The Historical Roots of American Sign Language

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Class Meeting Schedule:
Time: 11 am to 1 pm
Days: Mon/Tues/Wed
& scheduled excursions
Classroom location: CEA Paris

This course explores historical meeting points between cultures that have influenced the growth and evolution of ASL. Examining historical LSF documents written by the Abbe de l’Epee, the Abbe Sicard, deaf authors Ferdinand Berthier and Pierre Desloges, and the illustrated LSF dictionaries of Lambert, Pelissier, and Brouland, we examine linguistic structures of natural LSF as used daily by a thriving community of deaf people in 18th and 19th century France. As hearing and deaf French communities interacted, natural LSF was modified by de l’Epee, Sicard and others to create “Methodical Sign Language,” an early pedagogical tool used for educating deaf people in written French and other languages, and sign language was heralded by philosophers and educators as the world’s most “pure” language, of great cognitive benefit for all people, not only those who are deaf.

Turning our attention to Native American sign languages, we investigate several key sources. An 1881 Smithsonian Institution catalog written by the American ethnologist Garrick Mallery, “Sign Language Among North American Indians Compared With That Among Other Peoples and Deaf-Mutes,” outlines commonalities between “indian signs” and the signs of “French deaf-mutes” and “our deaf-mutes,” enabling an exploration of how “indian signs” differ from 19th century LSF and ASL.

The history of segregation of American deaf schools played a large part in the growth of a sign language variety documented by Carolyn McCaskill, Joseph Hill and a team of researchers in “The Hidden Treasure of Black ASL.” For over 100 years, from the mid 19th to the mid 20th century, schools for the deaf in the southern states and the District of Columbia educated deaf people of color in separate campuses or separate buildings. Segregation among groups of deaf people led to parallel evolution of a separate sign language variety and the importance of Black ASL as a language has recently been recognized.
Similarities and differences between ASL and Lengua de señas mexicana (LSM), the primary language of 87,000 to 100,000 deaf people in the urban regions of Mexico, and Hawai‘i Sign Language, a distinct sign language first documented in the 1820’s and brought to light recently by a 2013 research study which found 80% of the signs are different from those used in mainland ASL, enhance our understanding of ASL’s diverse history.

Studying how languages contact and influence each other will be reinforced with practical experience as we observe and interact with deaf people from Paris and other nations at local and international gatherings. Through practice using an invented sign language variety called International Sign that combines use of signs from several distinct sign languages, we experience how effective intercultural communication can be achieved as people from many nations converse.

Key scholars we will study include the Abbe de l’Epee, the Abbe Sicard, Ferdinand Berthier, Pierre Desloges, Laurent Clerc, Garrick Mallery, William Clark, William Tompkins, Nancy Frishberg, James Woodward, Carol Padden, Tom Humphries, Renate Fischer, Emily Shaw, Yves Delaporte, Carolyn McCaskill, Joseph Hill, Ted Supalla, David Quinto-Pozos, Albert Bickford, Samantha Rarrick, Brittany Wilson, and Melanie McKay-Cody.

Prerequisites: None. This course is intended for students with an interest in sign languages and does not presume or require prior experience with Sign Language, French or formal coursework in linguistics.

Weekly responsibilities: The course format is an interactive lecture/discussion style conducted mostly in English with examples from ASL and other sign languages.

Grading:

1) Participation in class activities and discussions (weeks 1-5): 20%

2) Typed reflections in response to prompts (weeks 2-5): 30%

3) Presentations (week 4): 20%

4) Final exam (week 5): 30%

All members of the seminar are expected to honor the UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship [https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/process/policy.html]?ga=2.96424028.1594427241.1560881570-842173471.1557185886 and the UCSD Principles of Community [http://www.ucsd.edu/explore/about/principles.html]
Attendance and active participation at all class meetings and all scheduled excursions is a key component of both courses (see rubric).

