

Course Description & Goals last modified: 1/5/10

This course provides language teachers, or those who wish to learn about language teaching, with a basic familiarity with the purposes, principles, concepts, methods, and tools of assessment - primarily of language learning, but also the assessment of learning materials, language programs, larger educational units as they relate to language learning, and language teachers themselves. Graduate students will receive a more advanced familiarity with one of these areas, especially with regard to research.

WHAT'S NEW last modified: 1/5/10

Items will be posted with the newest at the top.
Links open in new windows.

5 January

The outline below is a DRAFT, based on the previous version (2008 winter) of the course. At the first meeting we will discuss how it will be changed to suit the needs of the participants.

- fundamental concepts of testing (kinds, purposes, clients / communities, determinations of quality)
- national / international proficiency standards and definitions of competence
- commonly used assessments, including TOEFL and ACTFL OPI
- state standards and assessment tools, and their relation to curriculum and content
- creating test specifications
- creating rubrics / scoring guides
- computer-assisted testing: IBT and WebCAPE
- assessment and statistics
- assessing resources (textbooks, etc.)
- curriculum, program, institutional and system assessment, including departmental assessment at PSU, learner-outcomes assessment at PSU and in OUS
- teacher self-assessment (professional progress)
- financing assessment and research (familiarization with grants and projects)

These can serve as an outline of the course until we have a syllabus for it, which I expect to post by the second meeting of the class. In the meantime I will also be gathering email addresses and trying to contact the people who have registered for the course.

We expect to use *Testing for Language Teachers*, by Arthur Hughes, as our printed textbook, but it will be accompanied by other required reading that will be available as a photocopy package, from download via our course website, by access to the ACTFL and TESOL websites. There may be a secondary printed textbook specific to AL and FLL, probably *Testcraft* by Davidson and Lynch for AL, and *Introduction to Rubrics* by Stevens and Levi for FLL. PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT TO ACQUIRE THESE BOOKS until we announce a firm decision.



Meeting 01 • 05 January 2010 • Tuesday

Version:
1/5/10

Today

numbers in () = minutes planned for activity/ topic

√ = topic / activity that was adequately dealt with during the class

+ = topic needs more attention & will be resumed at next / subsequent meeting(s)

- = a topic / activity that was proposed but not carried out (but will be taken up later)

~~Struck through text like this~~ = a topic / activity that was proposed but not included / is not going to be taken up after all*Italic text like this* = comments after the meeting

	Main topic(s): Introduction to Assessment; the FL and AL Cultures
	(5) Welcome, introductions, overview (see TOC link: "course description & goals")
	(10) Course explanation: foundations and concepts
	(20) Ice-breaker activity: Who we are and what experiences of assessment we bring to the course. (Ever "frozen" on an exam - or "aced" one? Ever realized that, as a teacher, you have given a lousy exam - or (are you sure??) a wonderful one?) How do non-specialists talk about tests? How do they express their estimates of language skills? Media clip: Two very ordinary guys talk about tests in college, including a French test use this link to hear the audio clip, or go to my language-related media page to sample the larger collection of such.
	(30) Group discussion(s): The difficulties, breadth, and purposes of assessment
	(10) How to adjust the course: issues related to Applied Linguistics, ESL, and the TOEFL? How to support participants who haven't had an intro language pedagogy course?
	?(10) Demographic "survey": backgrounds and professional interests of instructor(s)
	?(10) Demographic survey: participants' previous coursework and work experience; language inventory
	(10) Course explanation: mechanics
	(10) Assignments: 1) reading, see the "schedule & assignments" page (under modification); 2) written assignment #1: reflection about a newspaper article
	(10) Announcements, debriefing and summation

More sugar for the kids. Obama's ~~missiveness~~ missiveness is not that of the spoiled princess, as her detractors have suggested, but that of the wary striver: why get used to things being good if they could fall apart at any moment?

