and print-outs of PowerPoint slides might be enough.

*Tutoring.* We're occasionally asked by Disability Services or the Athletic Department to recommend tutors. Tutors don't make sense with this course. A tutor can't help you come to class and study. A tutor can help you master a skill, but the only skills taught in this class are writing and critical thinking. The TAs and the University's Writing Center in the du Bois library

are likely to do a far better job imparting these skills than some student who took the course last year.

Each student has a choice of whether or not to use the accommodations recommended by Disability Services. Some students treat the accommodations as a back-up, in case the course turns out to be harder than they expected. (It never does.) When evaluating students' performance, you are legally required to ignore their choice in this matter as well as the fact that they have (or have not) received accommodations.

On the other hand, you may encounter students whose language disability or status as non-native speakers of English makes it impossible for them to write decent prose. If their writing were judged by the same criteria as everybody else, they would fail every homework assignment. I therefore want you to adopt the following procedure:

- (i) Grade homework #1 the same for everybody, but make note of which students seem to have one of these problems. Urge those students to work with you to improve their writing.
- (ii) If they do work with you, or if their writing improves through their efforts, then they should see better grades during the course of the semester. Progress needs to be rewarded, even if it means holding these students' writing to a more lenient standard than the rest of the class.

### **1.10. Matters not covered here**

Ask me. If a student comes to you with a question or request about policy that you can't answer, urge them to email me. I prefer to handle such things by email so I have a record of what the student and I said.

## **2. Organization (KP)**

### **2.1. Keeping organized**

Teaching requires the juggling of time, energy, and paper. Do not underestimate the difficulty of the paper-juggling part. Your duties will be a great deal easier than your predecessors in this regard because the homework essays are being submitted electronically. However, there will still be various times when students give you things you need to keep track of. An example is extra credit receipts (from participating in experiments). These miniscule pieces of paper are really easy to lose, and students will try to give them to you when you are busy doing eight other things. You should work out a system for being organized and keeping track of such things (e.g., put everything you receive a designated folder with secure edges). And if you are sure you'll lose something if the student gives it to you at that moment, tell them to wait.

### **2.2. Keeping track of student communication**

I find it a challenge to keep track of student communication when they catch me before or after class with a complaint/ concern/ request/ etc. I think I'll remember, and then occasionally the next week (or worse, the end of the semester), it turns out I've forgotten the encounter and whatever I've told them. The best advice is usually to just tell them to email you with their question. This way you have a written record of what they asked and what you told them. A lot of the time such queries will come in the form of email anyway, and though it's inherently easier to keep track of, it can be hard to deal with if you don't keep your email organized. Put all your 101 correspondence in a subfolder of your inbox so that you have it all in one place when you need to review it. (Don't bother with sub-subfolders or any other sorting system; the volume of email and the need to consult it later aren't sufficient to justify the extra effort.)

Sometimes whatever they ask before or after class seems easy enough to deal with in person at that moment, but keep in mind that students often treat what you say in these impromptu "meetings" as official, so you should keep track of them. I recommend writing down in the same place each time: who you talked to, what they asked, and what you told them. This doesn't have to be very formal, but it will save you the trouble and embarrassment of a student complaining that you took points off for a late assignment when you told them you wouldn't. ("But you said...!"). (This may also apply to office hours, by the way – it's probably a good idea to keep a brief written record of just about any in-person discussion you have with a student.)

If a student's request seems complicated or is a question about a grade, tell them to come to your office hours or set up an appointment at another time. Don't try to deal with complex requests or questions about grades in the moments before and after class, and don't waste your time writing long complicated email replies for something that could be cleared up in five minutes during your office hours.

### **2.3. Class email list**

SPIRE can automatically generate an email list with the (official) email addresses of the students on your roster. It's ultimately easy to do, but SPIRE makes figuring out how to do it harder than it has to be. Check out OIT's help guide to demystify the process:

[http://www.oit.umass.edu/spire/for\\_instructors/class\\_information/mailling\\_list.html](http://www.oit.umass.edu/spire/for_instructors/class_information/mailling_list.html).

You need to do this separately for each section, so you'll end up with three mailing lists.

## 2.4. Mobius class rosters

Mobius provides a downloadable text file of your roster to import into, e.g., Excel. You may not end up doing this since all your grades will be collected in the gradebook in SPARK, but you might want an Excel file for attendance or to have a list of their individual emails or some such. Mobius is a better option than trying to get this kind of thing out of SPIRE, but it's kind of clunky and has some non-obvious features, so you might want to check out OIT's guide:

<http://www.oit.umass.edu/mobius/guide/index.html>.

You can also do this from within Spark. Go to the grade book, and at the bottom click "Export to spreadsheet". From the options given, select "All members", "All columns", and "Comma-delimited format", then click the link at the bottom to proceed. Read the resulting .csv file into Excel or another spreadsheet. Sort by the Dis\_ID column, and delete the rows for the discussions other than yours. Also delete any columns you don't need.

Do not under any circumstances *upload* a spreadsheet to Spark without getting detailed instructions from John. There's a danger that you could wipe out grade data that could be impossible to reconstruct.

## 2.5. Learning students' names

You should make every effort to learn your students names. This can seem like a daunting task, but there are some things you can do to make it easier.

- Through SPIRE, instructors now have access to photo-rosters. You have to take a short quiz to demonstrate that you will be using this personal information ethically, but this is easy. You can then access each of your students' likenesses and study them in your spare time. (This may be more useful after you've seen them once or twice in person, but do whatever works for you.) The link to the security quiz and information about this tool are here: [http://www.oit.umass.edu/spire/for\\_instructors/class\\_information/photo\\_roster.html](http://www.oit.umass.edu/spire/for_instructors/class_information/photo_roster.html).
- I find an old-fashioned approach works very well too... You should be calling roll at least at the first few meetings, and you can try to use this as a chance to learn a few students' names at a time. Sometimes I write down one thing memorable about students that I don't know yet. I end up learning the names of the students with giant hair or funky glasses first, but you have to start somewhere. (I once wrote "BoSox cap" as someone's identifying feature, which turns out to be about the least helpful thing you could write.)
- If you're writing down descriptions of students, then calling the roll will be a bit time-consuming, but in the first class meeting or two you can probably spare this time. (Many freshmen will be late to the first discussion section meeting because of difficulty finding the classroom.) However, stick to one or two words for a student, and if nothing about a given student jumps out at you just move on and save them for the next round of name-learning. This should go without saying, but try not to be obvious that you're doing this, and *don't under any circumstances let anyone else, esp. other students, see what you've written.*

- Another thing I like to do is use groupwork time during the first few class meetings to learn names. You should walk from group to group during groupwork, and as you go around you can check your memory of students' names, and ask the ones you don't remember. (Since you have more time in this situation you can also fill in your list of distinguishing characteristics or write other notes that help you remember.)
- In the end, I have found that remembering names is easier than I thought it would be, but it did take a bit of work to be thorough. The trick is always the handful of students who never talk and don't particularly stand out to you. However, you should try to learn everyone's names within the first few weeks – it's better to have to ask a student what their name is during this time than halfway through the semester.

### 3. Teaching

#### 3.1. Tips for TAs (JJM)

1. Speak up. All of the students, even those in the back of the room, need to hear you very clearly. This also helps to keep their attention. You don't need to shout, but you all need to speak more loudly. Be confident -- you're in charge and they're generally predisposed to accept your authority in the classroom.

2. When a student asks a question or makes a comment, repeat it for the whole class. Students, particularly those in the front, tend to direct their speech to you, and they're inaudible to everyone else. You need to repeat the student's statement or question loudly. Also, when answering a question from a student in the front, keep your voice up. Avoid the tendency to engage in a quiet dialog.

3. Make transitions clear, and use them as an opportunity to gain or reclaim the students' attention. It is not easy to start class, but it is important to have a clear dividing line between the time when they don't need to pay attention to you and when they need to start paying attention to you. Speak up, announce the beginning, say what you're going to do.

- When you transition from one topic to the next, make the demarcation line clear. Have some bit of stage business for the transition -- erasing the board, writing a new topic on the board, etc.
- Getting their attention back after group activities is hard. Make them move their chairs back into normal position to signal that the group activity is over and normal classroom behavior has resumed.
- Be alert to drifting attention, people talking, newspaper-reading. Get their attention back by speaking up, asking for attention, or even flipping the lights off and on.

4. Don't discuss a handout until everybody has a copy. Check with the class: "Does everybody have a handout?"

5. With undergrads, don't bother putting anything on the handout unless you plan to go over it in some detail in class. Often, undergrads learn better from stuff written on the blackboard or an overhead slide. This allows you to point to things and explain them as you are pointing to them. You can even make an overhead of your handout (but use a bigger font for the overhead -- letters that are smaller than about 1/3 inch (1 cm.) won't make a big enough image when they are projected).

