

# Language in African Society

LIN 4930 . LIN 6932. SSA 3730 . Fall 2021 . T4 (AND 21) R4-5 (AND 13)

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**Hours:** Wednesday 1:00-3:00pm & by appt.

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*Lu nekk, mëneesna ko toxal, mu mel ni mu meloon, ba mu des wax*  
Anything can be moved and remain the same, except speech  
**Wolof proverb**



## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Welcome to Language in African Society! Africa is a vast and diverse continent where multilingualism is the norm and language plays a central role in social belonging and the maintenance of social relations. This course delves into the relationship between language and society in Africa from both a sociolinguistic and an ethnographic perspective. You will be introduced to a number of important topics in the study of language in African societies and become familiar with recent theoretical perspectives that allow you to talk about complex linguistic practices in new ways. No knowledge of an African language is required.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The specific objectives of this course are:

- To gain a general familiarity with the overall structure of African societies
- To survey the different roles of language in African societies
- To acquire critical skills for analyzing language in African societies
- To gain experience in presenting oral and written arguments about language in African societies
- To develop a deeper understanding of the role of language in African society

## **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 a more interesting – writer
- To develop your ability to make informed and articulate arguments

## **Class format**

This course relies on a combination of lectures and discussions that will enable you to explore the material (readings and film) we are considering. 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, frustrations, and (yes!) problems 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.

## **\*Special COVID information for Fall 2021 (as of 8/9/21)**

As of July 26, 2021, the Center for Disease Control issued [new guidance](#) for protection against contracting COVID-19. The CDC's recommendation is that vaccinated (and unvaccinated) people resume masking indoors in parts of the country where transmission is high. Florida is currently experiencing very high transmission rates of the virus. The CDC emphasizes that COVID-19 vaccines remain effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death. Please take this information into consideration and act responsibly to protect our classroom community by wearing a mask in class. COVID vaccines are available at the UF Student Health Center and at many other venues in Gainesville, and masks are widely available throughout campus. \*Please note that you will be required to wear a mask if you come to my office.

## 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. That being said, there may 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.

## READINGS

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

Grosz-Ngaté, Maria, John Hanson, and Patrick O'Meara, eds. 2014. *Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. (4<sup>th</sup> edition)

Simpson, Andrew, ed. 2008. *Language and national identity in Africa*. Oxford University Press.

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

## GRADES

**Grades** calculated as follows:

Test 1	15%
Test 2	15%
Oral presentation 1	10%
Oral presentation 2	10%
Paper	15%
Small assignments	15%
Classroom contribution	20%

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/>

## Access

Students who require academic accommodation to access the full benefits of this class may apply through the Disability Resource Center <https://disability.ufl.edu>. You should share your accommodation letter with me as early as possible so that I can make appropriate arrangements.

## Academic honesty

As a UF student you have subscribed to the Student Code of Honor. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, is a violation of that Code. Any student engaging in such activities will be dealt with in accordance with University policy and receive a failing grade for the course.

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

## Course evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>.

## Class recording

Pursuant to Florida House Bill 233, which you can see [here](#), please note the following:

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

## Campus resources

### Health and Wellness

*U Matter, We Care:* If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

*Counseling and Wellness Center:* Visit the [Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

*Student Health Care Center:* Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the [Student Health Care Center website](#).

*University Police Department:* Visit [UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

#### Academic Resources

*E-learning technical support:* Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).

[Career Connections Center](#): Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

[Library Support](#): Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

[Teaching Center](#): Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

[Writing Studio](#): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

*Student Complaints On-Campus:* [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information](#).

