

# ECOLINGUISTICS

LIN 4930 (23308)/ LIN 6932 (23309). Fall 2025

T Period 4 (10:40-11:30) Turlington 2318

R Periods 4-5 (10:40-12:35) Little 233

**Instructor:** Dr. Fiona Mc Laughlin

<https://people.clas.ufl.edu/fmcl/>

**Hours:** Wednesday 10:00-12:00 or by appt.

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*Florida Mangroves*

*Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation/Tim Donovan*

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Welcome to ecolinguistics, a multifaceted and interdisciplinary field of investigation that aims to probe the relationship between language and the natural environment. We are currently living in what some call the Anthropocene, the informal name for an epoch marked by substantial human-made change to the natural environment, resulting in seemingly intractable problems such as accelerating climate change and the global dispersion of plastics and other pollutants that degrade the environment. This course will consider the ways in which people talk about their natural environment and the effects this has on human thought and behavior, on grammar, and on the environment. We will then turn our attention to the relationship between language endangerment and ecology in hotspots of linguistic diversity in the world to understand what language loss means for the planet.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The specific objectives of this course are:

- To gain a general familiarity with the field of ecolinguistics
- To acquire critical skills for analyzing discourses on the environment
- To gain experience in presenting oral and written arguments about language and the environment and language endangerment
- To develop a deeper understanding of the role of language in mitigating threats to the environment

## **Broader objectives**

These are objectives that go beyond the topic of the course to contribute to your growth as an educated person:

- To become a better – and more interesting – writer
- To develop your ability to make informed and articulate arguments, especially those related to language and the environment

## **Class format**

This course relies primarily on discussion of the material we will consider. The format of this class demands that you, the students, be active participants in the learning process by a) doing the assigned readings; b) coming to class prepared and ready to contribute to conversations and activities on the day's topic; c) listening to your classmates, encouraging them, and sharing with them your thoughts, insights, and questions related to the material and topic at hand.

## **Classroom culture**

Our guidelines on classroom culture reflect respect for yourself, your classmates, and your professor. Cell phones must be silenced and put away in a backpack or purse by the time class begins. Please do not leave them sitting on your desk as they will distract you from our lectures and discussions. You may take notes on your laptop if you prefer that to a notebook, but please do not engage in activities on your laptop that are not related to class because it can be distracting to students sitting behind you. Please be punctual and arrive on time for class. When we discuss controversial topics in class, please be respectful of other students, including those who have points of view that may differ from your own. The university classroom should be an open space for debate and the exchange of ideas.

## **Communication**

I communicate with students outside of class through e-mail. Please be sure to check your UF e-mail on a regular basis. You should familiarize yourself with professional e-mail etiquette [here](#) and apply it in your communications with all your professors.

## **Requirements & attendance policy**

As part of our classroom community, you are required to attend class, complete readings and assignments on time, and participate in class discussions and activities. I consider these requirements to be interrelated: you cannot do one without the other. There may of course be times when something such as illness, an emergency, a religious holiday, or an activity will prevent your attendance, in which case you will be given the opportunity to make up the missed work. This provision will not apply to non-emergencies like oversleeping or working. In the case of illness or an emergency, please contact me by e-mail as soon as it is feasible for you to do so, to discuss how you will make up what you have missed. If you are participating in a university or athletic event that requires travel, or if you will be observing a religious holiday, please let me know in advance by e-mail so that we can make arrangements regarding readings and assignments.

## ACADEMIC POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Click [here](#) to view UF's academic policies and resources, all of which are applicable to this class.

## READINGS

The following textbooks are **required** for this class:

Stibbe, Arran. 2024. *Econarrative: Ethics, ecology and the search for new narratives to live by*. London: Bloomsbury.

Evans, Nicholas. 2022. *Words of wonder: Endangered languages and what they tell us*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Wiley Blackwell. Second Edition.