6. Use the blackboard or the overhead projector as well as your voice. You need to give them important stuff through multiple input channels.

7. Be a slave to the clock but not the agenda. They have very little time to get to the next class, and some of you need to go straight to your next section.

8. Try to get to the classroom early. If you're using AV equipment, make sure it's set up and operating correctly.

### 3.2. Handouts

You can find all of Wendell Kimper's handouts from 2007 in the Appendix.

#### 3.2.1 *Should you use handouts? (KP)*

Many TAs like having a handout for each discussion section, and I suspect this urge derives from the ubiquity of handouts in our field. Although you'll have to see for yourself whether you get along better with or without a handout, here are some things to keep in mind:

- A handout is not required; students probably don't get handouts in their other courses, and they certainly don't expect them for every class.
- Although linguists think of handouts as souvenirs from talks they've attended, students will not think of your handouts this way. In fact, they probably won't look at them ever again. For this reason, if you do make a handout, don't bother putting things on it that you don't plan to go over in class.
- A handout in front of a student can encourage passiveness. Without the handout, they may be more likely to be actively listening to what you say and to be writing things down for themselves. (For some students it won't matter... they don't even bring writing implements to class. But you can't reach everyone.)
- A handout can be time-consuming to construct. I find I spend a lot more time preparing for a discussion when making a handout, with only a negligible difference in the quality of that discussion section (surprising, but true). Instead of spending your time formatting a handout, consider using it instead to think of a useful group activity students could do that week, or a strategy for helping students improve their writing.

Situations which might warrant a handout:

- A handout can be really useful when you are planning to have students answer questions, e.g., in groupwork. And I have used handouts for beginning-of-class "quizzes" where students take five minutes to see if they can answer a few questions that test their retention of important concepts from lecture or a reading, for example. (I still call it a handout because the students keep it for themselves rather than turning it in. We discuss it as a class after the five-minute quiz time.)
- Anything that would benefit from visual presentation is a candidate for presentation via handout. (And given different learning styles, almost everything could fall into this category). However, also consider whether the blackboard and/or the overhead might do the trick (more on these below). If you have a diagram that you're filling in, for example, you might want to put a blank version of the diagram on a handout to distribute, and fill out yours on an overhead.

If you want to use a handout, check out some of the examples from previous TAs in the back of this handbook and/or Wendell's handout advice. And finally, if you do use handouts, make them

just one part of your repertoire for a given class. Thus, regardless of whether there's a handout, make use of the blackboard and/or overhead projector for displaying information.

### 3.2.2 *If you use them, what should they be like? (WK)*

- Only use a handout when there's good reason to. In addition to the many reasons why you probably don't need a handout all the time, students are more likely to pay attention to the handout if receiving one is a rarity rather than the status quo.
- The obvious: your handout should be formatted well. It doesn't have to be a masterpiece of graphic design, but it should look clean and polished. Just like your attire, a properly-formatted handout shows the students that you respect them enough to bother.
  - Avoid: inconsistent font face/size, erratic indentation or line breaks, obvious errors (occasional typos are inevitable, but too many and you look bad), etc. Good things: plenty of white space, appropriate font size, sparing but effective use of boldface and italics.
  - Headers and/or Footers: include the class, your name/email/office hours, and the date. A prominent title related to the purpose of the handout is also useful. Students are even less likely to look at a handout again if they can't immediately identify what it's for.
- The purpose of a handout is not to convey information or content (that's your purpose). But a handout can be useful for *structuring* that information, and as such can be used to encourage note-taking. The students will probably not read their notes later, but the act of writing things down in a structured way will help some students learn.
- Additionally, handouts can include small amounts of content you want them to be able to reference, like tips for writing essays. Use this kind of content very carefully --- what is the minimal amount you want them to be able to reference later (even if they probably won't)? How can you get them to write down for themselves as much of what you want to convey as possible?
- Handout should be interactive. Include questions and spaces for answering them, diagrams with blank spaces to be filled in, sample outlines with blank lines for section headings, or instructions and space for doing a class activity. Interactive handouts are useful because they give the students a framework in which to take notes, and they give you some amount of control over those notes.
  - Clearly structure the blank spaces: lines, boxes, whatever it takes. Make sure it's abundantly clear that the students are supposed to write something there, and make sure you leave enough space for them to actually write (remember that many of your students' handwriting will be typical of adolescent girls' --- big and round and loopy).
  - In discussion, give students suggestions about what to write and where. The less structure they have to figure out on their own, the more likely they are to take notes. Some of them still won't, and that's fine.
- Avoid putting visuals on handouts unless they are interactive. Those are better for overheads or projectors, because you want the students to be looking up at you instead of down at their desks. Interactive visuals should be done both in handouts (what they write down) and on the overhead (what you write down).
- Remember that a handout is just one tool, and use it only when it's the right one. If you make a handout because you think you're supposed to or because you don't know what else to do, it probably won't be very effective.

Some of Wendell's handouts from Fall 2007 are included as an appendix of this handbook.

### 3.3. Blackboard and overhead projector (KP)

These are two important and useful tools for presenting information visually and controlling the flow of the discussion. Here are some reasons to use them and tips for doing so successfully:

- Students will very often copy down whatever you write on the blackboard or overhead, and it requires their attention to you at the front of the room, unlike a handout (as you know from experience in linguistics talks in which you never make eye contact with the speaker).
- The blackboard can be used to slow the pace of the discussion. The time it takes you to write something on the board is time they can be absorbing information. But don't be laborious about writing every detail on the board or writing out really long examples – plan ahead and consider using the overhead for such cases, since they can be made in advance.
- An overhead can often replace material that is too cumbersome to reproduce on the blackboard and thus would often otherwise end up in a handout. There are several advantages to the overhead: you get to point/draw/circle/add, etc. to the transparency, and it requires students' attention on you, making it more interactive. Plus they are really simple and quick to make, and require much less fiddling with formatting (just make sure you use a big font). Every classroom is equipped with an overhead projector and our dept office has transparencies you can print on. This requires only moderate expertise with the copier; ask Kathy to show you how. The dept has some overhead pens available (they are “wet erase”), or you could buy your own for a few dollars.
- Another benefit of an overhead over a handout is the controlled release of information (without the need to write it all out on the blackboard). The students can't see what comes next, so if you stop and ask for their input, they won't have anywhere else to search for the answer (and they'll already be looking at you because you haven't been given something to stare at).
- I generally post a pdf of my overheads, or some equivalent, to my discussion website after class so students can have a copy if they really want to retain something from it and so absent students can see what we did in class.
- Obviously, it won't be a very interesting class if you stand at the overhead the whole time or write everything you say on the blackboard. Mix it up and include a couple of different modes of teaching in the same class period.

### 3.4. Website for discussion section (KP)

It is a good idea to maintain a website for your discussion sections. This is useful for posting summaries of what you did in class on a given day and is essential for posting any handouts (and/or overheads, etc.) that you used so that students who missed class can catch up. It's also possible to use your website to post homework help or responses to FAQs you get via email, etc. I think there are two main options for creating such a website:

- (1) You can create a site from scratch, or
- (2) SPARK has a nifty feature that you can use for this purpose.

We'll concentrate on the second option. Some technical details...

- To make a kind of webpage for your students on SPARK, this is what I suggest: use the “Discussions” tab in SPARK to create a topic and define it as a “blog.” This will let you do

exactly what it sounds like. The “blog” type is superior to the “thread” and the “journal” options because of the display formatting that the students see (you can play around with it to see what I mean). [I think John has already set these up for you.]

- Since everyone enrolled in the class (all 300+) can view things by default, you may want to use “Set release criteria” to allow only students in your discussions to view it. (Though this is entirely optional.) The easiest way to do this is to choose “Dis\_ID” equal to the five-digit SPIRE number for each of your discussion sections. The SPARK grade book has this stored, so it neatly picks out all and only your students. You can also add individuals if for some reason you needed to do that.
- The nice thing about using SPARK to maintain your section website is that the students will be visiting the site regularly anyway in order to post their assignments and check their grades, and it should be easy for them to see if there is a new post. You will have to educate them about this (you will have first semester Freshmen, for example). Remind them how to tell when there’s a new post (there will be a green star next to the “Discussions” icon, which is a thumbtack). You should also tell them what you’ll be using the blog for and about how often you’ll be posting (more on this below).

Actual use of the blog...

