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# MB 610 Learning a Language and Culture

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**MB 610/710: Learning a Language and Culture**  
Syllabus – Spring 2003

Tuesdays & Thursdays: 8:00 – 9:15  
MC 204

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**Course Description:**

(From ATS Catalog): “The developed generic methods of applied linguistics which equip the cross-cultural worker with methods of acquiring a field language with maximum efficiency.”

This course is a follow-up to MB 600/700: Anthropology for Christian Mission, and a bridge to MB 720: Cross-Cultural Communications of Christianity. We will be concerned with several aspects of cross-cultural living and learning, in order to facilitate communication in our various ministries.

The course has several facets, each of which could be expanded into at least a full semester’s course. Being put together here, they will serve as introductions to areas of life-long interest, learning, and possible research. These facets are:

- an introduction to language and linguistics, as the scientific study of language;
- an introduction to field methods in cultural anthropology and linguistics;
- an introduction to learning strategies in language study.

**Books and Materials:**

Required books for the course:

1. Abbott, Edwin A. (1884; 1979) *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*. NY: Dover.
2. Brewster, E Thomas, and Brewster, Elizabeth S (1976). *Language Learning Made Practical*. Pasadena: Lingua House (book plus cassette).  
(The book plus cassette is available from the instructor for \$20.00).
3. Marshall, Terry (1989). *The Whole World Guide to Language Learning*. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.
4. Nida, Eugene A (1960; 1990). *Message and Mission: The Communication of the Christian Faith*. Pasadena: William Carey.
5. Sandoz, Mari (1953; 1992). *Cheyenne Autumn*. Lincoln: Univ of Nebraska Press.

Recommended is: LinguaLinks Library (on CD-ROM). 2000. Dallas: SIL International.

(This CD-ROM is available in the Fisher Library. It is recommended for home use too, and for your future use).

**Required Writing Assignments:**

1. An interaction paper with *Cheyenne Autumn*.

This book is an incredible account of a desperate attempt of an oppressed people to keep their way of life in the face of the massive opposition of the encroaching culture. The account is full of ethnographic information about the Cheyenne Culture. But it isn’t given in a systematic way; you have to dig it out. For this assignment, follow these steps:

a. Review the lists of “ethnographic questions” given in the last part of Jacob A Loewen’s “Missionaries and Anthropologist Cooperate in Research” (One of the MB 600/700 readings; also reprinted in Smalley, *Readings in Missionary Anthropology, II*). These are starting pointers to the things to look for in investigating another culture.

b. Read *Cheyenne Autumn*. While reading it for the ‘story’, take note of all the ethnographic information given. You could mark in the margin the places where you find this

information; use different symbols to refer to various aspects of the culture. For example, mark anything about marriage and family structure with F; material about tribal leadership with L; information about religion with R; about healing with H; about the ways of carrying on warfare with W; information about material culture with M.

c. After you read the book, choose one of these areas, or perhaps a sub-division of the area. Collect all of the information given, and present it in a connected way. Think about what you have not been given in the book, and some further questions you would want to ask a Cheyenne about. You might speculate as to what directions further research in this area might turn. Write up your presentation in about 5-6 pages. The report is due on Thurs, March 6.

2. An interaction paper with *Flatland*.

This book is a short classic which everyone should read. You may find it rough going, but persevere you will remember this story longer than almost any other book you read during your seminary days! The theme is very simply the impossibility of cross-cultural communication! Yet we believe that this can be carried out, and it *can* be done successfully. We are called to do just this.

Write a short interaction response with this book, discussing the impossibility, along with what God has done, and something of what you have experienced in attempts at cross-cultural communication. The paper should be 4-5 pages, and is due Thurs, March 20.

3. An interaction paper with *Message and Mission*.

You have read Nida's *Customs and Cultures*. This book is also a classic, and it should be known by anyone concerned with the worldwide communication of the faith. In this book, Nida is concerned with the aspects of culture that we are most concerned with in this course: language and communication. You have been "involved" with a very different culture, the *Cheyenne*; you have wrestled with a parable of the communication problem, in *Flatland*; you are in the midst of assessing your own attitudes to another language and culture (Marshall, and other readings). What insights does Nida give to all of this? How does this apply to your own life and ministry? Write about this in a creative way, about 6-7 pages. This paper is due Thurs, April 3.

4. Language and Culture research.

Delve into one of the classic problems of the Language and Culture field (the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, Emic-Etic Theory, Language and Gender, Sociolinguistic variation, Language change, Bilingualism, Universals of Language/Culture, etc). The topic should be chosen by the end of March, in consultation with Dr. Walker. Read some of the discussions about your topic, and try to apply the discussions to a language that you know.

Write a paper (10-12 pages) which introduces the topic, presents the main currents of thought, the relevance of the problems involved, and some directions for the future, along with your application to a particular language. The paper is due Thursday, May 8.

5. A report on your language work through the semester.

From the first part of the semester, you will be working with a language you do not know through an informant. The time involved will be about one hour per week. You will find out as much as you can about his language (sounds, forms) and do some of the beginning language-learning tasks. At the end of the semester, write up in a systematic way what you have found out. (An outline for this will be given). Your report might be 15-20 pages, and will be due during exam week. There will be no final exam during that week.

**Course Evaluation:**

Your grade for the course will be based on the following:

Each of 3 short papers	10%
Language and Culture paper	20%
Final Language report	25%
Class participation and daily assignments	25%

**Daily Assignments:**

Language problems will be given on most days. Some of these will be worked on together in class; others will be studied outside of class, either individually or in groups. Auditors are expected to participate in these problems, including the ones worked on outside of class.

### **Class Schedule:**

February	11	Introduction; Phonetics	LAMP, 247-312; Marshall, ch. 1
	13	Phonetics	
February	18	Phonetics	Marshall, ch. 2
	20	Phonetics	
February	25	Phonology	
	27	Phonology	
March	4	Morphology	LAMP, 9-102; Marshall, ch. 3
	6	Morphology	Cheyenne Autumn paper due
March	11	Morphology	Marshall, ch. 4
	13	Morphology	
March	18	Syntax	LAMP, 313-67; Marshall, ch. 5
	20	Syntax	Flatland paper due
March	25	Syntax	
	27	Syntax	
April	1	Semantics	
	3	Semantics	Nida paper due
(Reading Week)			
April	15	Language in Society	
	17	Language in Society	
April	22	Child language	
	24	Child language	
April	29	Other language topics	
May	1	Other language topics	
May	6	Language and Culture	
	8	Language and Culture	Language and Culture paper due
May	13	Language and Culture	
	14	Language and Culture	
Exam Week			Language Report due