"Michelle's always been very vocal about anything," her mother, Marian Robinson, told me. "If it's not right, she's going to say so. When she was at Princeton, her brother"—Craig, now the head basketball coach at Brown, was two years ahead of Michelle—"called me and said, 'Mom, Michelle's here telling people they're not teaching French right.' She thought the style was not conversational enough. I told him, 'Just pretend you don't know her.'"

There is more to the Obamas' relationship, however, than the caricature of Michelle as a ballbreaker to Barack's Obama (Maureen Dowd's term). Consider the moments leading up to Barack's career-making speech at the Democratic

The New Yorker
10 March 2008

Upcoming class meetings

07 January: discussion of Hughes reading and the Oregonian article; mention of the optional textbooks; ••?? the AL and FL "cultures" - differences and similarities; scoring guide for Assignment 1; broader discussion of assessment and grading in the course

Upcoming assignment(s)

This section offers a PREVIEW, not activated assignments. Assignments are made, with announcement of their deadlines, both in class and on the "schedule" page. The next topic (week 2, 12 & 14 January) is "Language 'gold standards': ACTFL Guidelines, the standards and test instruments of the European, ••?? and the TOEFL Test. Also information about where to find other widely-circulated tests. The FL participants will get one that emphasizes ACTFL Guidelines; ••?? the AL participants will get one that focuses on the TOEFL. All participants will rate themselves (or someone else) on the ACTFL scale, by comparison to its profiles. ••?? All participants will examine items from the TOEFL test.

Announcements

••

Misc.

••

top of page

Schedule & Assignments last modified: 1/5/10

Unless otherwise noted, links open in a new window.

NOTE: Course is still being adjusted to current group of participants. Some content will change, especially the parts about Applied Linguistics, ESL, and the TOEFL

Meeting # & Date	Preparation for Meeting/ Assignments Activated at That Meeting (due as specified below)
Week 1: Introduction to Assessment; the FL and AL Cultures	
01 • 05 Jan.	Assignment 1: Written reflection on article, "Washington's proposed math rules to be released Tuesday" (due 15 Jan.)
02 • 07 Jan.	read Hughes: Preface, Chapters 1-3, maybe 13; those who haven't taken an intro language pedagogy course: read supplementary materials as assigned individually
Week 2: Language Standards and Widely-Used Assessment Instruments	
03 • 12 Jan.	ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines & the TOEFL: the "organizing principles" of testing and teaching; are there TESL equivalents of the ACTFL Guidelines, and FL equivalents of the TOEFL?; reliability, validity, backwash; more about major projects and class observations read ACTFL Guidelines for speaking and writing & Hughes chapters 4, 5 and (if not read earlier) 13; Assignment 1 is DUE TODAY; Assignment 2: Rate your own proficiency (due 22 Jan.)
04 • 14 Jan.	Breakout sessions for OPI training (FL - stay in Broadway Building classroom) and test specs & item construction (AL - go to Ondine 202); preview of Assignment 3 (conduct a pseudo-OPI [FL]; write test specs & items [AL] reading: Hughes 7 (everybody); Lynch-Davidson 1994 (AL required, FL optional); begin Stevens & Levi, <i>Introduction to Rubrics</i> (FL required, AL optional)
Week 3: a) the inner workings of the OPI (for FL) and the TOEFL (for AL); b) validity, reliability	
05 • 19 Jan.	Plenary session: debrief the 17 January breakout sessions; more about reliability, validity, backwash; rubrics & scoring guides reading: Hughes chapters 6, 8, and Stevens & Levi or Lynch & Davidson as above Assignment 2 (evaluate your own speaking proficiency) is DUE TODAY
06 • 21 Jan.	Breakout sessions for OPI training (FL - MEET IN ONDINE 202) and exploration of the IBT (AL - MEET IN REGULAR CLASSROOM, Broadway 220); preview of Assignment 3 (differs for FL and AL, and not due for several weeks) reading: Hughes chapter 9, 10, and Stevens & Levi or Lynch & Davidson as above
Week 4: continuation of week 3; rubrics; testing writing	
07 • 26 Jan.	Hughes chapter 9; Stevens (more for FL); Davidson/Lynch (more for AL); optional article (0009 Marva Barnett): an example about how informed assessment leads to informed response to student writing in second languages; formal activation of Assignment 3 for FL participants (version for AL participants was activated in stages that began