- I suggest using the blog to post after each class a brief indication of what you did that day. You should also post a pdf of handouts or other materials you might have used. SPARK makes this is really easy – you just upload an attachment to the blog post, and it appears as a link below the text. This also makes dealing with absent students a bit easier – just tell them to check the discussion blog (or whatever you want to call it) when they ask you what they missed.
- Sometimes I think of things I meant to tell students in class, or I have a point I want to make clearer, so I spend some time writing various short notes that I include as a bullet list in my weekly post. This can also include policy or deadline reminders.
- It’s also sometimes useful to direct students to content-appropriate websites when they’re relevant to the topic. This is more easily done via the blog than in the discussion itself.
- You can set up your blog so that only you can post, or you can choose to allow students to post public replies. The latter could be useful for answering common questions and getting students to interact with the thing, but you may also want to rule this out in order to maintain control of the posts. If you do allow students to post, warn them that it’s not the appropriate place to inquire about their grade, ask for an extension, etc.
- In addition to your weekly post indicating what was covered in class, I have also found it helpful to post help about homeworks if there seem to be confused emails a few days before the deadline. One post with a clarification on the reading, for example, might save you some email replies. (You could also do a mass e-mail to your students; see **Class email list** for information about how to do that.)
- You might want to check to see how often your blog is being read, and you can do this with SPARK’s tracking tools. (Ask John or the TAs familiar with this functionality.) Although I highly recommend maintaining this blog, it’s never been very clear to me whether students really take advantage of it (i.e., read it) the way they should. If your tracking results are disappointing you may need to send your sections an email reminding them that you are posting helpful information there.

### 3.5. What (Not) To Wear (JJM)

Until about four years ago, I wore the same kind of clothes teaching as I wore in college: sneakers, t-shirts and jeans, always clean but often faded and frayed (by the world, not by a designer). Then, at the instigation and with the assistance of Michael Becker, Kathryn Flack, and Matt Wolf, I started wearing real shoes, pressed pants, and shirts with collars. Before long, I bought some neckties and even started wearing suits on the days when I taught Ling 101.

This made a huge positive difference in my relationship with the students. They liked me better. They complimented me on what I was wearing, to my face, in the teaching evaluations, and on RateMyProfessors. My teaching evaluations got better, and I started getting nominated (by students) for the Distinguished Teaching Award.

Why? I've discussed this with Alex Deschamps, a Women's Studies professor who also dresses quite well (and is occasionally challenged to explain why a Women's Studies professor has any business dressing well). We decided that students perceive our dressing well as a sign of respect for them. Our clothes convey the idea that we take our responsibilities seriously and that we see teaching as something special and important. Students don't want us to dress like them; they want us to dress better.

For TAs, there's another consideration as well: dressing better enhances your authority in the classroom. You are not one of their peers, so you should try not to look like one. You can't do anything about how old you look, and you probably don't want to change your hair, so clothing is the best device available for accentuating your difference.

Remarkably, there is actual research showing the positive effect that well-dressed TAs have on student performance; see Roach, K. David (1997) Effects of graduate teaching assistant attire on student learning, misbehaviors, and ratings of instruction. *Communication Quarterly* 45(3), 125-141. (You can access this online through the library.)

What should you do? On days when you are teaching, you should try to dress a bit better than the average student of your gender in the classroom. Very likely, the average student is wearing a t-shirt, jeans, and sneakers. So you should wear: a shirt with buttons and/or a collar; khakis, chinos, or other slacks; and proper shoes. Alternatively, a tailored jacket will spruce up any outfit, even a t-shirt and jeans. A necktie, skirt, or nice blouse will do the same.

It would be nice if you also dressed like this on other occasions when you are like to encounter Ling 101 students (lectures, office hours), but that's less important than dressing well on the days when you have to stand in front of the class.

### 3.6. Diversity (JJM)

About half the content of this course deals with issues that fall under the heading of diversity, particularly the ways in which language is used by members of racial or ethnic minorities, immigrants, the poor, and the Deaf. The students in the course are also diverse; the UMass Amherst undergraduate population is almost 20% ALANA. (That breaks down to about 9%

Asian, 5% African-American, and 4% Latino, with less than 1% Native American or Cape Verdean.)

UMass Amherst requires all undergraduates to take a designated US diversity general education course. Ling 101 is now under consideration for this designation. If the designation is granted during the current semester, then students taking the course now will get credit for having fulfilled that requirement. I will keep you and them apprised of this.

When you deal with diversity topics in the discussion section, the overall tone will have already been set by the lectures that week. The tone we're trying for is that language is the object of rational study and analysis, and such study shows us that no language or dialect is right or wrong, better or worse, more or less "correct" or "educated". This view, unfortunately, is not widely held outside the community of linguists, and not all students will have internalized the message of the lectures.

Suppose you are in the following situation. You have been explaining negative concord in AAVE, and a student insists that *I didn't see nothing* is illogical and uneducated. The student who says this might be white or might be African-American. How should you respond?

Unemotionally. You should respond in the same way as you would respond to any student who is missing the point of a lesson, by re-explaining the material in a different way. You might also explain that human languages are full of stuff that has no counterpart in logic, like ambiguity or affective meaning.

What if you're discussing an inherently controversial topic with diversity implications, such as making English the official language of the United States? Again, try to maintain the discussion at the level of rational thought. If a student utters some generality like "Look at all the Spanish people who don't know English", lift the discussion up above the individual opinion and say something like "Why do some people think that Hispanics aren't learning English? Because they see Hispanics talking in Spanish with each other? Does that mean they don't know English?"

What if you get a homework assignment that seems to be totally at odds with everything we've taught all semester? That situation and the resolution of it are described in a nice paper by Matt Ouellett, the director of the UMass Amherst Center for Teaching. It's included in the appendix to this handbook.

*For discussion*

In the appendix, you'll also find an article from the *Harvard Crimson* about an incident that happened in Harvard's version of Ling 101. What did Vaux do wrong? How should he have handled it? (By the way, rumor has it that this incident occurred *the very same week* that his department was deciding whether to consider him for tenure.)

### 3.7. Teaching writing

#### 3.7.1 Internet resources

##### Writing Center at UNC Chapel Hill

Extensive handouts on many topics. The one entitled “College Writing” is a good starting point. When students are having a problem in a particular area, give them the URL of the appropriate handout.

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/index.html>

##### UMass Amherst Writing Program

The Junior Year Writing Program Sourcebook contains some useful material about teaching writing beginning at page 119. Peter Elbow’s essay on page 135 explains about low-stakes writing exercises, which you will be using in your sections. (This so-called Sourcebook is addressed to faculty who will be teaching Junior Year Writing in their respective departments, so it isn’t something you could usefully give to students.)

[http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/jy/jy\\_sourcebook3x.pdf](http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/jy/jy_sourcebook3x.pdf)

#### 3.7.2 Tips for teaching writing (KP)

**What to expect from your students’ writing.** It will be worse than you think. Although there will be a few students who write consistently high quality papers, there will be a lot more who consistently write papers with serious flaws. It will be tempting to try to fix everything about their writing, but it simply can’t be done all at once, and not all flaws are equally important to us. In general, you should try to not spend too much time being exasperated about the quality of their writing coming in to your class. You’re their teacher, and at least some aspects of good writing (and critical thinking) can be taught; you may have to start closer to the beginning that you’d imagine for a college course, but the resources in this handbook are meant to make teaching writing a little bit easier for you.

**The arc of the essay assignments.** We’ve designed the essay assignments with the intention of building up from relatively straightforward assignments in the beginning to more complicated ones requiring actual critical thinking later on. While you don’t have to explicitly discuss this with the students, you should be aware of the progression so that you can focus your efforts on helping them develop writing and critical thinking skills incrementally as the semester progresses.

**The first essay.** The first assignment is geared toward working out some of the kinks in students’ writing by giving them a relatively straightforward topic with a clear “answer.” Students will have the option of re-writing this essay for a better grade, so this is also a chance to communicate directly with students about improvements they can make to increase their score. Your comments to them on the first iteration of this essay should be as explicit as possible (not the same thing as voluminous), and if you detect major problems from a student consider directing him or her to your office hours to correct the issue for the second iteration and subsequent assignments. Before the first essay is due you should make sure students understand that this is the only essay for which they’ll have the opportunity for a rewrite (at least officially), and that we are letting them do this for their benefit in getting used to this kind of writing.

Another upshot though is that you can grade honestly on the first go without feeling guilty (even when this means more harshly).

