

# Sign Languages and Deaf Culture in the United States and France

*Linguistics 9GS*

University of California, San Diego  
Summer Session 1

## **Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday**

Lecture and discussion  
2 to 4 pm (subject to change with 24 hour notice)

## **Thursday**

Excursions

### **Global Seminar Professor:**

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We respectfully acknowledge that we live and work in the unneeded, ancestral, traditional and contemporary lands and territories of the Kumeyaay Peoples/Kumiai nation.

**Overview:** The focus of Linguistics 9GS is the study of the lexicon and grammatical structures of langue des signes française (LSF) with emphasis on their relationship to American Sign Language (ASL). We explore iconic and cultural motivations of signs, linguistic use of the body and neutral space, compare French and American Deaf cultural practices, and acquire basic conversational ability in LSF. Class meetings are conducted in sign language and no prior signing experience is required. Three French Deaf guest lecturers will present and discuss material in a combination of LSF, ASL and International Sign. Excursions to a Deaf Arts Festival in Reims and several Deaf establishments in Paris provide the opportunity to practice signing LSF and International Sign with Deaf people from France and other countries.

**Background:** ASL is a sign language used by Deaf and hearing people in the United States and parts of Canada and a member of the 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 Abbé de l'Épée and later established at 254, rue St. Jacques where l'institut national des jeunes sourds (INJS) still operates today. On our guided tour of the school we will walk the halls and

staircases where once walked the Abbé Sicard, Jean Massieu, Laurent Clerc, Ferdinand Berthier and many others. We will visit the library where some of the earliest teachers of the Deaf studied and planned pedagogical approaches. In 1817, Laurent Clerc, a Deaf teacher trained at rue St. Jacques, helped Thomas Gallaudet establish the first public school for Deaf children in the United States, in Hartford, Connecticut. Thus, early ASL was formed with influence from LSF as well as 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." In order to more deeply understand the roots of ASL, we explore the lexical and grammatical structures of LSF.

Key scholars who inform our understanding of sign languages and Deaf cultures include:

- \* Bill Moody and Philippe Gallant
  - "La langue des signes" tome 1-4
  - "Dictionnaire bilingue LSF/Français"
- \* Emmanuelle Laborit
  - "The Cry of the Gull"
- \* Carol Padden and Tom Humphries
  - "Learning American Sign Language"
  - "Deaf in America, Voices from a Culture"
  - "Inside Deaf Culture"
- \* Ted Supalla and Patricia Clark
  - "Archaeology of Sign Language"
- \* Emily Shaw and Yves Delaporte
  - "A Historical and Etymological Dictionary of ASL"

**Learning Activities:** We practice signing representations of numbers, useful LSF expressions, question forms and responses, verbs, adjectives, daily life activities, foods, animals, clothing and other objects, and the LSF manual alphabet. We examine iconic and cultural meaning embedded within the hand configurations, movements and locations of LSF signs. We practice use of role-shifting to conceptually represent dialogue, actions and thoughts. We read, translate and enact scenes from Emmanuelle Laborit's memoir "The Cry of the Gull," and view films about the history and practices of Deaf culture in France, and Deaf people's human rights.

**Prerequisites:** None. The course is designed for undergraduates with an interest in sign languages but does not presume or require prior experience with ASL, LSF, or formal coursework in Linguistics. Knowledge of French is also not required.

**Weekly responsibilities:** During class, actively participate in role plays and Q & A interactions with the aim to continually link forms and meanings. Arrive at class having read/studied the materials in the week's module on Canvas as well as assignments in the "Petit Guide" and "The Cry of the Gull." Fully participate in all activities during class meetings and excursions, using sign language to communicate whenever possible. Seek opportunities to engage in signed conversations with Deaf people on our excursions and enrichment activities. Language and culture quizzes will be conducted on Canvas during class meetings.

**Texts and videos:** In addition to texts and videos posted on Canvas, students need access to the book "The Cry of the Gull" by Emmanuelle Laborit (recommended to purchase before arriving in France) and the Petit Guide (provided by CEA).

### **Grading:**

1) Participation (weeks 1-5): 20%

Attendance and active participation in all class meetings and all scheduled excursions is a key component of both courses. Grading rubric on Canvas.

