The Theory and Practice of Foreign Language Learning & Teaching

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CLS: 195 Angell Street, Room 207
Office hours: Mondays, 11:00am and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

The course is intended for graduate students in departments of foreign languages and literatures interested in acquiring a theoretical understanding of second language acquisition (SLA) and language teaching methodologies and, by extension, developing a pedagogically sound teaching practice, grounded in research. The overall goal of the course is to help current or prospective language instructors to acquire the intellectual tools that will help them become reflective and independent practitioners. Due to this practical component, which requires that students demonstrate their knowledge of the principles and tenets of SLA in their classroom practice and develop their own instructional materials, undergraduates and graduate students from other departments may enroll only after obtaining the instructors’ permission.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the semester students are expected to:

- understand key concepts from SLA theory
- develop metacognitive teaching strategies
- demonstrate knowledge of research by evaluating instructional materials, developing their own or optimizing existing ones
- be familiar with and apply in practice the principles of communicative language teaching
- evaluate and reflect on their own teaching practice and the practice of others, through observation
- assemble a Language Teaching portfolio, which includes original learning activities, a teaching observation report, reflections anchored in research, a teaching philosophy statement, as well as a complete lesson plan as part of a micro teaching project
**Required Text**

**Optional texts:**


Additional texts and readings will be available in our Canvas site.

**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION**
As a discussion-based seminar, much of the work for the course takes place during class. Therefore attendance and active participation are key requirements for successful completion of the course. You are allowed two absences for any reason (including illness, travel to conferences, religious reasons etc.) without any consequence for your grade, as long as you have informed me in advance and any work assigned for the week of absence is submitted, by the prescribed deadline. Any further absence beyond those two will result in a penalization of 5% off your final grade, even if you submit your assignment. In case of unavoidable circumstances such as illness (properly documented), please contact me immediately to discuss alternative work.

You must come to class well prepared, having read and reflected upon the assigned readings and ready to actively discuss the topics. Participation will be evaluated in terms of the quality and quantity of your contributions. You will be graded on a scale from 1 to 5, the best and worst scores being described as follows:

**Outstanding (5)** – Contributions in class reflect exceptional preparation and further the learning of self and others with relevant and insightful ideas, questions, comments and analysis of the
discussed topics. If this person were not a member of this class, the quality of discussion would be markedly diminished.

Unsatisfactory (1) – Contributions in class reflect inadequate preparation and fail to show evidence of more than superficial reading of the course materials. Ideas tend to lack substance, insight or relevance. If this person were not a member of this class, the quality of discussion would not be changed.

**CLASS PREPARATION ASSIGNMENTS**

Each week before class you must complete an assignment based on the readings for the week. These assignments will vary in format and may include: personal reflections, guided commentary, self-assessment tasks, discussions, application tasks, etc. In some cases you will bring your work to class, other times you will be asked to post it in Canvas by the prescribed deadlines.

The main objectives of these exercises are to encourage a reflective, critical reading of the texts; jumpstart class discussion on the topics as well as help us pinpoint areas of particular difficulty, interest, etc. Postings will be evaluated in terms of their relevance, depth of analysis, correct application of theory, etc. (depending on the type of the exercise), on a scale from 1 to 5, the best and worst scores being described as follows:

Outstanding (5) – Response reflects analytical, reflective reading that justifies and contextualizes information effectively, offers interesting insights about implications for instruction, successfully applies theoretical concepts and methodological principles to practical examples. Writing style is cohesive and appropriate to purpose.

Unsatisfactory (1) – Response evidences a superficial reading, comments are trivial or anecdotal, unsuccessful application of concepts and principles to practical examples. There is little attempt at reflecting, offering examples and adhering to the conventions of persuasive and cohesive writing.
Note: Regarding online postings and discussions, it is strongly recommended that you also read your peers’ contributions, so you are familiar with them in case they are discussed during class. Feel free to follow-up or comment on others’ contributions as well as interesting discussions often emerge from such exchanges.

In the event that any classroom issues arise to which students would like to devote more online discussion outside class, the instructors may decide to create an additional forum topic under which that discussion can take place. Contributions to such topics would be optional and voluntary.

MIDTERM EXAMINATION
There will be a take-home exam around mid semester to assess understanding of key concepts in the field early in the course. More details will be provided later in the semester.

TEACHING PORTFOLIO
You will work on a teaching portfolio throughout the semester and will turn in different sets of materials on the dates noted on calendar. This portfolio will include:

- A set of original/adapted teaching materials
- A critique of language teaching materials
- An observation report
- An original lesson plan
- Micro-teaching videotape (or alternative work if teaching cannot be arranged.)
- A statement of your Teaching Philosophy

You should consider your portfolio as a starting point to continue developing as you gain experience, so you can eventually present it to prospective employers when looking for a job.

POLICY ON LATE WORK
The nature of all the homework assignments (online postings and portfolio assignments) requires their timely completion in order to fulfill the purpose of the assignments themselves, as well as to ensure adequate progress in the course, since a significant part of what we will do in class will
be based on or informed by those assignments. Not only is it not in your best interest to fall behind with your work, but failing to meet your deadlines also shows poor planning and lack of consideration for your instructors’ time. Please, do your best to work ahead of time and submit your work on time.

- Late assignments will be penalized with 20% of the grade if turned in within 48 hours of the set deadline. No late work submitted beyond this grace period will receive credit.
- Incomplete grades will only be given for exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the instructor and with a deadline set by the instructor within which to complete the work.
- If you observe any religious holidays that coincide with our class and/or deadlines, please inform me within the first two weeks of the semester so we can work on alternative dates.
- If there are any exceptional circumstances that prevent you from completing your work, please contact me immediately to discuss the situation.
- Keep in mind that there is a down side to working with technology: computers may act up, servers go down, etc. Please note that these problems will not be considered as valid excuses for late work.

EVALUATION

Since the main objective of the course is to be able to make connections between the literature on SLA theory / L2 teaching approaches and your teaching practice, assessment of your performance will be based on your contributions to online and class discussions and on the quality of your practice-based assignments.

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<tr>
<th>Class participation</th>
<th>15%</th>
<th>Midterm exam</th>
<th>15%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class preparation assignments</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Portfolio</td>
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Grades will be posted on Canvas on a weekly basis. Please keep track of them and let me know immediately if there is an error or you would like to discuss any of your grades.

A note on the relationship between ITAL2900 and the courses you (will) teach:

This course aims to provide you with a general overview of communicative language teaching approaches, regardless of context. Any given language program or course, however, takes place
within a particular context, with specific characteristics and needs. There are many different ways to approach language instruction that are valid and effective ways of achieving particular goals. There might be aspects of individual language programs that are carried out in ways different than what we read about or discuss in class. This will be part of your teaching experience as well: having the opportunity to observe and work with a variety of instructional procedures as well as realizing that there is not one right way of doing things and that the context where you teach will determine to some extent how you go about teaching. This course is only the beginning of a process that will continue throughout your time as a TA and after Brown, and we hope the tools you take away from this course will serve you well in your teaching and learning.
Bibliography


Other sources:

Nation’s articles
https://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/about/staff/paul-nation-pubsdate

CARLA
http://www.carla.umn.edu/Resources.html

CAL
http://www.cal.org/

CALICO
https://www.calico.org/


Also:

Youtube videos:
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXhfi16CGOA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXhfi16CGOA)

Identity and Interculturality. Kramsch