Language, Communication, & Culture of the Deaf
COM 395 Section [TBD], CRN [TBD]
Winter Interim 2017, Lecture, 3 credit hours – Course meets Dec 12, 2016 – Jan 4, 2017
Domestic Travel Course – 3rd week of class in Austin, TX (a Deaf epicenter in the U.S.)
Instructor: Darrin J. Griffin, PhD (CODA)
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“The Deaf are first, last, and for all time, the people of the eye.”
~George Veditz, President – National Association of the Deaf, 1910
“It is not the “Ear”th, it is the “Eye”th.”
~Anonymous Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf (Austin, TX), 2006

Course Description and Rationale
There is often a contrast in how mainstream culture (i.e., hearing) and people who are deaf think about communication. Hearing persons tend to reflect on deafness as the loss of a sense (hearing), something that depletes one of experience, and are prone to apologize to or express sympathy towards people who are deaf. However, views of deafness by those who are culturally Deaf (note capitalization) themselves do not focus on hearing, but rather they embrace visual communication. Deafness is not entirely based on one’s audiological status, but rather deafness can be thought of as a way of thinking, acting, being, and interacting. Moreover, the culture of the Deaf embraces unique ways of seeing the communicative world.

This intercultural communication course is designed to introduce all students to the rich history of deafness in the United States. Students will learn the basics of American Sign Language (ASL) and will learn about accurate cultural-linguistic portrayals that will dispel myths about deafness/ASL. Students will explore theories about how cognitive and language development are intricately tied to one another and the controversies revolving around educating deaf children. By taking on multiple perspectives of deafness (e.g., medical vs. cultural) students will better understand how society learns about the deaf through media and popular culture. The course will conclude by offering students insights regarding appropriate intercultural interactions and clear understandings of cross-cultural communicative barriers. Through the metaphorical journey into the Deaf World combined with travels to a Deaf cultural epicenter in the U.S. (Austin, TX) students will explore and find their own answers to the following questions relevant to intercultural communication and deafness:

- What are the fundamentals of ASL & fingerspelling?
- Who is deaf? What are the types of deafness?
- What does it mean to be Deaf?
- Is deafness a disability?
- How are the deaf educated and how do people learn ASL?
- What language(s) are taught to deaf children?
- Do the Deaf have unique communicative rights?
- Does technology solve communication issues between Deaf and hearing?
- What are best practices for interacting with the Deaf?
Required Texts

• (Optional/recommended) *Burn Down the Ground*, Kambri Crews

Prerequisites

No prerequisites are required for this course

Student Learning Outcomes

After completion of this course students will be able to:

- Utilize the fundamentals of ASL and fingerspelling
- Differentiate between various types of physiological deafness and understand multiple perspectives of deafness
- Recognize differences in the structure and nature of ASL – as compared to spoken and written English
- Discuss the history of deafness and ASL in the United States with others
- Articulate the perspectives of deafness and their inherent contradictions
- Cite the major tenets of the Americans with Disabilities Act as it relates to people who are deaf
- Understand cognitive impacts of deafness and visual communication
- Recite at least five prescriptions for interacting with the Deaf

See schedule or lessons/topics on last page of syllabus

Evaluation

Student learning and performance throughout the course will be evaluated and measured using:

- Language vlog/skills illustration = 20 pts
- Reading quizzes; 5 worth 5 points each = 25 pts
- Reading reflections 2 worth 5 points each = 10 pts
- *Attendance/On time/Warm-up assignments (start of class) = 10 pts
  *Note – these cannot be made up*
- Wikipedia page development = 10 pts
- Discussion & activity leader for 20 minutes = 10 pts
- Digital presentation on a component from the course = 15 pts

Total Course points = 100

Details of each of these evaluations will be discussed during class time.

Grading Policy

Students are evaluated in their performance and learning via points. A total of 100 points are available and a grading rubric (on next page) will be used to assign the
final letter grade. Do not calculate your grade or conduct mathematical magic - simply use the grading rubric below to determine your final letter grade at the end of the course. As a reminder - do not contact me near the close of the term and ask for opportunities for points. These type of requests will be ignored. I welcome students to communicate with me throughout the course on how to improve and earn the most points possible. The simplest prescription is to read and prepare for class. 😊

Visit the registrar’s site on the meaning of letter grades to better understand and read an explanation of the assigned final letter grades. Although extra credit might be given in this course, it will be infrequent and students should not rely on it to earn the desired letter grade. Extra credit - if given - is extra. It does not change the scale for the class – the rubric will always be based off 100 points, extra points will only serve to help you get more points. The way to earn the desired letter grade is by completing assessments, being on time to every class, and working to understand and follow the course content.

Point to Letter Grade Rubric

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<tr>
<th>Final Points</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<tr>
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<td>96-94</td>
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Grade Requirement Statement

Students must earn a “C-” or better in all required and elective courses in the major /minor for communication studies. A “C-” or better is required in all external courses required by the major/minor whether they serve as a prerequisite to a major course or are simply required by the degree.

