

**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**  
**INSTITUTE OF ANTHROPOLOGY, GENDER AND AFRICAN STUDIES**  
**ACADEMIC YEAR: 2014/2015**  
**SEMESTER: SECOND**  
**DEGREE: BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ANTHROPOLOGY**  
**COURSE: NAF 105: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE**

**OVERVIEW:** This course is an introduction to the study of language with a bias towards language and culture. The course asks how language is shaped by social and cultural processes, how people use language in their daily lives, and the interaction between language and identity. The foundational work builds on exploring the building blocks of human language, in order to better understand its role in social context.

### **Course contents**

#### **1. Introduction**

- What is language? What is linguistics? What is linguistic anthropology?
- Contextualizing language: the language-anthropology marriage

#### **2. The Building blocks of Language: sounds, forms, and meanings**

- Phonology: phonemes, distinctive features, minimal pairs
- Morphology: its basics and applications
- Syntax and semantics
- Suprasegmental features of language: paralanguage, proxemics and kinesics
- *Why people have accents-Open debate*

#### **3. Language birth, language death, and language change**

- Evolution of language and evidence for biological, innate basis for language
- Human vs. animal communication
- Child language acquisition: critical period hypothesis
- Variation, language/dialect, and the speech community
- *The value of languages and threat of language death-Open debate*

#### **4 When saying is doing: Language as a Social Act**

- Hymes' SPEAKING model for analysis of interactions
- Conversation as action: cooperation & competition
- Meaning more than what we say & reading between the lines

#### **5. Language Ideology**

- Language mixing vs. purism;
- Language politics in popular culture;

#### **6. Approaches to the study of language**

- Prescriptive;
- Descriptive;
- Comparative approaches

**Term Paper:** *"What We Say Influences What We Think, What We Feel and What We Believe"*.

Discuss the relevance of the preceding statement in the context of language and culture. (30 marks). **Due on the 29th Day of October, 2015.**

**Course work citations:** In this course you will be asked to do original library research. You are responsible for learning how to get sources for your paper in a timely manner. In this course, you will be asked to refer ONLY to scholarly sources. Scholarly sources DO NOT include: newspapers/magazines, Wikipedia or any other encyclopedia or dictionary (online), personal, political, or organizational WebPages, or your own exercise books. Scholarly sources DO include peer-reviewed journals, edited volumes, published books, and academic conference presentations or panels. This course has a NO WIKIPEDIA policy. This means that Wikipedia or any other online encyclopedia is not a valid source. You may not use text from Wikipedia or quote from Wikipedia (whether you have cited it or not) at any time, in any context.

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