

Form E-1-A for Boston College Core Curriculum

Department/Program Eastern, Slavic, & Germanic Studies
Program in Linguistics

Note: I am completing this form with reference to the course Ling2379/ Engl2132 / Socy2275 *Language & Ethnicity*, which offers Cultural Diversity credit. It was last taught Spring 2023

- 1) **Have formal learning outcomes for the department's Core courses been developed? What are they?**
(What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect students completing its Core courses to have acquired?)

Below are the 'learning outcomes' articulated for the course in Spring 2023

- Broad exposure to the methods and results of modern sociolinguistic inquiry, especially with reference to the concepts of style-shifting and convergent vs. divergent accommodation
- The ability to articulate, in fine detail, how groups of contemporary Americans construct their social identities through the use of varieties of English, with reference to the phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon, and pragmatic resources of their native dialects
Case studies include the following groups:
 - Residents of the Appalachian and Ozarks area
 - Italian and Irish immigrants to New England; long-stable residents of rural New England
 - African Americans living in diverse parts of the US
 - Oglala Lakota tribal members in Pine Ridge, South Dakota
- Understanding of the historical, social, and linguistic factors that have given rise to very different outcomes in the acquisition of English by Native Americans, African Americans, and ethnic groups that immigrated to the US from western Europe
- Depth of control over the varied communicative practices used by ethnically Deaf communities in the US; the history of American Sign Language and its competitor technologies; the ethno-cultural controversy precipitated by development of the cochlear implant
- Comprehension of both sides of on-going debates about language endangerment and about bilingual education in the context of US language policy
- At least modest control over the conventions of the International Phonetic Alphabet; the ability to use IPA to transcribe spontaneous speech in several dialects of English
- Experience reflecting on their own ethno-linguistic life history, and in placing that history in the context of personal memoirs by Leah Cohen, George Steiner, Richard Rodriguez, Amy Tan, Simon Ortiz, and Keith Gilyard

- 2) **Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific.** (Where are the department's expected learning outcomes for its Core courses accessible: on the web, in the catalog, or in your department handouts?)

These learning outcomes are specified in the course syllabus, made available to the institution at large through online publication, and distributed to students through posting on Canvas.

- 3) **Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine whether students have achieved the stated outcomes for the Core requirement?** (What evidence and analytical approaches do you use to assess which of the student learning outcomes have been achieved more or less well?)

(1) At mid-semester, students complete an informal course assessment in which they are invited to reflect on their progress in the direction of the course goals. That pooled data informs the subsequent direction of the course;

(2) Linguistics majors can elect to present texts they created for this class as an example of their best work in the discipline on the occasion of their senior departmental Colloquium;

(3) The instructor and TA grade and extensively comment on mid-term exams, and post online both further discussion of the exercise and samples of ideal responses. Final exams are comprehensive of the full course, and graded but not returned to students. They are retained as a permanent record of the group's accomplishments.

- 4) **Who interprets the evidence? What is the process?** (Who in the department is responsible for interpreting the data and making recommendations for curriculum or assignment changes if appropriate? When does this occur?)

The instructor, in collaboration with the course Teaching Assistant, interprets informal evidence for student achievement gathered at mid-semester. The Chair of the Department and other faculty members teaching in linguistics serve a consultative role as needed. In addition, student course evaluations are carried out every year at the end of the semester. Summaries are available to both the Chair of the Department and to the Departments of English and of Sociology, where the course is cross-registered. The instructor retains the full content of the course evaluations, including narrative responses to questions which probe students' self-evaluations of course goals. The instructor and TA meet after the course evaluations are returned to discuss these narratives in depth.

- 5) **What were the assessment results and what changes have been made as a result of using this data/evidence?** (What were the major assessment findings? Have there been any recent changes to your curriculum or program? How did the assessment data contribute to those changes?)

Assessment findings indicated that the course exceeded students' expectations. Student evaluations led to some minor changes in focus and pace, but overall student satisfaction was high.

During the pandemic year of 2021, I added an optional ethno-musicological component to the course, and have since retained it in response to overwhelming student pleasure.

Moreover, during the 2017–8 school year, the syllabus of this course was revised in consultation with the University Core Committee to realign the course content with the new initiative on 'Difference, Justice, and the Common Good'. On the basis of feedback from the Core Committee, I added a component to the course of reflection on what it means to go beyond '(mere) tolerance' of language difference to the goal of building a national consensus that expands community ownership and appreciation of language

difference. I have elaborated on this point in each iteration of the course since 2018. I look forward to returning to the course in 2025.

- 6) **Date of the most recent program review.** (Your latest comprehensive departmental self-study and external review.)

Our latest departmental review occurred in 2012, and included review of each of the courses we offer.

Form completed by Margaret Thomas, 21 May 2023