Course Description:
An introduction to the world of language and linguistics. Students explore the great diversity of
world languages and develop an understanding of the genetic and geographical ties among them.
They learn to appreciate language as an object of scientific study and to apply their new
knowledge to everyday social interactions in their own lives and communities. They examine
the relationship of linguistic variation to social and cultural identity. Topics include
multilingualism, language learning and preservation, spelling reform, and language policy.

3 credits, 3 class hours.

Prerequisite: CUNY reading proficiency. CUNY writing proficiency, or concurrent enrollment
in ENG 092W, ESOL 021W, or ESOL 031W.

Course text (purchase required):
A college-level English dictionary.

Supplementary texts (purchase not required):

Model grading policy:
Midterm exam: 25%.
Final exam: 40%.
Weekly quizzes, and written and oral homework assignments: 35%.
What you will need:

- Each student must own his/her own copy of the course textbook, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. You will be told when to bring this to class. **On an open-book quiz, you may use only your own copy of this book, not somebody else’s.**
- You will need a bound notebook or composition book to use for your journal and log. You will be learning to keep your eyes and ears open for language-related data, and the log is the place where you will enter your notes and keep them all together.
- You will also need a folder with pockets to keep any handouts (like this one). Second copies of handouts cannot be provided.
- You should be equipped with several pens and pencils, including a pen or marker of a special color to highlight new vocabulary that you will learn, both in your log and in your class notes.

What is expected of you:

**ATTENDANCE:** Class attendance is extremely important. According to College policy, you may miss no more than 10% of class meetings, for any reason, including illness. In our class, that means no more than three absences. This policy will be adhered to very strictly. A lateness counts as one-half absence. A perfect attendance record will certainly enhance your control of the course material and, under certain circumstances, may even bolster your final grade.

**ASSIGNMENTS:** You will have an assignment for every class. It is very important not to fall behind in the assignments. There will be frequent short quizzes on assigned readings to make sure you have understood the important points. From time to time, you will also be called upon to report to the class on data you have gathered, and you must be ready to give your report on the assigned day. On written assignments, you may be allowed a rewrite, but only if the assignment is turned in on time. Full credit will be granted only for assignments turned in on time.

**NOTETAKING:** Notetaking is a basic and essential college skill. The quality of your notes will correlate directly with the quality of the grades you receive. At the beginning of every class, a list of **vocabulary and terminology** will be put on the board. Make sure that you are clear on the meaning of every item on this list before we move on to the next unit in our syllabus.

**GRADES:** In accordance with College policy, a minimum average of 70% is required for a satisfactory course grade (C).

**CONSULTATION:** Please take advantage of my office hours (listed above) to speak to me privately about any difficulties or issues you may have with this course. If those hours are not convenient for you, please ask me for a special appointment, and I will try to accommodate you.

_New York City College of Technology Policy on Academic Integrity_

Students and all others who work with information, ideas, texts, images, music, inventions and other intellectual property owe their audience and sources accuracy and honesty in using, crediting, and citing sources. As a community of intellectual and professional workers, the College recognizes its responsibility for providing instruction in information literacy and academic integrity, offering models of good practice, and responding vigilantly and appropriately to infractions of academic integrity. Accordingly, academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and at New York City College of Technology and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. The complete text of the College policy on Academic Integrity may be found in the catalog.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Chapters to read:</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>The social functions of language. Language and geographical, ethnic, national identity.</td>
<td>Crystal: 4 Crystal: 8, 9</td>
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Students will be able to explain how language, whose primary function is to serve as an instrument of communication, serves secondarily to help establish aspects of the social identity of its speakers. They will be able to list aspects of social identity that correlate with linguistic identity—national, ethnic, class, geographical, sexual, educational—and give specific examples of how these aspects of social identity are supported or reinforced by language use.

Assignment: Listening and reporting.

| 2    | Dialects, sociolects, registers. | Crystal: 10 [Optional: Crystal 11] |

Students will be able to explain the status of geographical variations in a language—dialects, as well as the social equivalent of such variation. They will gather data from their own speech and that of their families and peers, of how individual speakers switch among varieties, and report on these examples to the class.