	earlier)
08 • 28 Jan.	Continuation of 29 Jan. and a chance to "kick back"; preview of Assignment 4 (create a rubric) (Sara away for the day)
Week 5: continuation of week 4; testing listening and reading; resource searching	
09 • 02 Feb.	reading: Hughes chapters 11, 12;
10 • 04 Feb	Breakout sessions for OPI training (FL - MEET IN ONDINE 202) and exploration of the IBT (AL - MEET IN REGULAR CLASSROOM, Broadway 220); reading: Hughes Appendix 2
Week 6: resource searching; teaching & testing writing, listening, reading	
11 • 09 Feb.	quick overview of kinds of K-8 language programs; group discussion about standardized tests, standards-based education, teaching to the test; on-line secondary research; comparison of AL and FLL with regard to teaching and testing writing reading: Hughes chapters 11, 12
12 • 11 Feb.	group discussion about standardized tests, standards-based education, teaching to the test; comparison of AL and FLL with regard to teaching and testing writing reading: Hughes chapters 11, 12
Week 7: Teaching & Testing Writing (cont'd).; Testing reading & listening; FL- more about large-scale standards (National, state); AL - program-specific standards (IELP, etc.) computer-based testing; placement issues	
13 • 16 Feb.	testing/ teaching writing (cont'd); large-scale standards (introduction, with AL/FL breakout sessions at next meeting); testing (and teaching?) listening and reading; computer-assisted testing (WebCAPE placement test as example); European Union standards and DIALANG test; reading: Hughes chapters 9, 11, 12
14 • 18 Feb.	large-scale standards in FL & AL breakout sessions (AL in regular classroom; FL in Ondine 202)
Week 8: self-assessment as professional; textbook evaluation	
15 • 23 Feb.	visitor: Danelle Stevens (institutional assessment; author of rubrics book); language standards of the European Union; if time (probably not): assessing textbooks and other learning materials
16 • 25 Feb.	followup about institutional assessment; the "G" topic; report about AL job candidates ; assessment of learning materials
Week 9: the "G" topic; breakout sessions for special topics	
17 • 01 Mar.	report about AL job candidates; continuation of "G" topic; about grants
18 • 03 Mar.	breakout sessions: AL (regular room) for classroom assessment; FL for testing reading & listening (meet in main FLL office, 393 NH, for further deployment)
Week 10: technology-supported assessment tools; research & grants to support assessment; assessment of professional development	

current schedule & assignments

19 • 08 Mar.	in NH 437 (Computer classroom) for on-line language tests (WebCAPE, DIALANG) reading: WebCAPE Manual (0179); Hughes, Chapter 16 "Test Administration", Appendix 1 "Statistical Analysis" (go lightly!), and Appendix 2 "Item Banking"
20 • 10 Mar.	Assessment-related grants; assessing own professional development reading: documents linked on the outline for the meeting; "Reaching for PASS" document (0056) about what characterizes a well-prepared language teacher. NOTE please that the project was funded and designed to address FLL teacher ed. In class we will discuss its extension and alteration to fit TESL.

