

University of Puerto Rico/Rio Piedras Campus
Faculty of Humanities/English Department/Doctoral Program in English

INGL 8080 Caribbean Literatures and Languages in a Global Context: Fieldwork on Globalization, Language and Culture in St. Croix

Semester: January – May 2005

Course Number and Title: INGL 8080 Caribbean Literatures and Languages in a Global Context: Fieldwork on Globalization, Language and Culture in St. Croix

Number of Class and Credit Hours: 75 Hours/3 Credits

Prerequisites, Corequisites or Other Requirements: INGL 6488 Literature, Language and Culture of the English-Speaking Caribbean or permission of the instructor

Description of the Course:

A recent surge of interest in linguistic and ethnographic fieldwork has been sparked by concern about languages and literatures whose continued existence is being threatened by the current wave of globalization and its homogenizing effects on language and culture. In contemporary discussions some call for a complete re-thinking of the way that fieldwork has been traditionally carried out, but most agree that the collection of empirical data remains the lifeblood of language-related disciplines. In 1994, the Linguistic Society of America issued a policy statement on “The Need for the Documentation of Linguistic Diversity.” This can be seen as a response to the fact that many scholars and most graduate students engage in fieldwork only once in their careers, often only long enough to obtain data. Though it is not always the case, much of the linguistic data is often obtained by outsiders who enter a given community with limited knowledge of local culture and history and have minimal contact with native speakers or knowledge-bearers of the language/ topic under study.

The documentation of Caribbean Creole languages and vernacular traditions, which themselves are to a great extent the result of an earlier wave of globalization that occurred during the era of plantation slavery, has been especially neglected and therefore is all the more urgent. Even though many of the languages and vernacular traditions of the Caribbean are in grave danger of being overwhelmed by the European languages that dominate in Caribbean governments, schools, media, etc, most remain undocumented. Where documentation does exist, it is often sparse (notable exceptions are the Creole languages of Haiti, Jamaica, and Guyana).

Given their relatively small populations and their maximal exposure to the forces of globalization, the need for field-based research is especially strong in the English-speaking islands of the Eastern Caribbean, which is the geographic area that provides the focus for this course. In this region alone there are approximately twenty Creole varieties (almost all of them endangered by globalization) that have not yet been described in any individual pieces of published or available research, including M.A. theses or Ph.D. dissertations! Another phenomenon related to the present wave of globalization that has caught the attention of linguists and other scholars is the diversity of social and linguistic subsystems within and across traditional speech communities, caused by a globalized labor force (in- and out-migration), the effect of globalized media, increased mobility of people in a globalized market, etc.

Opportunities for fieldwork abound, extending beyond traditional linguistic research into the areas of folklore and oral history. The goal of this course is to prepare students for fieldwork in all of these areas. It is designed both to fill these gaps in scholarship and to further the continuing efforts of the English department to place the study of Caribbean cultures, languages, and literatures in a multidisciplinary and global context. Whether the final goal of individual projects is formal linguistic analysis of the effects of migration and other phenomena related to globalization on the languages used in St. Croix or a literary analysis of the effects that globalization has had on the vernacular culture in St. Croix, these opportunities should be approached by persons trained as socially and scientifically responsible researchers.

This course has three parts. It begins with a survey of the growing body of academic work that focuses on fieldwork in the current era of globalization, written by specialists from a wide spectrum of fields, including: linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, and postcolonial studies. During this component, students will also survey the scholarly work already done on the language and literature of their target group. The second part takes students to the field to collect data from native speakers, and introduces them to all of the techniques and skills necessary to prepare, carry out and synthesize a fieldwork experience. The third part of the course deals with cultural and linguistic analysis of the data collected.

Objectives of the Course: By the end of the course, the students will be able:

- 1) To convey the intellectual excitement of fieldwork.
- 2) To provide a realistic and relevant picture of the complexities of describing language as it is used by actual speakers in natural settings as well as in less natural ones (i.e., speech labs, sound-proof rooms, formal interviews).
- 3) To understand the importance not merely of the collection of data, in this case data from an English-speaking island in the Caribbean, as an end in itself but also for: (a) its contribution to the advancement of theory, (b) the understanding of variation across languages and cultures, and (c) its unmasking of the effects of global forces on language and culture.
- 4) To critically analyze the role of the researcher in collecting, interpreting and otherwise using data, especially in a globalized context.
- 5) To develop a research methodology which approaches native speakers as collaborators- ‘partners’ and somehow positively contributes to the community being studied in their attempts to come to terms with the current wave of globalization.
- 6) To properly operate equipment used in the recording of oral culture and the collection of speech samples for linguistic analysis.
- 7) To design and administer relevant questionnaires.
- 8) To use the original data or information collected during field-based research in subsequent work.
- 9) To contribute in an effective way to the integration of fellow students with special challenges and needs into the learning environment.
- 10) To participate in teamwork designed to make necessary adjustments for the inclusion of students with special challenges and needs.

Outline of the Course (Course Content and Calendar): The course is divided into three parts.

Part I Review of current debates about fieldwork and ethnographic/ linguistic research

Readings: Aceto, Dimmendaal, Everett, Geertz, Hale, Hyme, Milroy and Gordon, Newman and Ratliff, Winford, Wolfson

Students are exposed to debates about fieldwork in a globalized context in anthropology, linguistics and related fields, as well as becoming familiar with the existing research on the language and literature of the target community.