### **Helping them get better, general strategies.**

- Many students just do not have experience writing the kind of essay that we're aiming for in this course – a brief, convincing demonstration of critical thinking and argumentation. They're much more likely to have done “personal response” type writing, which is probably the reason for many of the problems with their essays. It's okay to emphasize to your students that this is a different kind of writing. This lets you be explicit about its components and execution, and you can correct them by identifying aspects of their writing as inappropriate for this style rather than unequivocally wrong. (The first assignment includes some comments to the students about this very issue, and you should also emphasize it to them in class.)
- Before the first essay is due you should go over in class what you expect essays to look like (i.e., how should they be structured) – this is very important. Although you might feel silly being so explicit about something you think they should already know, you literally need to explain to them that you expect essays with an introduction, several body paragraphs, and a conclusion. You should also go over what you expect in each of these sections. Go over the grading rubric with them and discuss what is meant by each category. (Since the rubrics change over the course of the semester you should revisit them for each assignment to explain any new things.) Writing and the evaluation of writing can seem a bit mystical for students (common complaint is that the grading is arbitrary), and one of our goals is to take as much of the mysticism out of it as possible.
- You should supplement discussions of writing with some exercises in class. Students need to *see* what you deem to be good and bad writing and they need to be able to identify for themselves what sets the two apart. Students can practice writing in class for a participation grade (“low-stakes” writing); some ideas and resources are compiled in section 4.
- After an essay has been graded encourage students to apply comments from previous assignments toward doing well on subsequent ones. The impression should be that we're building toward something – a competence in this style of writing. It will be easy for the students to view the essays as unrelated to one another, so you will probably have to be explicit about the fact that they can apply comments on their previous assignment(s) toward doing better on the next one.
- Relatedly, they should be paying attention to the grading rubric as well as your comments. Make a point of explaining and emphasizing the grading rubric in class before the assignment is due. After it has been graded, if they got a less than perfect score on a particular category encourage them to figure out how to improve for the next assignment and if they aren't sure, they should come to your office hours where you'll help them (the rubrics change a bit but they have access to all of them ahead of time). I was surprised to learn after guiding a few students in office hours that they weren't really using the rubric as a formula for doing well on the assignment, even though that's basically what it is. Going over the rubric for an assignment with the class before it's due should help to orient them toward satisfying its requirements.

### 3.7.3 Low-stakes writing exercises (WK)

For suggestions about when to use these exercises, see the week-by-week lesson plan. These suggestions are based on the specific course content mentioned in the exercise. But you could always change the content to fit a different week of the course.

#### Exercise 1: Outlines

*Discussion:* how is a good essay organized?

- What are the crucial parts?
- What goes into the introduction?
- What goes into the body?
- What goes into the conclusion?

*Topic:* Start with a sample topic, and, as a class, review the basic arguments in favor of the thesis statement. Some ideas for topics:

- Do children learn language by imitation?
- Is the waggle dance an instinct?

*The Task:* In small groups, organize the points discussed as a class into an outline for an essay on the topic.

*Review:* As a class, go over the outlines the groups came up with (one way to do this is to have each group write their outline on the board). Discuss how to turn this outline into an essay.

#### Exercise 2: Introductions

*Discussion:* what does a good introduction look like?

- What not to do. Why is the following sample bad?

Since the dawn of time, linguists have wondered: Is there a critical period for learning a second language? Kids like Genie can't learn language because they've reached puberty, but adults often try to learn a second language. Anyone who has tried knows how hard it is, but no one can agree on whether or not there's really a critical period. There have been scientific studies looking at adults and children trying to learn a second language, to see whether or not it's harder after puberty.

- Why is the following sample good?

Some instinctual behaviors must be acquired during a *critical period*, or they will never be acquired at all. We know from cases like Genie that human language is one of these instincts – a child who does not acquire their first language before puberty will never successfully learn it. But is there also a critical period for learning a second language? Evidence from several scientific studies suggests there is, since adults are less successful than children at learning a second language.

- A good introduction:
  - a) explains the issues surrounding the topic
  - b) identifies the central question in the essay, and
  - c) clearly states the position the essay takes on that question.

*Topic:* Start with a sample topic, and as a class, and review the basic arguments in favor of the thesis statement. Some ideas for topics:

- Is brain size important for linguistic ability?

- Does the descent of the larynx provide an evolutionary advantage?
- Is the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis true?

*The Task:* Individually, write an introduction to a hypothetical essay on the topic.

*Review:* In small groups, discuss students' introductions and suggest improvements.

### **Exercise 3: Paragraphs**

*Discussion:* what makes a good paragraph?

- Why is the following sample bad?

The dialect considered standard can change, because what makes a dialect standard is not whether or not they're correct. Features of certain dialects that some Americans think of as incorrect or illogical are also found in other languages, like double negatives in French. For example, in America the standard dialect before World War II was an r-dropping dialect, and that changed after the war. This proves that all dialects are equal. The prestigious dialect spoken by the Queen in England is still an r-dropping dialect.

- Why is the following sample good?

Before World War II, the dialect of prestige in America was an r-dropping dialect much like the one spoken by the upper class in Boston. After World War II, the standard dialect changed to the non-r-dropping dialect spoken in places like Ohio. If dialects earned their place as the standard dialect by being more correct or logical, we would not expect the standard to change because correctness does not change based on political pressures. The change in the level of prestige in these two dialects, then, provides evidence that dialects are equal.

- A good paragraph:
  - a) limits itself a single, coherent point,
  - b) begins by stating the evidence under consideration,
  - c) explains that evidence, and
  - d) connects that evidence to the main point of the essay.

### **3.1 Ordering Sentences**

*The Task:* In small groups, put the following sentences in order so they make a coherent paragraph (it's ok to add connecting words to make it flow more smoothly). There are probably several ways to do this. There will be one sentence that does not fit.

- A) Expressive ability is an important feature of human language, so this provides further evidence that ASL and oral languages are equal.
- B) There are signs in ASL for "government", "paradox", and "verb".
- C) ASL builds words based on hand shape and orientation.
- D) It has been claimed that signed languages are just pantomimes, and not real languages.
- E) ASL can express abstract concepts and ideas.
- F) ASL has an unlimited capacity for expressing ideas, just like oral languages.
- G) If ASL were simply pantomime, we would expect to find only words like "book", "eat", or "cat", which can be easily mimicked.

*Review:* As a class, discuss the results of the group work in light of what makes a paragraph good. Suggestion: have transparencies of the sentences cut up (and a marker for connecting words) for easy display.

### 3.2 Writing

*Topic:* Start with a sample topic, and as a class, and review the basic arguments involved.

Some ideas for topics:

- Are Native American languages “primitive”?
- Are some languages/dialects more “logical” than others?
- Are signed languages like ASL real languages?
- Is language change a sign of social degeneration?

*The Task:* Individually, write a paragraph presenting a single piece of evidence and arguing in favor of a conclusion on the topic.

*Review:* In small groups, discuss students’ introductions and suggest improvements.

### Exercise 4: Reasoning

*Discussion:* what does good reasoning look like?

- Why is this sample bad?

On Martha’s Vineyard, speakers are much more likely to raise their diphthongs if they plan to stay on the island. The Brahman accent in Boston is a sign of membership in an elite group who dress and act alike. Many people who leave where they grew up try very hard to lose their accent if it is not very prestigious. This proves that the way we speak is affected by our social circumstances and how we see ourselves fitting into society.

- Why is this sample good?

A study of dialects on Martha’s Vineyard found that speakers were more likely to raise their diphthongs if they plan to stay on the island. If speaker’s attitudes towards society and group membership had no impact on their speech, we would expect factors age or geographical location to be responsible for the difference in dialects. Instead, the best predictor of diphthong raising is whether or not someone feels connected to the group of people who exhibit that particular feature. This provides evidence for the claim that our dialect is affected by how we see ourselves in society.

- Good reasoning:
  - a) is based on clearly presented evidence, and
  - b) explicitly connects that evidence to a conclusion (one way to do this is to compare that piece of evidence to what would be expected if the opposite conclusion were true).

*Topic:* Start with a sample topic. Some suggestions:

- Should teaching deaf students be treated as Special Education or as Bilingual Education?
- Should English be named the official language of the U.S.?
- Should groups be allowed to trademark reclaimed slurs (e.g. Dykes on Bikes)?
- Did President Clinton commit perjury when he claimed he did not have sex with Monica Lewinsky?

*The Task:* Individually, write a paragraph clearly connecting one piece of evidence on the topic to a conclusion.

*Review:* In small groups, discuss students' reasoning and make suggestions for improvement.

### 3.7.4 An example of a good essay similar to assignment #1 (JJM)

Suggested use: put it on an overhead slide in a bigger font. Read and discuss in class. (It's on the CD with the rest of this material.) This essay was written by John. There are good and bad essays by real students in the appendix, but you shouldn't use them in class because we didn't get the students' permission to do that.