Finals Week: Culminating discussion: assessment of professional development

21 • 15 Mar.	<p>List of Main Course Assignments (not necessarily in final order), with estimate in () of hours of outside-class time needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (2) Written reflection on newspaper article (see above, Assignment 1) • (3 + 3) Further reading and written reflections: WebCAPE or DIALANG; learning materials (textbook, on-line resources, etc.) replaced with self-starting informal reflections of your own, which you are welcome to discuss with us or bring up in class • (2) Evaluate your own language proficiency (Assignment 2) • (3) Write a scoring guide (rubric) for a language learning activity (Assignment 4) • (5) Evaluate own professional development and start teacher portfolio (may become part of panel discussion at meeting during final-exam time) • (5) Search and annotate professional literature in preparation for major project (will be done as part of Major Project) • (5) Classroom observations & reflection • (10) Pseudo OPI (FL, primarily) / create test specs & items (AL, primarily) (Assignment 3) • (20) Major project <p>Total: 55 hours, some of which is done as regular class preparation time</p> <p>Small assignments (reflections, etc.) will usually be due ONE WEEK from when they are activated. Larger ones will have longer lead times. For the really big ones, like the major project, we will introduce them fairly early and check progress along the way.</p> <p>There are no formal tests. We reserve the write to add short in-class reflections as "pop" quizzes.</p>
--------------	---

Assignment #01: Reflection about newspaper article; establish email contact with instructor(s)

last modified:
1/5/10

Purposes: Major: Encourage thought about the complexities of assessment and its stakes and stakeholders. Minor: Confirm reliable two-way email communication and document transmittal

Product: A two-part expression of thoughts and feelings, including some knowledge (and possibly also expression of lack of and need for knowledge). Length: up to 2 pages; difficult to do in less than 1 page (1 page = 250 words). Format: Text file (.txt, .doc, or .rtf) attached to email.

Evaluation: The following link is to the scoring guide for this assignment. If you read the scoring guide before you complete your assignment, you will know exactly what to do to get the score and grade you want.

Procedure:

Read this assignment COMPLETELY before you begin your reflection. Since it is the first assignment of the course, it lays out some important policy considerations.

BEFORE you read the article linked below, think about a significant period of classroom learning in your education, which then resulted in a significant test of that learning. The subject area does not have to be language courses. Then - still BEFORE you read that article - write about half a page in which you briefly describe the learning and testing circumstances (what, when, where, how), and then consider more subjective matters related to the assessment situation, such as: Why that kind of test? Was it appropriate? Did you understand why you were being taught and assessed that way? How have your later life experience, education, professional development affected your view of that earlier learning and assessment experience?

Now read the article, and then revisit your first reflections. Here are some guidelines that you might follow, but if you have a better idea, go with it: 1) If the article increased your understanding of that old learning/ assessment experience, explain how. If it did not, tell what you need to know in order to improve your understanding, or else why you already had a sufficient understanding of the past situation. 2) Offer a few thoughts about how the Washington math teaching and testing situation relates to your world of language learning and teaching.

About the language you write: English is preferred; if that is your native language, use it. If English is not your native language, you may use any of the following without further consideration: Spanish, French, or German. For other languages.

EMAIL this assignment to the instructor. Do NOT write or print it out and hand it in. Use the address that you want your instructor to use to contact you during this course. If you do not have your own internet provider and email service, you should get PSU internet and email access ("Odin") right away (<www.account.pdx.edu>), or arrange some other email and internet service.

Problems? If you do not understand the terms of this assignment, or for some other reason encounter some obstacle in carrying it out, contact the course instructors. Such contact, at least until the process is abused, will count as "on-time" completion of the activity.

A note about setting up your own email:

Many people have incorrectly constructed email e-addresscards. When someone auto-adds them to an addressbook, the new listing shows up just as [e-nickname]@xxx.yyy. Of course that's your email, but it appears in the field where your human name should show. The results: Your name is alphabetized by your nickname, rather than by last name. If your e-nickname is much different from your human name it's hard for people to know who you are when they're going through what may be hundreds of names. The problem is even worse if someone uses a colorful but very different name, such as - true stories from a couple years back, and probably not a good idea in an academic setting - "honeygirl" or "whoflungpoo")

If you're not sure what this means, try sending yourself an email and then auto-adding yourself to your addressbook.

