American Deaf Community: Language, Culture, and Society (LING 26030; SIGN 26018)
Instructor: Prof. Diane Brentari (dbrentari@uchicago.edu)
Lecture Location: Rosenwald Hall 015; Location for both Discussion Sections: Social Sciences 106
TAs: Emre Häkguder (hakguder@uchicago.edu) Section: F 11:30am-12:20pm
Jenny Lu (jennylu@uchicago.edu) Section: F 12:30-1:20pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION (No knowledge of ASL is required to take this course.)

The linguistic, cultural, and societal context of the deaf community in America is the focus of this course. Both historical and contemporary aspects of Deaf identity will be included, with an emphasis on the central role that ASL plays in the lives of Deaf individuals. The Deaf community that uses ASL consists of 500,000 individuals, and these individuals come from Deaf families (10%) and hearing families (90%). ASL is the fourth most widely used language in the US. This course will offer a window into a culture that is markedly different from American culture, yet which exists as a diaspora within it.

This course covers issues of culture, history, language and literature within the Deaf community, which uses American Sign Language (ASL). The Deaf community spans all racial groups, yet it is a distinct cultural and linguistic minority. Its members use as their primary language a non-Indo-European language, American Sign Language (ASL), which is structurally and typologically entirely different from English. (ASL should not be confused with gestures or other manual communication systems that represent English words and structure.)

The course will not teach ASL, per se, but it will highlight the differences among signed and spoken languages. (To date, there are approximately 200 attested sign languages, compared with approximately 4,000 spoken languages). Aside from the language differences, the course will cover the Deaf community’s own set of values and norms, as well as its own literary tradition and history. The Deaf community, like most cultural groups, has unique cultural icons and centers of reference.

The literary tradition in the Deaf community is strong, and exists in ASL poems, short stories and prose poems that have their own structural characteristics and themes. These traditions emerge out of the residential schools for the Deaf run by state governments, where children grow and develop within a large and varied community of Deaf peers, teachers, and staff where shared experiences become codified in literary form.

GRADING

(25%) Participation
1. Discussion participation and leading discussion: Each student is expected to be well prepared to participate in discussions in section and in lecture. This includes leading one or more of the discussions.
2. Discussion Posts: By Monday of each week at midnight (11:59pm), each student should post to the discussion board a response to the readings that consists of two parts: (1) describe an idea you found particularly compelling (or not compelling) from the readings for weeks x-y; (2) formulate a question for one of the authors. The entire response may consist of approximately 100 words, or more if you wish. You may start your own topic or respond to a student's post.

(35%) Take-home Midterm 2000-3000 words: From a set of 8-10 questions on the topics of the lectures, you will be asked to respond to three questions (approximately 700-1000 words each in each response).

(40%) Final paper: 4000-6000 words: Respond to one of these broad topics. The successful paper will draw upon numerous specific examples from material discussed in class.

To what extent do you think that Deaf Community has a unified identify when compared with African American Community, Jewish Community, or LBGTQ Community?

Or

What internal and external factors do you think are most important in allowing minority communities to thrive, with particular attention to the Deaf community? Can we generalize across minority groups?
WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1: De-constructing (D/d)eafness
Readings:
Videos:
1. Rachel Kolb: Navigating the Hearing World [Navigating deafness in a hearing world | Rachel Kolb | TEDxStanford]

Week 2-3: Language creation/cultural creation: necessity & choices
Readings:
Lane, Harlan, Hoffmeister, Robert, and Bahan, Benjamin. 1996. Journey Into Deaf-World. (chapter 2,3,5)
Videos:
1. Veditz: 1917 clip (on course website).
2. Derek Braun: genetic deafness [Tracing the roots of deafness to a gene that maybe prevented disease | Derek Braun | TEDxMidAtlantic]

Week 4-5: Language Structure: Sources, Change, Contemporary Grammars
Readings:
Videos:
1. Joseph Hill: Black ASL (on course website)
2. Peter Hauser: Linguisticism [Effects of Linguisticism and Audism on the Developing Deaf Person | Peter Hauser | TEDxGallaudet]
3. Brentari & Goldin-Meadow: Language emergence [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJxcFLMe6Fc
4. Julie Hochgesang: Accents in ASL (on course website) [Do sign languages have accents?]
5. Andrew Bottoms: Understanding Proximalization and Nonmanuals in M2L2 Sign (on course website)
6. Bahan: Ball story (on course website)

Weeks 6-7 Children as Cultural Investment
Readings:


**Videos:**
1. Rebecca Dadey: Achieving the "Impossible": Lessons from a Deaf Woman [Achieving the "Impossible": Lessons from a Deaf Woman][TedxOnondagaCommunityCollege]
2. Drisana L Levitzke-Gray: Deaf Children need sign language (Auslan!) [Dears Children need sign language][TedxSouthBank]
3. Danielle Billing: Bilingualism [Thumb of my leg; a humanist approach to bilingual deaf literacy][Danielle Billing]

**Week 8-9: Micro-ethnicity & International perspective**

**Readings**
Grenoble, Lenore & Lindsay Whalen. 2006 Saving languages: an introduction to language revitalization. (ch 2; 21-49), CUP


**Videos:**
1. Joseph Hill: Panel on Diversity film (on course website)

**Week 10 Deaf in literature and the visual arts**

**Readings**


**Videos:**
1. Melissa Malkuntz: Deaf Ideology as Visual Narrative [Creative Advocacy Through Visual Narrative][Melissa Malzkuhn]
2. Judy Lieff: Deaf Jam (shown in class)