Assignment: Report on bi-dialectalism.

| 3    | Multilingualism. | Crystal: 60 Grosjean (Xerox supplied) |

Students will be able to give specific examples of how a large portion of the world’s population live and function with more than one language in their everyday lives.

Assignment: Report on observation of a bilingual.

| 4    | Language policy and planning. | Crystal: 61 |

Students will be able to list some of the societal issues that arise when more than one language is widely spoken in a country. They will learn about the role of governments in establishing language policies—such as bilingual education and language immersion—and in protecting endangered languages.

| 5    | Prescriptivism and the equality of languages. | Crystal: 1, 2 |

Students will be able to explain the difference between approaching human linguistic behavior as an object of scientific study (linguistics), and approaching it with the view that some ways of speaking are “good” and some are “bad” and attempting to impose a “better” variety on a speech community (prescriptivism). They will be able to articulate the fact that all languages develop to serve the needs of their speakers, who are members of particular societies and practitioners of particular cultures, and that languages can therefore not be compared in terms of their inherent superiority or inferiority.
Students will be able to define and give specific examples of: a) standard languages, b) pidgins, c) creoles. They will be able to describe how a creole develops from a pidgin and list specific criteria needed for a language variety to be considered standard. They will give examples showing that pidgins and creoles may fill a need in situations where no standard language is available.

5 Written and spoken language.

Students will be able to state what the characteristic structural differences between written language and spoken language are. They will learn that, from the standpoint of linguistic science, spoken language is primary and written language derivative.

6 Spelling and spelling reform.

Students will consider the relation between speech and spelling and the origins of spelling conventions. They will be able to describe the advantages of a good spelling system as well as the consequences of an inadequate one (e.g. modern English) and evaluate proposals for reform, with their potential advantages and disadvantages.

7 Language change and reconstruction.

Students will examine evidence of language change by comparing samples of languages at different stages in their histories, such as texts in Latin compared to Spanish, or Old English, Middle English, and Modern English. They will learn that the reason languages diverge from a common ancestor is the constantly ongoing process of linguistic change. They will be able to list some of the reasons for language change. They learn that linguists can reconstruct the ancestors of related, attested languages, even though no records of the ancestor language may survive.

Assignment: Documenting language change.

8 The languages of the world.

Students will be able to answer such questions as: How many languages are there in the world? How many speakers do these languages have? Where are they spoken?

9 Language families.

Students learn how linguists have determined that certain groups of languages are all descended from a common ancestor. They will be able to name the major families and the genetic affiliations of the world’s major languages.
Having learned something about the great number and diversity of languages, students proceed to consider questions like: How did this multiplicity originate? How did language itself originate?

10 First-language learning. Crystal: 38, 39

Students survey some of the ongoing research on the process of children’s learning of their first languages.

[OPTIONAL TOPIC: Foreign language learning and teaching. Crystal: 62

Students learn some of the basics of the process of learning and teaching a foreign language. They will compare, in writing, this process to the process of learning one’s first language.]

11 Language as an object of scientific study. Crystal: 65

Sapir (selections)

Students learn of the existence of the science of linguistics. They will be able to list some of the goals and methods of this science. They will demonstrate the ability to differentiate between notions and statements representing a layman’s view of language and others that approach language as an object of scientific study.

12 Language and other communication systems: animal, machine. Crystal: 64

In light of what they have learned so far about the structure and function of human language, students gain a basic understanding of some important features of animal communication systems and computer “languages”. They will list, in writing, specific features that make these systems qualitatively the same as or different from human language.

[OPTIONAL TOPIC: Sign language. Crystal: 35-37

Students will be able to describe some salient features of the sign language of the deaf and they will be asked to evaluate to what extent sign language is qualitatively the same as or different from ordinary language.]

13 Languages and world communication. Crystal: 56-59

Artificial and world languages.

Students consider the role of language and the challenge posed by the great diversity of languages in an increasingly globalized world society. They will be able to list and describe some attempts to address this situation with the creation of international artificial languages and the possible use of existing languages as international languages.

14 Review and special topics as per student interest. articles

15 Final exam.