Has a gorilla learned American Sign Language (ASL)? This question is important because, if the answer is positive, we will have proof that language is not unique to humans. If the answer is negative, then proponents of animal language learning will have to find their proof elsewhere. In this essay, I raise doubts about the evidence that the gorilla Koko has learned ASL, and I therefore conclude that Koko offers no support to those who would deny that language is a uniquely human trait.

What does it mean to *know* ASL or any other human language? All human languages have words and rules. Words are meaningful elements, and rules are principles for combining words to say new things. This is the criterion I will use to evaluate claims about Koko.

Koko has been taught ASL since 1972, when she was one year old. Koko now knows over 1000 words of ASL (Gorilla Foundation). Koko's vocabulary size is impressive, even if it is less than that of a two-year-old human. But does Koko also know the rules of ASL, and is she able to use these rules to create new phrases and sentences? There are good reasons to doubt this.

First, an ASL expert who worked with Koko for eight months concluded that she was not using the rules of ASL to form sentences (Lecture). Unlike a typical two-year-old child, most of Koko's utterances consist of individual words that are unconnected grammatically. Thus, while Koko may have a two-year-old's vocabulary, she does not have a two-year-old's knowledge of the rules of a human language.

Second, supposed evidence for Koko's creative use of ASL is an illusion (Pinker 1995, page 337). In the lecture, we saw a dialogue where Koko responded to the question "Koko, do you like to talk to people?" with the answer "Fine nipple." Koko's response seems like random signing rather than evidence of creative language use, but Koko's trainer, Penny Patterson, insists instead that Koko is using language in a remarkably creative way, by signing the word for "nipple" as a pun, because the spoken English word "nipple" supposedly rhymes with the word "people". It is simply not credible that Koko, who does not speak English at all or ASL very well, is trying to pull off a bilingual pun that even humans cannot figure out without an explanation.

Has Koko learned ASL? Despite 36 years of effort by a highly dedicated trainer/teacher, the answer is no. If Koko is a typical gorilla — and we have no reason to think that she is not — then gorillas are not capable of learning ASL. Furthermore, since ASL has all of the important properties of other human languages, including oral ones (Perlmutter 1991), I conclude that gorillas are incapable of learning any human language. The gorilla experiments are no threat to the claim that language is unique to humans.

## References

- Gorilla Foundation. <http://www.koko.org>. Accessed 7/22/08.  
 Perlmutter, David (1991) The language of the deaf. *New York Review of Books* 36 (2), March 28.  
 Pinker, Steven (1995). *The Language Instinct*. New York: Harper Collins.

### 3.7.5 An example of a terrible essay in response to assignment #1 (JJM)

Suggested use: put it on an overhead slide in a bigger font. Read and discuss in class. (It's on the CD with the rest of this material.) This essay was written by John. There are good and bad essays by real students in the appendix, but you shouldn't use them in class because we didn't get the students' permission to do that.

If my cat Brendan could talk to me, what would he say? I've always wondered about this and probably you've pondered about it too. People everywhere are rapt by the idea of talking with animals. (There was even a movie about it with Eddie Murphy.)

In class we heard about a chimp named Viki. Some people raised it like it was their own baby and it used to sit with them in the house and they tried to teach it to talk. It learned to say a few words like "cup" and "papa" but it was really hard to understand and then it died before they could teach it any more words. So that experiment was a failure because chimps can't learn how to talk because of the descent of the larynx. There was also a gorilla. A woman named Penny was teaching this gorilla sign language and she talked to it too and this gorilla even appeared on *Monster Garage*. It rhymed "people" with "nipple".

What does it mean to know a human language? Cognitive linguists, like other linguists, study language for its own sake they attempt to account for its systematicity, its structure, the functions it serves and how these functions are realised by the language system. However, an important reason behind why cognitive linguists study language stems from the assumption that language reflects patterns of thought. So, in my opinion, knowing a language must mean knowing about how these functions are realized by the language system.

Nim Chimpsky was a chimpanzee who was the subject of an unmitigated study of animal language acquisition (codenamed 6.001) at Columbia University, led by Herbert S. Terrace. Nim was a male chimpanzee who began the project at the age of one week. Like Viki, he was raised like a child in somebody's house and he went to a classroom to learn ASL. At the end of the project, he was returned to the Oklahoma Institute for Primate Studies.

Rico is a border collie who knew about 500 words. He can bring back any object you ask for. That's because border collies are really smart. Once we had a border collie that knew the names of me and my brothers and all of my cousins. We could say "chase Billy" and he would chase my cousin Billy. Rico can learn new words without being told what they are. This is just like babies and it's called fast mapping. And this is why animals can not learn to talk.

In conclusion, it is my opinion that animals cannot learn to speak a human language.

## 4. Grading

You'll find examples of Assignment #1 from Fall 2007 in Appendix A, including the grading rubrics with TA comments. You'll be doing things somewhat differently, because the assignments won't be submitted on paper and you'll be using a more sophisticated grading rubric.

#### 4.1. Criterion-referenced grading explained (JJM)

You'll be using a grading rubric (form) to grade the assignments. In our meetings, we'll discuss the use of the rubrics, we'll practice with them, and we'll deal with issues that arise in each assignment.

The rubrics and this course are based on a *criterion-referenced grading system*. Criterion-referenced and norm-referenced are two different approaches to grading. In criterion-referenced grading, each student's performance is assessed against specified learning goals. If all students reach those goals, all get a high grade. In norm-referenced grading, each student's performance is assessed against the performance of all the other students. Some predetermined percentage of the students receive a high grade. Norm-referenced grading is often called "grading on the curve", since it assumes that student performance follows the bell-shaped curve of the normal distribution and it assigns the best grades only to students at the right tail of the distribution.

This course uses criterion-referenced grading because it has explicit, realistic learning goals (in the syllabus and the grading rubrics, which the students see in advance), because criterion-referenced grading does not require tests and assignments that are excessively hard,<sup>1</sup> and because students themselves can more readily understand what is required to succeed in such a system.

In the past, some TAs in this course were bothered by criterion-referenced grading because it seemed unfair to them. They encountered situations where students X and Y both got As, because both have achieved the learning goals, but X's work was clearly much better than Y's work. If X and Y both got As, they felt, then our grades have failed to capture obvious differences in student performance.

Although this outcome is considered undesirable in norm-referenced grading systems, it is perfectly normal and fair in criterion-referenced grading. Criterion-referenced grading does not seek to capture all of the observable distinctions in student performance. Instead, it is content to capture the distinctions that are relevant to the previously stated learning goals.

There is one respect in which we might need to take a lesson from norm-referenced grading: the goals we set might be too difficult. This can happen when new assignments are used for the first time. (Since all of the assignments have been recently revised, this could easily happen to us this semester.) Reports from the TAs are crucial to discovering situations like this. The situation is to modify the learning goals, typically by altering the grading rubric to better conform with what students have actually succeeded in doing.

#### 4.2. Local and global views of an assignment (JJM)

By its nature, the grading rubric enforces a highly local view of the writing task —  $x$  points for paragraph structure,  $y$  points for use of evidence, etc. Although the grading rubric has many

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<sup>1</sup> Properly implemented norm-referenced grading requires that tests and assignments be so difficult that even the best students can't get perfect scores. Otherwise, you get ceiling effects, meaning that you've failed to capture some of the distinctions in the right tail of the normal distribution.

advantages in fairness, consistency, and ease of use, its localistic character means that it sometimes produces counterintuitive results. For instance, a single mistake in an essay might cause the student to lose lots of points in several different categories, so the punishment is disproportionate to the crime.

For this reason, after you've filled in the grading rubric, do a global check of whether the final sum makes sense. For instance, if you think that it looks like a B essay, but it is getting fewer than 24 points out of 30, tweak the numbers a bit to increase the total.

### **4.3. Grading Guidelines for Homework Assignments (JJM)**

(This advice dates from Fall 2007, when students still submitted their assignments on paper, so some of it is irrelevant. But it might still be useful as overall guidance.)

Before you begin grading, read over a small sample of assignments to get a sense of what the typical essay is like. Later, when you know more about the students, you can just look at essays by the best, average, and poorest students to see the overall range of quality. This will help you when assigning points on the grading rubric.

When you begin grading in earnest, at first you'll probably want to read each essay twice, once for form and once for content. As you become more experienced in grading each assignment, you may find that a single reading is enough.

It's quickest to avoid writing on the assignments themselves. If you're going to deduct points for grammar etc., circle some mistakes but don't bother correcting them. (If there's a recurrent error, explain the correction in your comments on the rubric.) If you want to comment on a particular passage, put a circled number in the margin so you can refer to it in your comments.

Use the grading rubric for all feedback. Decide on how many points to deduct in each category. Any significant non-obvious deductions should be explained in your comments, ideally with suggestions for future improvement. Be nice and be helpful!