2) Three language quizzes (weeks 2-4): 25%

Study assignments in the Petit Guide. Participate in class conversations.

3) Three culture quizzes (weeks 2-4): 25%

Read assignments in "The Cry of the Gull." Participate in class conversations.

4) Conversation Final Exam by appointment (week 5): 30%

Demonstrate your knowledge of the course topics during a 15 minute one-on-one conversation with your professor in sign language.

**Contingency:** Our default class meeting location is the CEA building in Paris. Depending on a number of circumstances, it is possible that some class meetings will take place at different locations (including outdoor locations where we may sit on grass or park chairs). We may meet occasionally on Zoom, as needed. Please reply to meeting location announcements on Whatsapp so we can be sure everyone is aware when there is a change.

For excursions, in some cases we will leave from CEA to head to the location together, other times we will travel independently and meet at the assigned location. Be sure to stay

current with Canvas and WhatsApp announcements each day during our program and, as much as possible, practice the buddy system with roommates or other classmates.

## Summary of Topics in Ling 9

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### Week 1

Handshapes & other parameters of sign languages

#### **STUDY PETIT GUIDE:**

“des personnes” ... people and identities  
“des expressions” ... introductions and useful phrases  
“des questions” ... question forms, affirmatives and negatives  
“des expressions de temps” ... expressing & incorporating time  
“alphabet de la langue des signes française” ... fingerspelling &  
“compter” ... numbers 1-20 in ASL and LSF

**READ:** The Cry of the Gull, chapters 1-6 (pgs 1-28)

LEARN AS MUCH LSF AND INTERNATIONAL SIGN AS YOU CAN  
FROM OUR **FRENCH DEAF GUEST INSTRUCTOR BRUNO MONCELLE !**

### Week 2

Introduction to the study of iconicity and inflection

#### **STUDY PETIT GUIDE:**

“des verbes” & “des adjectifs” ... verbs, adjectives

**Language Quiz #1 during class (covers vocabulary from week 1)**

**Culture Quiz #1 during class (covers The Cry of the Gull chapters 1-6)**

**READ:** The Cry of the Gull, chapters 7-12 (pgs 29-63)

LEARN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ABOUT 18TH/19TH CENTURY LSF and  
DEAF EDUCATION FROM OUR **FRENCH GUEST INSTRUCTOR Dr.  
SABINE ARNAUD**

### Week 3

Cultural iconicity

#### **STUDY PETIT GUIDE:**

“des aliments” & “des fruits et legumes”... foods... fruits and vegetables

**Language Quiz #2 during class (covers vocabulary from week 2)**

**Culture Quiz #2 during class (covers The Cry of the Gull chapters 7-12)**

**READ:** The Cry of the Gull, chapters 13-19 (pages 64-108)

LEARN AS YOU CAN ABOUT Visual Vernacular performance in sign  
FROM OUR **FRENCH DEAF GUEST INSTRUCTOR SIMON ATTIA**  
(date/time TBA)

**Week 4**

Iconicity maps on the human body

**STUDY PETIT GUIDE:**

“des lieux du quotidien” & “au magasin” ... locations... places to visit  
“des animaux”... animals

**Language Quiz #3 during class (covers vocabulary from week 3)**

**Culture Quiz #3 during class (covers The Cry of the Gull chapters 13-19)**

**READ:** The Cry of the Gull, chapters 20-21 (pgs 109-118 - no culture quiz on these chapters but it may be included on the final exam in Ling 9)

**GUEST:** TBA

**Week 5**

variation and more comparisons

**STUDY PETIT GUIDE:**

“des vêtements” & “des choses” ... clothing and descriptions... objects

**Final Exam** by individual appointment during week 5

Assigned readings and due dates for both Linguistics 9 and Linguistics 149 are in the chart below. Assignment due dates are posted on Canvas.

Attendance and active participation in all class meetings and all scheduled excursions is a key component of both courses (see rubric in Canvas).

All members of the seminar are expected to honor the UC San Diego Policy on Integrity of Scholarship

[https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/process/policy.html?  
\\_ga=2.96424028.1594427241.1560881570-842173471.1557185886](https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/process/policy.html?_ga=2.96424028.1594427241.1560881570-842173471.1557185886)

and the UC San Diego Principles of Community <https://ucsd.edu/about/principles.html>