Washington's proposed math rules to be released Tuesday

The Oregonian

3 Dec 2002 pbs

Education | The standards have been rewritten to clarify learning priorities

By **DONNA GORDON BLANKINSHIP**
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEATTLE — When the public gets its first peek at Washington's proposed new grade-by-grade math learning requirements, what they'll find most surprising is how easy they are to understand, the consultant managing the revision effort has promised.

No drastic changes are on the horizon — kindergartners will still learn to count, not multiply and divide — but some philosophies about teaching math are changing, said Kathy Seeley, senior fellow at the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas.

"It's a pretty significant rewrite, but it's not dismissing what was there before," said Seeley, who has been guided in her work by a committee of Washington educators.

The problem with the old standards was not so much the content, but how difficult they were to use by both parents and teachers, Seeley said. The old standards left everyone in the dark about the learning priorities for each year, so teachers had to do some guessing about what to emphasize, and most parents didn't have a clue.

Seeley wouldn't share many specifics about the new learning requirements before the draft is released on Tuesday, but she did offer some examples about the way the teaching of math is evolving in Washington and around the nation.

The current math learning standards offer a spiral of learning — a number of concepts are taught over a number of years with more depth added over time. The new standards will shorten the length of time students are given to master a concept such as fractions, but during the years in which fractions are a major emphasis, teachers will spend more time and make more of an effort to ensure that every child understands the concept thoroughly, Seeley said.

"We're really trying to get past the spiral, so students don't get stuck spinning around," she said.

At every grade level, there will be three or four big hits. For example, grade three will focus on multiplication, division with whole numbers, fractions and early geometry.

A list of the computational skills that need to be learned and the reasoning and problem-solving ideas that go with each concept will be included. Following that will be a list of smaller concepts or supporting ideas that should also be taught at that grade level but not emphasized as much as the big hits, such as learning to tell time, use money or do measurement. Some smaller concepts will become big hits in later years.

Since the Legislature adjourned last spring, the Washington Board of Education has worked with the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and consultants such as the Dana Center to revise the way math is taught and learning is assessed in Washington.

The goal is to realign what is being taught in the classroom with what is being tested on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning so that by the time the math section of the WASL becomes a graduation requirement in 2013, the test makes more sense as an assessment of math learning and more students will pass it. Both the learning requirements and the WASL will be revised by 2013.

Currently, only about half of Washington's 10th-graders pass the math section of the WASL each year, even with retakes, while passage rates on the reading and writing tests are more than 80 percent. This year's seniors are the first class to be required to pass the reading and writing tests to get a diploma. The Legislature removed the math test from graduation requirements earlier this year.

The first step of the revision process happened this past summer, when another consultant worked with the state Board of Education to assess Washington's math expectations. The recommendations written by Linda Plattner of the Maryland-

based education research firm Strategic Teaching, with plenty of public input, guided the Dana Center and the math standards committee in its work.

The committee and the Dana Center spent the past two months writing the draft learning requirements and will spend the next two months gathering public input on the draft and rewriting as needed.

When the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction put out a call for educators and community members to participate in the committee, 157 people applied in about a week.

"I was just blown away by the fact that the response was so tremendous and immediate," said George Bright, a former University of North Carolina professor who came out of retirement to coordinate the math standards project.

That enthusiasm has never flagged, and Bright said that speaks well for Washington's education system and of the prospects for the revision process. He expects a similar response to the state's call for public input on the draft, which will be taken in person at several public forums in January and over the Internet on the project Web site where the draft will be posted on Tuesday.

The committee is looking for specific input, such as suggestions on wording that should be changed or opinions on standards being too difficult or too easy or at the wrong grade level and rationale for making the change.

"We really need as specific information as people can give us about what changes can be made so that the standards address the needs of Washington students," Bright said.

Education officials say six years is not a lot of time for making these revisions, but critics of the WASL and the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction counter that classroom learning and the graduation test should have been aligned a long time ago.

"The process is pretty complex and pretty intense given the short timeline," Seeley said.