If you use a word processor for the rubric, you can easily copy comments from one student to the next. (The same problems tend to recur.) You can also go back and revise earlier point totals if you find that your grading standard changes as you process more essays. (But see the next paragraph.)

Try not to agonize a lot about how many points to assign. Bear this in mind: each homework is 8% of their final grade and each homework has 20 points, so one homework point is 0.4% of the course grade. *De minimis non curat lex*.

### **4.4. Grading pointers (KP)**

- You may want to read over some of the essays to get a sense for the range of performance before beginning to grade in earnest. Sometimes you can catch this way whether everyone made the same mistake in understanding and keep this in mind when assigning points.

- Try not to grade students' assignments in the same order each time (don't go alphabetically, for example). Your grading at the top of the pile may differ from your grading at the bottom of the pile, but as long as this is randomly distributed (i.e., Aaron Aaronson's essay isn't always graded first) you shouldn't have to worry about it having an overall biasing effect.
- Don't wait till the last minute to do your grading. You just can't grade 80 essays in one sitting, so you're better off not putting yourself in that position. I find essay grading to be somewhat emotionally trying – it's easy to take it personally if your students espouse a gut reaction to a sensitive issue despite your careful efforts to get them to appreciate the complexity of the topic. So, start your grading early for your sake; you don't want to find yourself reaching a boiling point only halfway through the stack the night before they're supposed to be graded. Give yourself enough time to walk away and pick it up again tomorrow.
- Don't fret over a point or two. In the grand scheme these decisions aren't going to determine a letter grade.
- Don't lose sight of the big picture. It's really easy to get bogged down in terrible writing and to feel like an essay isn't even gradable. But try not to feel this way. Instead, assign points as best you can, and in your comments focus on the one or two biggest problems with the essay that will help them improve for future assignments.

It's important (though difficult) to not be distracted by annoying things that students do in their writing that don't really matter – if they put alliterative titles on all their papers or write bogus introductory and concluding sentences you might be annoyed, but correcting these behaviors is hardly as important as instructing them on critical analysis and clear argumentation. (Go back and read some of your own undergrad essays – you've probably changed since then, and they will too.)

#### **4.5. Suggested comments**

The grading form (rubric) you will be using for the homework essays includes a box at the bottom for comments. (The box will hold 1000 characters, which is plenty.) Ideally, you will include one comment for each category where you have deducted points, plus an overall evaluation comment. These comments explain the grade to the student and they give the student suggestions and encouragement to do better.

Since the grading form divides the various writing problems into categories, it is possible to use prefabricated comments for many errors that you encounter. This is particularly true of comments on writing mechanics. (We'll develop appropriate prefabricated comments for the substantive parts of each assignment as we go along.) The comments below are suggestions. You may want to change them to fit your own pedagogical style, and you'll probably want to alter them somewhat after each assignment so it won't be apparent to students that you're recycling your comments. Suggested use: The CD includes these comments as a Word file. Keep that file open and cut-and-paste appropriate comments into the box on the grading form. Tweak as necessary. This will speed up your grading and avoid the need to compose similar comments repeatedly. (It's also helpful if you begin the comment with the capital letter of the corresponding row in the grading form.)

*Global evaluation*

26-30	Excellent work (equivalent to A or A-)
23-25	Good work (in the B- to B+ range). Read the other comments for advice about getting your work into the A range.
20-22	Your homework score is in the C range. Read the comments below for advice about pulling up your grade, and see me if you'd like additional help.
Below 20	Homework scores below 20 are in the D to F range. You should read the comments below and see me to discuss how to do better.

*A. Grammar, word usage, punctuation, and spelling*

A. Use the spelling checker in your word processor.

A. Proofread your work carefully before submitting it.

A. Pay closer attention to word choice. See the advice here:  
[http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/word\\_choice.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/word_choice.html).

A. Avoid run-on sentences or sentence fragments. See the advice here:  
<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/fragments.html>.

*B. Paragraph structure*

B. Paragraph #x needs work. A good paragraph has one central idea and doesn't contain sentences that are not relevant to its main point. See the advice here:  
<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/paragraphs.html>.

B. Paragraph #x needs work. A good paragraph is well-structured and develops an argument in a logical order. See the advice here: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/paragraphs.html>.

*C. No direct quotations or close paraphrases; proper citation*

C. Essays for this course should not contain direct quotations (see page 20 of course pack).

C. Paraphrase beginning with "x" is too close to the original wording. Use your own words. For advice about how to avoid this problem in the future, see page 20 of the course pack.

C. Please cite your sources (see pages 20 and 23-24 of the course pack).

*D. Overall organization of the essay*

D. A good introduction is needed. See page 23 in the course pack.

D. A good conclusion is needed. See page 23 in the course pack.

D. Evidence and arguments are not presented in an orderly, logical way. For advice, see <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wweb/handouts/organization.html>.

## 5. Information and ideas gleaned from Fall 2007 teaching evaluations (JJM)

### About me

I'm a snazzy dresser.  
I run out of time.  
I need to stress the main points more.

### About the TAs

Enthusiasm, engagement, and conveying a feeling of personal interest in the students' success count for a lot.  
Students like that the TA is helping them with their homework (with handouts, lecture, email).  
A few students complained about their TA's arrogance, condescension, or, paradoxically, diffidence.

### About the course workload

Some students think the workload is too much, "especially for a 100 level course".  
One memorable comment noted that having a test or homework due every single Friday is a real drag.  
*Response: The F08 version of the course has reduced the number of homework assignments and in-class tests.*

### About the tests

Some students wanted more feedback about the tests. What did they get wrong and why?

### About the homework assignments

The grading of the homework assignments was the single most common complaint I saw. They feel it's harsh or arbitrary and the reasons why they lost points weren't sufficiently explained to them.

*Response: The grading rubrics have been beefed up considerably, and standardized comments have been developed.*

A few students felt that the TA didn't do a good enough job in discussion of explaining the homework assignments and our expectations for them.

*Response: We've worked on improving the lesson plans.*

Some students didn't like all the emphasis on writing. Some felt it was pointless or infantilizing ("we learned this in elementary school").

*Response: The syllabus now explains this in detail.*

A few wanted more class time spent on discussing the readings, but not spending class time discussing assignments that they've just turned in.

*Response: We no longer have discussion of assignments on the day when they're due.*

One or two students complained about the late homework penalty.

*Response: It's more reasonable now.*

### About the discussions

A lot of the answers to “What would you change about this course?” were constructive suggestions about the discussion sections. They particularly wanted to see more variation in the format.

Ideas mentioned include:

- Do more group work.

- Have more classes like the one on slang.

- Do hands-on learning.

- Have activities.

- Gather info and tally on blackboard.

- More review of hard points in lectures.

- Get students to talk more.

- More discussion of homework assignments and readings.

- Grade students on attendance or participation.

*Response: The suggested lesson plans incorporate many of these activities, but use your own ideas as well.*

A few students mentioned time management as an issue — trying to cover too much and going too long, or not quitting early when everything has been covered.

**6. Goals and suggestions for each weekly discussion section (KP)**

1.

September 5

**This week's lectures**

1. *Introductory*. No real content yet.

**Hard points**

- The syllabus, perhaps.

**Must do**

Introductions – Tell them who you are. Find out who they are.

Get info (name and student ID#) from anyone who wants to add the course or switch sections; you can tell them to see you after class to do this. (Also tell them we cannot add/change if there is a course conflict; they have to drop the other course themselves first.) After class, give students' names to Kathy or Sarah for action.

Give syllabus to anyone who needs it.

Review course requirements and policies. Encourage questions. What is expected of them? How can they succeed in this course?

Go over “Homework assignments in this course” in course pack.

Briefly introduce HW #1, which is due in two weeks. Urge them to do the reading for the next discussion section, because that will maximize their benefit.

Identify students who haven't used Spark yet, and students who have questions about using it. End class early and have them stay for a brief demo on your laptop.

[AV equipment: Some classrooms have it, some don't. For further info, look here: <http://www.umass.edu/provost/classroom/>. Note that you need to get the key in advance. Some faculty also have portable projectors.]

**Also consider**

Discuss results of Spark poll (John will supply by Thursday evening).

Common beliefs about language handout.

Other activities – Wendell's classes thought of questions they have about language

**Bring**

Extra copies of syllabus.

Extra copies of “Homework assignments in this course”, for those who don't have course pack.

Poll results

Common beliefs about language handout (if using)

Laptop.

