

**BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
City University of New York

**Department of Academic Literacy and Linguistics**  
**LIN 250H.053W**  
**Spring 2021**  
**Forensic Linguistics**

**Instructor:** Cynthia S Wiseman, EdD  
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**Office:** N499C  
**Office Hours:** Mondays 12-3 via zoom  
& by appointment  
**Academic Calendar**

**Class Hours:** 3  
**Credits:** 3  
**Days/Time/Rooms:** Online

Fri Jan 29	Classes begin
Fri Feb 5	Verification of Enrollment (VOE) period begins
Fri Feb 12	Lincoln's Birthday: No classes
Mon Feb 15	President's Day: No classes
Thurs Feb 18	VOE period ends
Sat-Wed, Mar 27-31	Spring Break: No classes
Thurs-Sun, Apr 1-4	Spring Break: No classes
Mon May 17	Last Day to Withdraw with grade of W
Mon May 17	Last Day of Class
Tues May 18	Reading day
Wed-Tues, May 19-25	Final Examinations
Fri May 28	Grades Submitted
Tues Jun 1	Honors Convocation
Fri Jun 4	BMCC Graduation/Convocation

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This 3-credit, 200-level course will explore the complex relationship between language and the law. The course critically considers the role of language and its power in the legal process. Three branches of forensic linguistics (handwriting, phonology, and discourse analysis) will be discussed. We will examine the work of dialectologists, creolists, and graphologists who have used linguistic evidence to interpret evidence (e.g., blackmail and ransom notes), and voice and spectrogram analysis will also be discussed. The course will also examine how linguists are involved in the legal process when they serve as expert witnesses. This course fulfills the Writing Intensive (WI) requirement for the College.

**PRE-REQUISITES**

ENG 101, ENG 201

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The main goal of this course is that through the discipline of linguistics students will gain an awareness of the positive and negative manipulation of language in the pursuit of justice. Student learning objectives include:

**WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE**

This is a Writing Intensive course that fulfills the WI requirement for graduation. Writing intensive courses pay special attention to developing critical reading, writing, and analytic skills to prepare students for college-level coursework. Both informal and formal writing will be designed to maximize your understanding of the subject matter. Formal writing assignments, at least 10-12 pages total, account for the largest portion of your grade and will include opportunities for revision.

<b>Course Student Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Measurements</b>
1. Students will be able to identify positive and negative manipulation of language in legal settings.	1. In-class analyses, homework, exams, and larger data collection and research papers
2. Students will be able to describe the role of the linguist as expert in legal settings.	2. In-class analyses, homework, exams, and larger data collection and research papers
3. Students will be able to analyze the work of experienced practitioners.	3. In-class analyses, homework, exams, and larger data collection and research papers
4. Students will be able to identify how language influences thought and analyze how this relationship impacts the legal process.	4. In-class analyses, homework, exams, and larger data collection and research papers
5. Students will be able to critically assess research articles.	5. In-class analyses, homework, exams, and larger data collection and research papers

<b>General Education Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Measurements</b>
<b>Social and Behavioral Sciences-</b> Students will be able to apply the concepts and methods of the social sciences.	Students will collect and analyze forensic linguistic material, and submit in-class analyses, homework, and larger data collection and research papers

<b>Writing Intensive Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Measurements</b>
Students will be able to complete (a) formal writing assignment(s) of at least 10-12 pages in length that has/have gone through the revision process (e.g., research paper, content-related report, and essay).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short papers /essays/ data collection report</li> <li>• Research Proposal</li> <li>• Annotated bibliography</li> </ul>
Students will be able to generate pieces of informal writing in response to a variety of prompts, concepts, situations, or reading assignments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blog discussions</li> <li>• Journal assignments</li> </ul>

<b>Honors Courses Outcomes</b>	<b>Measurements (means of assessment for honors courses outcomes)</b>
Communicate clearly, knowledgeably, and effectively in written, spoken, visual, oral and technological modes for a variety of purposes, with different audiences in various contexts, using appropriate formats and technologies.	<b>Written Analysis</b> of Linguistic Data in a Case involving language-related crimes & <b>Oral Presentation</b> of Project; quizzes & exams
Conceive, plan and execute a high quality (multi) disciplinary research, creative, or applied project, using multiple modes and technologies, including qualitative methods and other modes of inquiry and research.	<b>Mid-term &amp; Final Projects:</b> Submit a preliminary plan for feedback and approval: Submit: Linguistic analysis of linguistic evidence in light of the relevant law. Feedback on plan and project graded using rubric. Quizzes & exams
Demonstrate an ability to give constructive criticism and accept feedback as part of the process of peer review.	<b>Peer Feedback:</b> Critique and provide feedback for peer presentations using rubric

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION**

Please study the breakdown of the value of the required assignments. Notice that completing the weekly Discussion Board and Reading comprehension Assignment is worth 15% of the final grade. This seems like a small proportion of the final grade but keeping up with the weekly assignments, doing the readings,

and answering the comprehension questions each week will give you the tools that are necessary to complete the projects.