Ghosh, Amitav. 2016. *The great derangement: Climate change and the unthinkable*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Additional required readings are available on CANVAS (<https://elearning.ufl.edu>).

## GRADES

**Grades** calculated as follows:

Test 1	20%
Test 2	20%
Test 3	20%
Discussion	20%
Presentations	20%

### Class discussion

In order to engage in meaningful class discussion you should do the readings carefully, take notes on them, think through what you have learned from them and what your reaction to them is. Your Canvas postings will help you refine your reading and you should come to class prepared to contribute meaningfully to the discussion.

### Short written assignments

You will have five short written assignments over the course of the semester. These will be opportunities to apply the concepts you learn in Stibbe's book to discourses about the environment. You should aim to write approximately 4-500 words for each.

### Paper 1

Your first paper will be related to Amitav Ghosh's book, *The great derangement: Climate change and the unthinkable*. You will be provided with details well in advance of the due date.

### Paper 2

The second paper will be related to Nick Evans' book, *Words of wonder: Endangered languages and what they tell us*. You will be provided with details well in advance of the due date.

The assignment of a final letter grade will be based on the following scale:

A 92-100	B 81-84.9	C 71-74.9	D 61-64.9
A- 88-91.9	B- 78-80.9	C- 68-70.9	D- 58-60.9
B+ 85-87.9	C+ 75-77.9	D+ 65-67.9	E Below 58

You may consult the following website to see how the final letter grade is weighted with regard to overall GPA: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

**SCHEDULE of TOPICS** (subject to minor changes according to class rhythm and needs)

\*Please consult CANVAS for materials other than those drawn from our textbooks. Readings on CANVAS are marked by an asterisk below.

<b>Week 1</b> Th 8/21	<b>Introduction to ecolinguistics</b> What we will be doing in this course
<b>Week 2</b> T 8/26-28	<b>Narratives &amp; narratives of origin</b> Readings: Stibbe Ch.1 & 2
<b>Week 3</b> T 9/2-4	<b>Narrating ecocultural identity</b> Readings: Stibbe Ch.3 & 4 Short written assignment due 9/6
<b>Week 4</b> 9/9-11	<b>Evaluations and identities</b> Readings: Stibbe Ch.5 & 6
<b>Week 5</b> 9/16-18	<b>Convictions and erasure</b> Readings: Stibbe Ch.7 & 8
<b>Week 6</b> 9/23-25	<b>Salience and narratives</b> Readings: Stibbe Ch.9-10
<b>Week 7</b> 9/30-10/2	<b>Interlude</b> Reading: Amitav Ghosh <i>The great derangement: Climate change and the unthinkable</i>
<b>Week 8</b> 10/7-9	<b>Interlude</b> Reading: Amitav Ghosh <i>The great derangement: Climate change and the unthinkable</i>
<b>Week 9</b> 10/14-16	<b>The ecology of language endangerment</b> Reading: Gorenflo et al. 2013 <a href="https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.1117511109">https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.1117511109</a>  Watch: "Endangered languages: why it matters." Mandana Seyfeddinipur, Director, Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR). <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7HZOsQYx_U">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7HZOsQYx_U</a>
<b>Week 10</b> 10/21-23	<b>'The library of Babel'</b> Evans Part I (Ch. 1 & 2)
<b>Week 11</b> T 10/28-30	<b>'A great feast of languages'</b> Readings: Evans Part II (Ch. 3 & 4)
<b>Week 12</b> T 11/4-6	<b>'Faint tracks in an ancient wordscape: Language and deep world history'</b> Readings: Evans Part III (Ch. 5, 6 & 7)
<b>Week 13</b> T 11/13	<b>'Ratchetting up each other: The coevolution of language, culture, and thought'</b> Readings: Evans Part IV (Ch. 8 & 9)

**Week 14**

T 11/18

**'On the brink'**

Readings: Evans Parts V and VI (Ch. 10 & afterword)

**Week 15**

Th 12/2

**Wrap-up**