### **Some Common Beliefs About Language**

1. It's important to correct children's mistakes, so they'll learn to speak English properly.
2. Children can't learn a language unless an adult teaches them.
3. Some gorillas and chimpanzees have been taught a human language.
4. When Mick Jagger or Britney Spears sing "I can't get no satisfaction", they're being illogical, because two negatives make a positive.
5. Primitive people speak primitive languages.
6. Contractions like "didn't" and "isn't" are signs of laziness in speaking.
7. The world would be a more peaceful place if we all spoke the same language.
8. People with dyslexia read words backwards.
9. Shakespeare uses *thou* because it sounds fancy.
10. People from Boston drop all their *r*'s.
11. People from the South talk more slowly than people from the North.
12. We need to pass a law declaring English to be the official language of the United States.
13. If we ever encounter intelligent space aliens, we can learn their language and they can learn ours, with enough effort.
14. The longest word of English is *antidisestablishmentarianism*.
15. English comes from German, and French comes from Latin.
16. Tongue-twisters (like "One bug bled bad blood") twist your tongue.
17. Cavemen communicated with sign language before they developed spoken language, as it says in the *Clan of the Cave Bear* novels.
18. You should say "*To whom* did you give the book", and not "Who did you give the book to".

2.

September 12

(Unit 1 – Language is a uniquely human instinct)

**This week's lectures**

2. *Knowing and learning a language.* When you acquired your native language as a toddler, what did you learn and how did you learn it?

3. *Language is uniquely human.* Can chimps, gorillas, or parrots learn a human language?

**Hard points from lectures***Lecture 2*

- Overgeneralization.
  - What is it?
  - Why does it happen?
  - How does it support the claim that language acquisition includes rule acquisition?
  - Relation to language change.

*Lecture 3*

- Learning a language involves learning rules as well as words.
- How can we tell whether an animal (or a person) has learned a rule?

**Must do**

Review hard points from this week's lectures, answer questions. General advice: Let them be your guide about what's hard or easy, but don't expect them to ask questions without reminders of topics, prompting, etc.

Discussion of HW #1:

What is it asking for?

What are the readings saying?

How should essay be structured?

Go over grading rubric (in course pack).

General advice when discussing homework assignments, especially near the beginning of the semester: Don't dictate the essay to them, but don't worry about giving too much away either. For instance, HW #1 tells students that writing this essay requires first answering the question: What does it mean to know a human language? You can and should discuss this question in class, ideally by getting them to answer it.

Note that HW #1 and other assignments include promises of what will be covered in discussion

**Also consider**

Organizing some of the discussion of HW #1 around individual or group tasks.

Since many of them probably won't have done the HW #1 reading, you could bring excerpts to be read and discussed in class.

**Bring**

Some extra copies of "Homework assignments in this course, HW #1, and the grading rubric, for those who didn't bring the course pack. In the future, they should bring their course packs to discussion.

3.

September 19

(Unit 1 – Language is a uniquely human instinct)

**This week's lectures**

4. & 5. *What are instincts?* Examples of instincts. Instinctual communication systems in honeybees, birds, bats, non-human primates, and cetaceans.

**Hard points from lectures***Lecture 4*

- Behaviors that involve instinct and learning together.
  - Learning “completes” the instinct.
  - Without the learning, the instinctive behavior doesn't work right.
  - In lectures 6 & 7, we'll look at critical period for this kind of learning. E.g., Lorenz's goslings could only imprint during a period that begins 12-17 hours and ends 24 hours after hatching.
- Waggle dance (harder of the two bee dances).
- How to argue that the bee dance language is instinctual. (How to argue, in general!)

*Lecture 5*

- Generalizing the “words and rules” description of human language so it can apply to animal communication systems.
- Why it make sense to say that bee dance language or chickadee warning call has “words and rules”, but bird song or vervet warnings don't seem to.
- Boundedness — the difference between all of these systems and human language.

**Must do**

Review hard points from this week's lectures, answer questions.

This discussion section is designated as review for the test next week, so you should:

Go over “Tests in this course” in course pack.

Conduct some kind of systematic review and take questions.

Tell them to bring sharpened #2 pencils next week.

Remind students that essays are due by 5pm. Remind them of penalties too.

**Also consider**

Have them perform the waggle dance.

Can they think of other bounded communication systems used by animals or humans?

Prepare slide or handout with a list of review questions for test.

Have them, individually or in groups, concoct plausible questions that might appear on the test.

**Bring**

Extra copies of “Tests in this course” for those who still can’t remember to bring the course pack.

4.

September 26

(Unit 1 – Language is a uniquely human instinct)

**This week's lectures**

6. & 7. *Human language is an instinct.* In what way? Evidence: critical period; irrelevance of brain size; universality and inevitability; language acquisition.

**Hard points from lectures**

*Lectures 6 and 7*

- What process of reasoning do we use to argue that human language is an instinct?
- Ask them, but critical period and Genie are usually pretty clear to all of them.
- Instincts and genetics.
- Language as an instinct => uselessness of imitation and correction in language acquisition.

**Must do**

Test #1 (Lectures 2-5). See the “Tests” section of the “Guide to course policies” in this TA Handbook. Detailed procedures will be discussed in our weekly meeting. **IMPORTANT:** Keep answer sheets for different colored exams in separate piles. Don't let students remove exams from room.

Hard points of week's lectures

Discuss HW #1 with class, offer general suggestions for improvement (tell them where to look for their grade if they're confused). Explain about revision option and strict deadline for it.

**Also consider**

Prepare a slide or handout with a list of common problems in essays (grammar, style, content).

Low-stakes writing or group work focused on problems identified in HW #1.

**Bring**

Exams, scantron forms, sharpened no. 2 pencils.

5.

October 3

**(Unit 1 – Language is a uniquely human instinct)****This week's lectures**

8. & 9. *The evolution of human language*. The mechanism of natural selection. Descent of the larynx. Evolution of the language instinct. The beginning of a language: Nicaraguan Sign Language. Summary of this section of the course.

**Hard points from lectures***Lectures 8 and 9*

- Natural selection.
- Why the descent of the larynx initially looks like a problem for natural selection, and how that problem might be solved.
- Keeping Broca's and Wernicke's aphasia straight. (You can tell them that there's always a test question about this.)
- The over-elaboration problem.
- Sexual selection and how it might help solve the over-elaboration problem.
- Kin selection and how it might help solve the over-elaboration problem.

**Must do**

Remind them: revised HW #1 due by 5pm. No late work accepted.

Hard points from lectures.

Review for test #2. See September 19 for general ideas of how to proceed.

Introduce HW #2. Discuss grading rubric. Urge them to do the reading for next week (but they won't, because of the test).

**Also consider**

See September 19.

**Bring**

HW #2 grading rubric (on course website in HW #2 folder).

6.

October 10

(Unit 2 – Human languages are different but equal)

**This week's lectures**

10. & 11. *There are no primitive languages.* What does this mean? The richness and complexity of indigenous languages of the US and elsewhere. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and the controversy about Piraha.

**Hard points from lectures**

*Lectures 10 and 11*

- Latin (free word order with case marking) vs. English etc. (fixed word order without case marking)
- Check that they got the point of the videos of Siberian Yupik etc.
- Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis and critique of Whorf's arguments.
- Experiment on relative vs. absolute directions.
- Pirahã, recursion.

**Must do**

Test #2 (Lectures 6-9)

Hard points of lectures.

Discuss HW #2. Some may need a lot of help with this one. A good strategy would be to bring copies of a page or two from the article, have them read it, and then get them to identify the evidence and weave it into an argument. As usual, talk about writing as well as content — e.g., how should it be organized?

**Also consider****Bring**

Exams, scantrons, No. 2 pencils.

Excerpt from article.

7.

October 17

**(Unit 2 – Human languages are different but equal)****This week's lectures**

12. *The equality of oral and signed languages.* The structure, origin, and culture of American Sign Language.

13. *Dialect differences.* No dialect is wrong. Who speaks the “standard” dialect? Dialects as an object of prejudice.

**Hard points from lectures***Lecture 12*

- What kind of evidence and reasoning do we use to determine whether ASL is a language?

*Lecture 13*

- Not a hard concept, but hard to make them accept: Standard/prestige dialects not “correct”, “careful” vs. non-standard “incorrect”, “sloppy”, “lazy”...

**Must do**

Remind them that HW #2 is due by 5pm.

Hard points from week's lectures.

Review for test #3. Note that the test includes next Monday's lecture, so they'll have to review that on their own.

**Also consider**

Have they themselves, or someone they know, tried to change their accent? Why?

**Bring**

8.

October 24

(Unit 2 – Human languages are different but equal

&amp;

Unit 3 – Language in the USA)

**This week's lectures**

14. *The source of language and dialect diversity*. Language change. Futile attempts to prevent it. The past, present, and future of American English. Summary of this section of the course.