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<tr>
<th>WK</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Summary of topics</th>
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| 1  | 7/1-7| Historical documents of Langue des Signes Française  
Sign Language Families and Lexicography of Sign Languages  
Types of Sign Languages and types of signs  
Intro to phonology and morphology of Sign Languages  
EXCURSION: Festival Clin d’œil 2019 and city of Reims  
FILM EXCERPTS: “Au Pays du Sourd” a documentary in LSF & French with English subtitles |
| 2  | 7/8-14| International Sign and contact languages  
Archaeology of American Sign Language  
Multi-lingual communities  
EXCURSION: Audism Conference in Paris  
FILM EXCERPTS: “The Wild Child” (1975) a historical re-enactment filmed on location at rue Saint Jacques, in French with English subtitles |
| 3  | 7/15-21| History of LSF and key figures in the French 19th Century Deaf World  
Early Sign Language dictionaries and Methodical Signs  
Guests: Eric Lawrin and Dr. Sabine Arnaud  
EXCURSIONS: Café Signes, Institut des jeunes sourds at rue St Jacques  
walking tour of the Jardin du Luxembourg  
Louvre, International Visual Theatre (including LSF experience) |
| 4  | 7/22-28| Documentation of Native American Sign Languages  
Plains Indian Sign Language  
Hawai’i Sign Language and Sign Language Revitalization  
Presentations due on TritonEd  
(option to present in class during week 4 or 5) |
| 5  | 7/29-31| The Treasure of Black ASL project  
History of segregation of American deaf schools  
A look at Lengua de señas mexicana (LSM)  
Intersectional identities and revision of signs  
FINAL EXAM |
Weekly schedule, assigned readings and due dates for both Linguistics 9 and Linguistics 149 are below. Assignment grades will be posted on TritonEd.

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<td>11 am 149 Guest: Dr. Sabine Arnaud</td>
<td>Cafe Signes St. Jacques school Jardin du Luxembourg</td>
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| One  | **Padden** (17 pgs) and response by **Woodward** (14 pgs) | CEA orientation & river cruise (Mon)  
Class days (Tues, Wed)  
Day off (Thurs)  
Reims and Festival Clin d’œil 2019 (Fri, Sat, Sun) |
|      | **Gull** 1-6 (pp. 1-28) |  
**Petit Guide:** manual alphabet  
s 1-20  
des personnes (15)  
des questions (8)  
des expressions (8)  
des expressions de temps (18) |
| Two  | **Shaw & Delaporte**  
Introduction (14 pgs) | Class day (Mon)  
Audism Conference  
(Tues, Wed)  
Short class day (Thurs)  
Days off (Fri, Sat, Sun) |
|      | **Gull** 7-12 (pp. 29-63) |  
**Petit Guide:** des verbes (26)  
des adjectifs (18) |
| Three| **Fischer** (13 pgs) | Class day (Mon, Tues)  
Cafe Signes,  
St. Jacques school & Jardin du Luxembourg (Wed)  
Louvre & IVT (Thurs)  
Days off (Fri, Sat, Sun) |
|      | **Gull** 13-15 (pp. 64-84) |  
**Petit Guide:** des aliments (15)  
des fruits et des legumes (10) |
| Four | **Mallery** (17 pgs)  
**Rarrick & Wilson** (7 pgs) | Class days (Mon, Tues, Wed)  
[Thurs - to be determined]  
Days off (Fri, Sat, Sun) |
|      | **Gull** 16-21 (pp. 85-118) |  
**Petit Guide:** des lieux du quotidien (8)  
au magasin (5) |
| Five | **Hill** (14 pgs) | Class days (Mon, Tues)  
Final Exams (Wed)  
Farewell dinner - TBA |
|      | **Gull** 22-27 (pp. 119-147) |  
**Petit Guide:** des animaux (9)  
des vetements (9)  
des choses (15) |
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<td>149 Presentation Slides due 10 am</td>
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**Linguistics 9**  
LQ - language quizzes given in class  
CQ - culture quizzes given in class

**Linguistics 149**  
Reflections submitted on TritonEd (see rubric)  
Presentation slides submitted on TritonEd or shared on Google Drive (see rubric)  
Sign up to make your presentation in class (optional)