Attendance Policy

This is a three week interim course. The first week of class will be held in a classroom at Reese Phifer, Monday – Friday from 9am until noon. The second week of the course will be conducted via Blackboard as an online class week; the third week students will travel on their own to Austin, Texas to tour the city and hold classes near the University of Texas campus.
**Week 1:** Class will meet in the morning on five days (Mon thru Friday) for three hours (i.e., 9am- Noon) in Reese Phifer at the UA campus. This portion of the course will focus on learning the basics of ASL/fingerspelling and the basics of Deaf culture.

**Week 2:** The class will be conducted via the Blackboard learning platform. Students will be required to keep up with readings that are assigned and to interact with the instructor and others students daily. To earn the highest marks in the course you MUST be able to read, write, and login to Blackboard daily!

**Week 3:** Students will travel on their own to Austin, TX. Students must arrive to Austin on the morning of Tuesday December 27th and be ready for class that afternoon. We will also have class Wednesday morning, and Thursday evening. Students are expected to arrange their own travel to depart Austin on Friday December 30th.

**Missed Work**
Keep in mind missing one of our classes is equivalent to missing a week of a normal class! Also, once you are registered for the class you are responsible for being in class (no exceptions). Students are expected to attend class and to be on time. Class will start promptly at the scheduled time and tardy students will serve only to disrupt the classroom activities. Please arrive before the start of class. Students having difficulty attending class or arriving on time will earn lower marks because of the way the grading system is set up for this class. Students having any absence will have their final letter grade dropped by an entire letter. Arriving to class late two times will count as an absence. University sanctioned excuses will not count as an absence, but must be communicated to me in-person (not in email!) previous to the day of the absence (the morning of the absence will not be allowed). Please do not wait until the morning of class or the hour before the class meeting that will be missed to warn me of absences. All work that is missed for any absence (including excused absences) must be made up the next class day. Failure to coordinate a makeup time and complete the makeup within one day will result in a deduction for the evaluation. Satisfactory documentation will be required to show that the absence is excusable and I reserve the right to contact the person or entity listed on the note.

**Classroom Etiquette & Expectations**
Students are expected to arrive in class on time and prepared. Preparation means that you have read assigned readings and completed any assignments that are due. Please be considerate of others. Turn off cellular phones, iPods, pagers, laptops and any other electronic devices prior to the start of class. Do not text or use a laptop or device during class. Do not play Pokémon. If you want to take notes via a computer or electronic devices please discuss this with me for prior approval. Students who do not honor the policy on electronics in the classroom will be dismissed from class. Texting or surfing the web during class disrupts your learning and others ability to focus.
Each individual is expected to earn his/her course grade on the merit of personal effort. Consequently, any form of cheating or plagiarism constitutes unacceptable deceit and dishonesty and will result in disciplinary action. The Code of Student Conduct requires that students behave in a manner that is conducive to a teaching/learning environment. Students who engage in behavior that is disruptive or obstructive to the teaching/learning environment will be subject to disciplinary sanctions outlined by the Code of Student Conduct. If a student engages in disruptive or inappropriate behavior I will first give a warning and discuss this with the student. Repeat offenders will politely be asked to excuse themselves from the class for that day.

All students in attendance at the University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academically related matter and any knowing or intentional help or attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student. The Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy will be followed in the event of academic misconduct.

**UA Statement on Diversity**
The mission of The University of Alabama is to advance the intellectual and social condition of the people of the State through quality programs of teaching, research, and service. That educational mission is enhanced by the robust exchange of ideas that occurs within a diverse and inclusive environment. Students who learn from each other and from faculty members and administrators, including those at the highest levels of leadership, in an environment with a variety of backgrounds are better able to understand, appreciate, and contribute to our twenty-first century global society. Consequently, the University endorses a student, faculty, and administrative community enriched by women and men of diverse national origins, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, cultures, socioeconomic and geographic backgrounds, ages, physical abilities, and religious and political beliefs.
To report ANY type of harassment prohibited by UA policy, see [http://titleix.ua.edu/report-a-violation.html](http://titleix.ua.edu/report-a-violation.html)

**Response to Shooting Incident**
Should a shooter or a person with a weapon appear on campus, call the [University Police](http://www.ua.edu/police) 205-348-5454 or 911 as soon as safely possible. The University Police Department are trained to deal with this incident and will respond immediately upon notification. If this type of incident should take place on campus during our class please follow my instructions and requests.

In general each situation is different, so no single procedure will work in all circumstances. You will have to make the best decision based on your particular situation. Always be aware of your surroundings as you determine how best to protect yourself. The Department of Homeland Security offers the following suggestions:
Run: If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises.
Hide: If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you.
Fight: As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter.