15. *Dialect diversity in the USA*. Survey of major US dialect regions, with special emphasis on Massachusetts.

**Hard points from lectures***Lecture 14*

- S-Curve of innovation, reasons for it, role in language change.
- Detroit high school.

*Lecture 15*

- How dialect boundaries are established.
- Contexts for *r* dropping and addition.

**Must do**

Test #3 (Lectures 10-14).

Review hard points from lecture #15. (Lecture #14 is irrelevant, because it was on the test.)

Mention HW #3, but it won't mean much to them yet since it requires next Wednesday's lecture.

**Also consider**

Bring an outline map of Massachusetts on a slide and do a dialect mapping project using *cot/caught*, *frappe*, grocery *carriage*, with students in class as informants.

Slang. This is relevant to idea of linguistic innovation introduced in lecture #14. Try collecting some current slang words (hugely popular activity). Topics that elicit lots of slang are sex, drugs, booze, and vomiting. Think of the ecology of the typical college student. Students who \*never\* talk will pipe up with examples of slang. It's a lot of fun. The point about change can be made by looking at the volatility of slang, which can be seen by comparing current slang with the old Ling 101 slang dictionaries included in the TA Handbook. Many of the words are probably gone by now, though some persist ("wicked", "packie" were popular in my youth and remain so).

Common problems in HW #2 (depends on how far you got with the grading).

**Bring**

Exams, scantrons, No. 2 pencils

Possibly: slide maps of MA, overhead projector pens.

9.

October 31

## (Unit 3 – Language in the USA)

**This week's lectures**

16. *Dialect and self-identification*. Region, ethnicity, class, and other factors affecting one's dialect. Examples from Boston, Martha's Vineyard, and New York City.

17. *The African-American English dialect*. Social and legal status. Possible origins. Major grammatical constructions: negative concord, null copula, aspect. African-American English in the schools.

**Hard points from lectures***Lecture 16*

- Overall concept: Our speech is affected, often unconsciously, by how we identify ourselves in relation to society. Brahmins talk like Brahmins because they think of themselves as Brahmins and Brahmins talk (and dress and eat and work and shop) alike.
- How the various kinds of evidence discussed in lecture support this thesis.

*Lectures 17 & 18 (First half this week)*

- Ann Arbor decision.
- The approach to teaching Standard English to kids who speak AAVE. (This is relevant to the homework assignment.)
- Two features of AAVE grammar: aspect and negative concord.

**Must do**

Hard points from lectures.

Introduce HW #3. Points to cover:

Basic task.

Bring copies of the legislation for reading and discussion in class.

Make sure they understand that the educational program being criticized/rejected is a lot like the one seen in the lecture or described in the excerpt from Lisa Green's book.

How write this kind of thing.

Grading rubric

**Also consider**

Common problems in HW #2 (unless you did this last time).

Possible discussion topic related to lecture 16: How do visible clues (like clothing, hair, make-up) identify someone as a member of a particular group?

Activities to help them learn AAVE aspect and negative concord. Tasks might include:

Translation to/from AAVE.

Fixing incorrect sentences in AAVE.

Identifying AAVE features in lyrics (print out from web).

**Bring**

Handouts or slides needed to support these activities.

10.

November 7

**(Unit 3 – Language in the USA)****This week's lectures**

18. (continued from 17) *The African-American English dialect*. Social and legal status. Possible origins. Major grammatical constructions: negative concord, null copula, aspect. African-American English in the schools.

19. *Native American languages*. Before European contact and today. Endangered and recently dead Native American languages. Efforts to preserve Native American languages. The attempt to revive Wampanoag on Cape Cod.

**Hard points from lectures**

*Lectures 17 & 18 (Second half this week)*

- Ann Arbor decision
- The approach to teaching Standard English to kids who speak AAVE. (This is relevant to the homework assignment.)
- Two features of AAVE grammar: aspect and negative concord.

*Lectures 19 & 20 (First half this week)*

- Concepts to review briefly: dead language, endangered language, language preservation, language revival. They should be able to identify Wampanoag [wɪmpənóæʔ].
- Arguments by proponents of official English, and answers to those arguments.
- Transitional Bilingual Education
- English Immersion
- Question 2 referendum in Massachusetts

**Must do**

Remind them that HW #3 is due by 5pm.

Hard points from lectures.

Review for test #4. (Test #4 includes next Monday's lecture, so they'll have to review that on their own.)

Briefly introduce HW #4.

**Also consider**

Activities to help them learn AAVE aspect and negative concord. Tasks might include:

Translation to/from AAVE.

Fixing incorrect sentences in AAVE.

Identifying AAVE features in lyrics (print out from web).

As I wrote this in mid July, I realized that you'll be reading it right around election day. Just this week, Obama got in trouble with conservatives from suggesting that students should learn Spanish:

Obama's comments:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZprtPat1Vk>

A conservative's reaction:

<http://theamericanscene.com/2008/07/14/the-education-of-a-would-be-obamacon>

**Bring**

Handouts or slides needed to support these activities.

11.

November 14

(Unit 3 – Language in the USA)

**This week's lectures**

20. *The languages of immigrants*. In US history. Nativism. The official English movement. Bilingual education.

**Hard points from lectures**

*Lectures 19 & 20 (Second half this week)*

- Concepts to review briefly: dead language, endangered language, language preservation, language revival. They should be able to identify Wampanoag [wʌmpənóæ].
- Arguments by proponents of official English, and answers to those arguments.
- Transitional Bilingual Education
- English Immersion
- Question 2 referendum in Massachusetts

**Must do**

Test #4 (Lectures 15-20)

No reason to do hard points from lectures, since there is only one lecture this week and they've already been tested on it.

Discuss HW #4. Points to cover:

Basic task.

Bring copies of the legislation for reading and discussion in class.

Make sure they understand that the educational program being criticized/rejected is a lot like the one seen in the lecture or described in the excerpt from Lisa Green's book.

How write this kind of thing.

Grading rubric

**Also consider****Bring**

Exams, scantrons, No. 2 pencils

12.

November 21

**(Unit 4 – Language and power)****This week's lectures**

21. *Language as a marker of status.* Politeness. Terms of address. *Thou* and *you* (*tú* and *Usted*, *tu* and *vous*, etc.)

22. *Using language to claim power.* Racial, ethnic, and other slurs. Orwell, then and now. Language in contemporary political discourse: rebranding, framing.

**Hard points from lectures***Lecture 21*

- Reviewing this lecture and getting them ready to do homework #5 are the same thing

*Lectures 22 & 23 (First half this week)*

- “Bleached” slurs
- “Reclaiming” a slur
- Newspeak
- Euphemism and rebranding in political language. Role of Frank Luntz
- Framing

**Must do**

Remind them that HW #4 is due at 5PM.

Hard points from lectures.

Explain HW #5 in some detail. What is the question under investigation? What are they supposed to do? Suggested organization of data table. Grading rubric.

**Also consider**

Group work to come up with scenarios.

**Bring**

(No discussion next week, Nov 28 – Thanksgiving holiday)

13.

December 5

(Unit 4 – Language and power)

**This week's lectures**

23. (Continued from 22) *Using language to claim power*. Racial, ethnic, and other slurs. Orwell, then and now. Language in contemporary political discourse: rebranding, framing.

24. & 25. *Language and the law*. The language of laws, language crimes. Summary of the course.

**Hard points from lectures**

*Lectures 22 & 23 (Second half this week)*

- “Bleached” slurs
- “Reclaiming” a slur
- Newspeak
- Euphemism and rebranding in political language. Role of Frank Luntz
- Framing

*Lectures 24 & 25*

- Difference between a name and a noun
- Original intent vs. textualism
- How the courts define perjury (and how this is unlike our usual understanding of lying)

**Must do**

Hard points of lectures.

Discuss HW #5 – this will take some time.

Record who has brought data table

Discuss what to do with data, how to interpret it, how to structure essay #5.

**Also consider**

Wendell had a very successful class last year in which students' data was recorded on blackboard. We'll get him to describe it.

**Bring**

**14. December 12****(Unit 4 – Language and power)****This week's lectures**

26. & 27. *Men's and women's language*. Popular accounts (Tannen, *Cosmpolitan*, *HomeImprovement*) and serious scholarship.

**Hard points from lectures**

*Lectures 26 & 27*

- Nothing very hard here.

**Must do**

Remind them that HW #5 is due by 5pm. Cut-off for late work is December 15, 5pm (i.e., not a whole week.)

Count participation beads.

Review for test #5, which will be administered online. Details will be provided during the last week of class.

**Also consider****Bring**

## **7. Appendices**

See end of table of contents for list.