Sign Languages and Deaf Culture in the U.S. and France

Linguistics 9GS

Global Seminar 2019
University of California, San Diego
Summer Session 1  July 1-August 3

Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday
Lecture and discussion

Thursday/Friday
Excursions

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This course is an introduction to how the vocabulary and grammar of American Sign Language relate to ASL’s linguistic roots in Langue des Signes Francaise (LSF). The course is taught entirely in ASL and no prior signing experience is required. Through interactive/comparative analysis of contemporary ASL, LSF and today’s American and French Deaf Cultures, students acquire conversational skills in ASL and/or enhance the ASL skills they already possess while gaining familiarity with the vocabulary, grammar and culture of LSF.

ASL is the sign language used by Deaf and hearing people in the United States and parts of Canada and is part of a family of sign languages that trace their heritage to the use of LSF in Paris in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The world’s first public school for the deaf was founded in Paris in the 1760’s at the home of the Abbe de l’Epee and later moved to 254, rue Saint Jacques where L’institut national des jeunes sourds still operates today. In 1817, Laurent Clerc, a deaf teacher trained at rue Saint Jacques, helped establish the first public school for deaf children in the United States, employing LSF and other sign language varieties used in North America. As Padden and Humphries (1988) note, “Some signs and structures in ASL today still reflect their French Sign Language origins, although the two languages are distinct.” Supporting students’ acquisition of ASL, we explore the LSF lexical and grammatical roots of signs...
for introductions and identities, education and family, descriptions, directions and locations, personality traits and emotions, numbers, fingerspelling and more.

Key textbooks and scholars we will study for the course include Carol Padden, Tom Humphries, Emmanuelle Laborit, Yves Delaporte, Emily Shaw, Ted Supalla, Patricia Clark, and Bill Moody and Philippe Gallant of the International Visual Theatre.

**Prerequisites:** None. This course is designed for students with an interest in sign languages and does not presume or require prior experience with sign language or formal coursework in linguistics. Knowledge of French is also not required.

**Weekly responsibilities:** The course format is an interactive discussion style conducted entirely in ASL. Visual aids and graphics, role plays and Q&A games support students' ability to link ASL forms and meanings and use ASL conversationally. Come to class having prepared by reading linguistic and culture assignments and viewing the video assignments on TritonEd.

**Grading:**

1) Participation in class activities and discussions: 20%

2) Three in-class culture quizzes: 10%

3) Four in-class vocabulary quizzes: 20%

4) Analysis Midterm (multiple choice and T/F): 25%

5) Conversation Final Exam (15 minute individual appointment): 25%

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**Summary of Topics**

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<td>1</td>
<td>7/1-6</td>
<td>handshapes and other linguistic parameters of sign languages</td>
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<td>“des expressions” … introductions and identities</td>
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<td>“des questions” … question forms, affirmatives and negatives</td>
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<td>“alphabet de la langue des signes française” fingerspelling in ASL &amp; LSF</td>
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<td>“compter” … numbers in ASL and LSF</td>
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EXCURSIONS: Institut des jeunes sourds, Rue St. Jacques
Instructor led walking tour of the Jardin du Luxembourg
2 7/7-13 “des verbes” et “des adjectifs” inflecting verbs and adjectives
“des personnes” … people and family members
“metiers” … occupations
“qualites” … emotions and attitudes
“communication” … politeness and commands

EXCURSIONS: Festival Clin d’oeil, Reims, France

3 7/14-20 “des expressions de temps” time incorporation
“des animaux” … animals
“des choses” … objects of every day life
“des lieux du quotidien” … locations and directions
“au magasin” & “loisirs” … places to visit and things to do

EXCURSIONS: Chateau Vincennes, International Visual Theatre

FILM: “Audism Unveiled” a documentary in ASL with English subtitles

4 7/21-27 “des vetements” … clothing and descriptions
“couleurs” … colors
“a table” & “des aliments” … foods
“des fruits et legumes” … fruits and vegetables
personality traits

EXCURSIONS: a visit to the World Federation of the Deaf conference

FILMS: international VLOGS online in ASL, LSF and international sign

ANALYSIS MIDTERM

5 7/28-8/3 storytelling and role shifting
more about classifiers

EXCURSIONS: Cafe Signes

FINAL Conversation exam by appointment