You can read more about the details and suggestions offered for an active shooter scenario at the UA emergency preparedness website - https://ready.ua.edu/shooting-incident/

Severe Weather Guidelines
The guiding principle at The University of Alabama is to promote the personal safety of our students, faculty and staff during severe weather events. It is impossible to develop policies which anticipate every weather-related emergency. These guidelines are intended to provide additional assistance for responding to severe weather on campus. UA is a residential campus with many students living on or near campus. In general classes will remain in session until the National Weather Service issues safety warnings for the city of Tuscaloosa. Clearly, some students and faculty commute from adjacent counties. These counties may experience weather related problems not encountered in Tuscaloosa. Individuals should follow the advice of the National Weather Service for that area taking the necessary precautions to ensure personal safety. Whenever the National Weather Service and the Emergency Management Agency issue a warning, people in the path of the storm (tornado or severe thunderstorm) should take immediate life saving actions. When West Alabama is under a severe weather advisory, conditions can change rapidly. It is imperative to get to where you can receive information from the National Weather Service and to follow the instructions provided. Personal safety should dictate the actions that faculty, staff and students take.

The Office of University Relations will disseminate the latest information regarding conditions on campus in the following ways:
- Weather advisory posted on the UA homepage
- Weather advisory sent out through UA Alerts to faculty, staff and students
- Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA at 90.7 FM
- Weather advisory broadcast over Alabama Public Radio (WUAL) at 91.5 FM
- Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA-TV/WUOA-TV, and on the website at http://wvuatv.com/content/weather. WVUA-TV Home Team Weather provides a free service you can subscribe to which allows you to receive weather warnings for Tuscaloosa via e-mail or cell phone. Check http://wvuatv.com/content/free-email-weather-alerts for more details and to sign up for weather alerts.

In the case of a tornado warning (tornado has been sighted or detected by radar; sirens activated), all university activities are automatically suspended, including all classes and laboratories. If you are in a building, please move immediately to the lowest level and toward the center of the building away from windows (interior classrooms, offices, or corridors) and remain there until the tornado warning has
expired. Classes in session when the tornado warning is issued can resume immediately after the warning has expired at the discretion of the instructor. Classes that have not yet begun will resume 30 minutes after the tornado warning has expired provided at least half of the class period remains.

Disability Statement
If you are registered with the Office of Disability Services, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss any course accommodations that may be necessary. If you have a disability, but have not contacted the Office of Disability Services, please call (205) 348-4285 (Voice) or (205) 348-3081 (TTY) or visit 133-B Martha Parham Hall East to register for services. Students who may need course adaptations because of a disability are welcome to make an appointment to see me during office hours. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services, 133-B Martha Parham Hall East, before receiving academic adjustments.

Policy on Academic Misconduct
All students in attendance at The University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University of Alabama expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. At the beginning of each semester and on examinations and projects, the professor, department, or division may require that each student sign the following Academic Honor Pledge: “I promise or affirm that I will not at any time be involved with cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or misrepresentation while enrolled as a student at The University of Alabama. I have read the Academic Honor Code, which explains disciplinary procedure resulting from the aforementioned. I understand that violation of this code will result in penalties as severe as indefinite suspension from the University.” See the Code of Student Conduct for more information.
Schedule & Topics

Lessons Topic, issues, and/or details of instruction

Week 1: UA classroom – Monday thru Friday 9am - noon

Read book – *Seeing Voices*, by Oliver Sacks
1. Teacher and student introductions & review of course and syllabus
   b. Basics of D/deafness
   c. Intro to ASL & fingerspelling
2. Defining deaf/deafness/Deaf – terminology and other vernacular to know
3. The physiology of deafness [and/or the organ of hearing]
4. Various perspectives on deafness; Theories, practice, & views in society (e.g., movies and TV shows)
5. Deaf history in the United States & in Alabama (e.g., Helen Keller)

Week 2: Course meets daily via Blackboard

Read book – *Deaf Culture: Exploring Deaf Communities in the United States* (Read Part I of textbook)
6. Deaf Culture
   a. Deafhood (the deaf experience)
   b. Subcultural groups (e.g., Black-Deaf) (Read Part II of textbook)
7. Language – American Sign Language (ASL) and other types of “signing”
8. Fingerspelling and other forms and functions (e.g., cued speech)
9. Language acquisition – how children and adults learn ASL
10. ADA = the Americans with Disabilities Act

Week 3: Class meets in Austin, TX – Students arrive morning of Tuesday Dec. 27th for first class meeting that afternoon. Students depart Friday morning Dec 30th.
(Read Part III of textbook)
11. Disability – when and if deafness is a disability
12. Deaf rights and rights to access/communication
13. ICT’s = Information & Communication Technologies and the Deaf
   a. Ludditism?
   b. Deaf Video TV
14. Master Noticers & Deaf Gain
15. Practical applications, takeaways, and intercultural interactions
   a. What it all means about communication in general
   b. What we learned
   c. Intercultural communication take home