Notice that the parts of speech quiz, mid-term exam and the final exam constitute 30% of the final grade. The exams count for a greater percentage of the final grade but not the greatest percentage. Exams should be the opportunity to review and organize all the concepts and information that we have covered during the semester.

Note that the projects constitute 40%, the greatest proportion of the final grade. These projects are like capstone projects in a STEM course. They require that you apply all the information and ideas that we have studied in the analysis of authentic data. These projects are worth more because they require more attention and thought because they try to simulate how linguistic analysis can be applied in the real world.

For Honors credit, there is an additional requirement worth 15% of the final grade. This task to critique or provide peer feedback on the ePortfolios of classmates gives you the opportunity to develop feedback criteria, to evaluate work and to give feedback to classmates. This is a valuable opportunity to apply the concepts and knowledge that we have learned but also to develop and refine soft skills critical in the work place.

Homework Assignments/Quizzes	15%
Mid-semester Project	15%
Midterm	20%
Final Project and Presentation	25%
Final Exam	10%
Peer- and Self-Evaluation/Critique of ePortfolio	<b>15%</b>

### Grade Definition Index

A	93-100%	<b>4.0</b>	
A-	90-92%	<b>3.7</b>	
B+	87-89%	<b>3.3</b>	
B	83-86%	<b>3.0</b>	
B-	80-82%	<b>2.7</b>	
C+	77-79%	<b>2.3</b>	
C	73-76%	<b>2.0</b>	
C-	70-72%	<b>1.7</b>	If you receive a C- or lower, see the <a href="#">F/C-grading policy</a> on the BMCC website.
D+	67-69%	<b>1.3</b>	
D	63-66%	<b>1.0</b>	
D-	60-62%	<b>0.7</b>	
F	Failure	<b>0.0</b>	

I encourage you to discuss your grades with me as the semester progresses. Here is how I describe student work at different grade levels:

- A – Excellent overall
- B – Mostly adequate with some excellent aspects
- C – Adequate
- D – Mostly inadequate with some unacceptable aspects
- F – Unacceptable overall

Let me emphasize that an “A” for the overall course requires excellence in all aspects of the course. Just doing all the work in this course is often adequate (i.e. “C” or “C+” work). Students who receive an “A” push themselves very hard because they are not content to do the minimum.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- Solan, Lawrence M. and Peter M. Tiersma (2005) *Speaking of Crime: The Language of Criminal Justice*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

### **HONORS Project: Critique and peer feedback on midterm/final projects**

To earn honors credit for this course requires the following:

- In collaboration with other Honors student, develop a rubric for each page of the ePortfolio.
- Review the ePortfolios assigned to you.
- Give feedback to classmates regarding their ePortfolios, including praise for excellent presentations and suggestions for improvement.
- Self-evaluation: reflection on your role as peer mentor.

### **Guidelines for Required Assignments**

Regular class **participation** is required. Active participation in an online course includes regular weekly postings on Discussion Board, submission of requirement reading assignments, completion of quizzes and exams and midterm and final projects as well as presentations.

All assignments must be submitted on their **due date**. If you have any problems meeting the deadlines or submitting the work (e.g., access to internet, etc.), please communicate this to me ASAP. I am willing to work with you but you must contact me and discuss the situation. Otherwise, please note: Any late work may receive a lower **grade** than it would get if submitted on time.

### **Discussion Board Posts**

Please remember the following points for Discussion Board posts:

1. Original post is due by Thursdays at midnight. Please develop responses to answer the suggested question(s). Elaborate with explanation and examples. Include a bibliographic citation. (You may go online and find additional information from other sources besides the textbook.)
2. Post at least 2 substantive responses to other posts by midnight on Sunday evening. A substantive response means that you are explaining the idea expressed in the original post and then further developing that idea. A substantive response is not "I agree with you." or "I like what you said." or "You are right." You have to address a particular point made in the original post. In your response, explain what the original post said, what was right or correct if you agreed and why you think it was correct or what was not accurate or aligned with your perspective and why and how you disagree and then add something to that point -- develop it, perhaps with additional information or an example.

### **Reading Assignments**

1. Please submit reading responses via Assignments.
2. Copy and paste the question that you are answering into the document and then write the response in answer to the question.
3. Answer the required number of questions thoroughly. This assignment is the opportunity for you to demonstrate that you have read the articles and that you are attempting to understand the concepts presented in the reading. Explain and provide language examples to illustrate the concepts.
4. Write in Standard Academic English. Please proofread your writing. (no fragments, run-on sentence, misspellings, errors in punctuation, etc.)