Part II Fieldwork in the English-speaking Caribbean (St. Croix)

Readings: Chelliah, Freeman, Hopkins, Ladefoged, Longacre, Watahomigie and Yamamoto

Students are engaged in intensive data collection experiences in English-speaking Caribbean communities. All phases of the fieldwork process are covered, including: identification of a sample population, construction of instruments for data collection, developing a framework for working with collaborators, experimenting with different techniques for the collection of data, transcribing data, and making data accessible for future research.

Part III Cultural and Linguistic Analysis

Readings: Alleyne, Cockcroft et al., Cojti Cuxil, Craig, DeGraff, Dixon, Duranti, England, Gil, Hudson, Li, McLaughlin et al. Mithun, and Said

Students review traditional methods of analysis, including the comparative method, the historical method, the ethnographic method, and additional methods used by folklorists and other cultural researchers as well as critiques and commentaries on each. Based on these readings and their fieldwork experience they propose sketches of a 'Postcolonial Creolistics' for the current era of globalization.

Teaching Strategies: As much as possible a participatory, student-centered pedagogy will be used in this class, with students actively engaged in learning processes whereby they can use their existing knowledge to shed light on areas of understanding about language which they may not have previously explored, through the use of such methods as discussion, Socratic questioning, group work, fieldwork, active research, lectures, textual analysis, critical analysis of linguistic and cultural analyses, etc.

Students with access to Vocational Rehabilitation Services will be asked to contact the professor at the beginning of the semester in order to plan any special arrangements and equipment necessary in accordance with the recommendations of the Office of Challenged Students' Affairs (OAPI) in the office of the Dean of Students. In addition, any students with special needs or who require any type of assistance or special arrangements will be encouraged to contact the professor.

Resources and Equipment Required:

- 1) Richardson Seminar Room (English Department) for student research and access to assigned readings
- 2) Ferri Screening Room (English Department) for video presentations
- 3) English Department Laboratory for student access to computers and the internet
- 4) Recording equipment available in the English Department Laboratory and the Richardson Seminar Room

Methods of Evaluation: Evaluation procedures will be adjusted for students with special needs.

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| Class /Online Discussion / Participation | 20% |
| 2 Oral /Online reports | 15% |
| 4 Response Papers (developed from journal entries) | 20% |
| 1 Fully-described pilot project proposal or grant proposal | 15% |
| 1 final seminar-length Research Project | 30% |
| TOTAL | 100% |

Grading System: A=90-100%; B=80-89%; C=70-79%; D=60-69%; F=0-59%
Alternative evaluation systems are available for students with special needs.

Bibliography:

Primary Text:

Newman, Paul and Ratliff, Martha (eds.). 2001. *Linguistic Fieldwork*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Secondary Texts:

St. Croix Sociohistorical Bibliography

DuTertre, Jean-Baptiste. 1978. (Translation / reproduction of 17th century document) *On the French in St. Croix and the Virgin Islands : a translation with introduction and notes*. Charlotte Amalie, United States Virgin Islands. Green, James Warren. 1972. *Social Networks in St. Croix, United States Virgin Islands*.

Hovey, Sylvester. 1838. *Letters from the West Indies: Relating Especially to the Danish Island St. Croix, and to the British Islands Antigua, Barbadoes, and Jamaica*. New York: Gould and Newman.

Lawaetz, Erik, J. 1991. *St. Croix : 500 years pre-Columbus to 1990*. Herning, Denmark: P. Kristensen.

Lawaetz, Eva. 1979. *Free Coloured in St. Croix, 1744-1816: the History, Statistics, and Selected Information Concerning the Free Coloured in the Danish West Indies, with Special Reference to St. Croix, from 1744-1816*. Christiansted, V.I.: Lawaetz.

Marsh, Clifton. 1981. *A Socio-historical Analysis of the Emancipation of 1848 and the Labor Revolt of 1878 in the Danish Virgin Islands*. Christiansted, St. Thomas, V.I. Lawaetz.

Fieldwork Bibliography

Aceto, Michael. 2003. What are Creole Languages? An Alternative Approach to the Anglophone Atlantic World with Special Emphasis on Barbudan Creole English. In Aceto, M. and Williams, J.P. *Contact Englishes of the Eastern Caribbean*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

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Cockcroft, Leah, Mary Diamond, and Robin Sabino. 2003. Language Variety in the Virgin Islands. In *Contact Englishes of the Eastern Caribbean*, eds. M. Aceto, M. and J.P. Williams, pp. 81-94. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Cojti Cuxil, Demetrio. 1990. Lingüística e idiomas Mayas en Guatemala. In *Lecturas sobre la lingüística Maya*, ed. N.C. England and S. R. Elliot, 1-25. Guatemala City: Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamerica.

Craig, Colette Grinevald. 1997. On Fieldwork Methodology for Work on Endangered Languages. In *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, ed. F. Coulmas. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

DeGraff, M. 2003. Against Creole Exceptionalism. *Language* 79, 2, 391-410.

Dimmendaal, Gerrit J. 2001. Places and People: Field Sites and Informants. In *Linguistic Fieldwork*, eds. P. Newman and M. Ratliff, pp. 55-75. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Dixon, R.M.W. 1992. Naïve Linguistic Explanation. *Language in Society* 21: 83-91.

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England, Nora C. 1992. Doing Mayan Linguistics in Guatemala. *Language* 68 1, 29-35.

Everett, Daniel L. 2001. Monolingual Field Research. In *Linguistic Fieldwork*, eds. P. Newman and M. Ratliff, pp. 166-188. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Freeman, Derek. 1999. *The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead: A Historical Analysis of Her Samoan Research*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
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