#### **SCHEDULE of TOPICS** (subject to minor changes according to class 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>	<b>Introduction to African societies: Space and time</b>
T 8/24	Introduction to the class
Th 8/26	Readings: <i>Africa</i> , Chapters 1 & 2 Assignment: Bring one current news story about Africa for discussion
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Introduction to African societies: Social relations</b>
T 8/31	Reading: <i>Africa</i> , Chapter 3
Th 9/2	Reading: *Bird & Shopen (1979), The use of language in Maninka culture In class: Coleman Donaldson. <i>Na baro ke: Streetside chats in Manding. An ka taa</i> .
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Multilingualism and linguistic repertoires in African societies</b>
T 9/7	Readings: *Lüpke & Storch (2013), Multilingualism on the ground, pp. 13-47.
Th 9/9	In class: Coleman Donaldson, <i>Senankuya</i> Joking relationships
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Language and the city in Africa 2/2-4</b>
T 9/14	Readings: <i>Africa</i> , Ch. 6; *Beck (2010), Urban languages in Africa
Th 9/16	In class: <i>Contras' City</i> by Djibril Diop Mambéty <a href="http://www.ubu.com/film/mambety_contras.html">http://www.ubu.com/film/mambety_contras.html</a>

<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Language and the city in Africa</b>
T 9/21	Reading: *Mc Laughlin (2008), On the origins of urban Wolof: Evidence from Descemet's 1864 phrase book.
Th 9/23	Readings: *Quayson (2010), Signs of the times: Discourse ecologies and street life on Oxford St., Accra; *Newell (2009), Enregistering modernity, bluffing criminality: How Nouchi speech reinvented (and fractured) the nation
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Language and the city in Africa</b>
T 9/28	Preparation: Watch <i>The little girl who sold the Sun</i> by Djibril Diop Mambéty. The film is available through UF libraries on Kanopy. You must log in to the UF library system via VPN if you are accessing it from off campus. <a href="https://ufl.kanopy.com/video/little-girl-who-sold-sun-la-petite-vendeuse-">https://ufl.kanopy.com/video/little-girl-who-sold-sun-la-petite-vendeuse-</a>
Th 9/30	Test 1
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Youth languages in Africa</b>
T 10/5	Reading: *Kiessling & Mous (2004), Urban youth languages in Africa
Th 10/7	<b>Multilingualism and the nation</b> Reading: <i>Africa</i> Chapter 12
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Multilingualism and the nation</b>
T 10/12	Reading: Simpson, Introduction.
Th 10/14	In class: Presentations based on case studies from Simpson
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Writing in Africa</b>
T 10/19	Readings: <i>Africa</i> , Ch. 5; *Pasch (2008) Competing scripts: The introduction of the Roman alphabet in Africa
Th 10/ 21	<b>Writing and old literacies in Africa</b> Readings: *Savage (2008) Writing Tuareg – The three script options; *El Guabli (2020) (Re) invention of tradition, subversive memory, and Morocco's re-Amazighization: From erasure of Imazighen to the performance of Tifinagh in public life
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Writing and old literacies in Africa</b>
T 10/26	Reading: *Lüpke & Bao-Diop (2014) Beneath the surface? Contemporary <i>ajami</i> writing in West Africa, exemplified through wolofal
Th 10/28	October 28 <b>no class</b> (I will be at the Middle Eastern Studies Association Annual Meeting in Montreal)
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Writing and new literacies in Africa</b>
T 11/2	Reading: *Juffermans (2011) 'Do you want me to translate this in English or in a better Mandinka language?': Unequal literacy regimes and grassroots spelling practices in peri-urban Gambia

Th 11/4 \*Deumert & Lexander (2013) Texting Africa: Writing as performance; \*Mc Laughlin (2015) Linguistic warscapes of northern Mali

**Week 12**

T 11/9 Test 2

Th 11/11 Holiday

**Week 13 Language and mediation in Africa**

T 11/16 Readings: \*Conrad & Frank (1995) Nyamakalaya: Contradiction and ambiguity in Mande society; \*Hoffman (1995) Power, structure, and Mande *jeliw*

Th 11/18 Presentations on final paper

**Week 14**

T 11/23 Presentations on final paper

**Week 15 Language and mediation in Africa**

11/30 Readings: \*Conrad (1995) Blind man meets Prophet: Oral tradition, Islam, and *funé* identity

12/2 In class: *Timbuktu* by Abderrahmane Sissako

**Week 16 Wrap-up**

12/7