5. Provide citations for each of the articles/sources that you are citing or writing about. (Note: I have provided citations for most of the readings so that you just have to copy and paste that citation into your document.)
6. Upload the saved document in Assignments. (Note: I cannot insert comments into your response on Assignments if you copy and paste your work into the textbox but I can if you upload a .doc)
7. **IMPORTANT!!!!!! DO NOT** copy and paste your responses into the Comment box. The Comment box is for a message like, "Dear Prof., Please find my homework attached." All formatting is lost if you copy and paste it into the comment box. I cannot make comments and respond to your work if you paste it there.

**Citations: APA format.**

Linguistics is a social science and in this discipline, we use the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines for citations. Please refer to the Purdue Owl website for guidelines on in-text citations and bibliographic citations (APA style).

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/03/>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05/>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/06/>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/07/>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/08/>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/09/>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/10/>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/11/>

**All written assignments must be proofread and edited to meet academic writing guidelines/standards.**

**COURSE POLICIES**

*Deadlines:* If you have a serious reason or emergency that prevents you from completing an assignment, you must email me before the deadline and I will consider your request on a case-by-case basis.

*Extra Help:* I am available for extra help during my posted office hours. You may drop in, but setting up a time in advance guarantees that I will save the time just for you.

*Online & Email Etiquette:* Please be respectful in your discussion board posts, in your communication with classmates and your professor. If you want to send an email to me, please refer to the article I have given the class to represent yourself in the best possible way.

**Class Participation**

Participation in the academic activity of each course is a significant component of the learning process and plays a major role in determining overall student academic achievement. Academic activities may include, but are not limited to, attending class, submitting assignments, engaging in in-class or online activities, taking exams, and/or participating in group work. Each instructor has the right to establish their own class participation policy, and it is each student's responsibility to be familiar with and follow the participation policies for each course.

**BMCC is committed to the health and well-being of all students. It is common for everyone to seek assistance at some**

**point in their life, and there are free and confidential services on campus that can help.**

**Single Stop** [www.bmcc.cuny.edu/singlestop](http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/singlestop), room S230, 212-220-8195. If you are having problems with food or housing insecurity, finances, health insurance or anything else that might get in the way of your studies at BMCC, come by the Single Stop Office for advice and assistance. Assistance is also available through the Office of Student Affairs, S350, 212-220- 8130.

**Counseling Center** [www.bmcc.cuny.edu/counseling](http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/counseling), room S343, 212-220-8140. Counselors assist students in addressing psychological and adjustment issues (i.e., depression, anxiety, and relationships) and can help with stress, time management and more. Counselors are available for walk-in visits.

**Office of Compliance and Diversity** [www.bmcc.cuny.edu/aac](http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/aac), room S701, 212-220-1236. BMCC is committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive learning environment free of unlawful discrimination/harassment, including sexual harassment, where all students are treated fairly. For information about BMCC's policies and resources, or to request additional assistance in this area, please visit or call the office, or email [olevy@bmcc.cuny.edu](mailto:olevy@bmcc.cuny.edu), or [twade@bmcc.cuny.edu](mailto:twade@bmcc.cuny.edu). If you need immediate assistance, please contact BMCC Public safety at 212-220-8080.

**Office of Accessibility** [www.bmcc.cuny.edu/accessibility](http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/accessibility), room N360 (accessible entrance: 77 Harrison Street), 212-220-8180. This office collaborates with students who have documented disabilities, to coordinate support services, reasonable accommodations, and programs that enable equal access to education and college life. To request an accommodation due to a documented disability, please visit or call the office.

### **BMCC Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity Statement**

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas, words or artistic, scientific, or technical work as one's own creation. Using the idea or work of another is permissible only when the original author is identified. Paraphrasing and summarizing, as well as direct quotations, require citations to the original source. Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Lack of dishonest intent does not necessarily absolve a student of responsibility for plagiarism. Students who are unsure how and when to provide documentation are advised to consult with their instructors. The library has guides designed to help students to appropriately identify a cited work. The full policy can be found on BMCC's Web site, [www.bmcc.cuny.edu](http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu). For further information on integrity and behavior, please consult the college bulletin (also available online).

### **Outline of Topics (Subject to change at the instructor's discretion)**

- Introduction to Forensic Linguistics and Linguistics in the Law
- Gathering the Evidence
- Linguistic Evidence in Court
- Crimes of Language
- The (Possible) Improvements/Evolution of Language and the Law