

# 100 Words for Snow: Language and Nature

## ENVI/LING 225



Miriwoong  
Seasonal Calendar  
(Australia)

<http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/miriwoong/>

### Professor:

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**Office:** Olin/Rice 158A - my office is in the basement looking up at the LC parking lot, come and visit me!

**Office Hours:** Office hours are Monday 2:20-3:20. Thursday 1:30-2:30. Also by appointment.

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*I promise to respond within 24 hours to electronic communication*

**Time:** 9:40 MWF

**Location:** Neil 217

**This syllabus is subject to change.** Changes will be posted to Moodle

## Topics

- ▶ Introductions, What is language?
- ▶ Basso's "Wisdom Sits in Places"
- ▶ Indigenous Knowledge: (or how language adapts to its environment)
- ▶ Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis: Language and our Perceptions of Nature
- ▶ Environmental Discourse
- ▶ The Ecology of Language: A Metaphor
- ▶ Endangered Languages – Endangered Environments (Biolinguistic Diversity)
- ▶ Evolution of Language (or how humans adapted to their environment)

No prerequisites. Argumentative Writing. Social Science.

## Writing Learning Goals

As a writing intensive course, we will focus on learning the following:

- ▶ Planning, organizing, drafting, and revising a college-level social science paper.
- ▶ Expressing ideas clearly through structuring at the paragraph and sentence level;
- ▶ Constructing an argument and using evidence to support it.

## Learning Goals

- ▶ Learn how to read scholarly articles by identifying the main argument, the theoretical framework, or the methodology, and comparing to other research.
- ▶ Demonstrate the ability to think systematically about complicated problems.
- ▶ Understand how knowledge is reflected and encoded through language and stories.
- ▶ Understand the complexity and difficulty of talking about connections between language, thought, and perception of the world.
- ▶ Recognize the linguistic structures used in environmental discourse.
- ▶ Respect ways of knowing that are not western/scientific.

- ▶ Communicating others' perspectives effectively;
- ▶ Integrating your own ideas with those of others;
- ▶ Adapting the style, vocabulary and tone of a piece of writing to its anticipated audience and context.
- ▶ Citing evidence and building a list of works cited using the APA.



"We cannot be too suspicious of ordinary language." Whitehead



<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/IKS/iceberg.html>

"It is in the vocabulary of a language that most clearly reflects the physical and social environment of its speakers ... and were such a complete thesaurus of the language of a given tribe at our disposal, we might to a large extent infer the character of the physical environment and the characteristics and the culture of the people making use of it." Edward Sapir

## Assessment vs Grading

In this course, we will take a different approach to assessment and grades. There is at least some evidence that grades can inhibit student learning and particularly "deep learning" of material (e.g., Rust 2002). Research also shows that you learn through practice (e.g., Gladwell 2008) and believing that you can improve (e.g., Dweck 2007) is key to improvement.

Grading is extremely anxiety provoking both for you and for me. I love to help students improve their writing, critical thinking skills, and linguistic knowledge, but giving grades can shut down and end writing improvements for good and struggling writers alike. Everyone should view writing as any other skill and continue to write, rewrite and work to improve. I will be assessing you throughout the semester, but I will only grade your final portfolio. By the time of the final portfolio, you will have had several opportunities to receive feedback from me and from others. You will then select your best works to be graded. This will give you space to grow and explore the topics and writing and will give me the chance to guide you without "punishment." Besides your final portfolio, you will be graded only on meeting the Contract for a B. **If you stay on contract, the lowest grade you can earn in the class is a B.**

## Contract for a B

All students will earn at least a B in this class if you work **really** hard, take your learning seriously, and do the following:

1. **Class Attendance.** I hope you will be present for all class times and all individual conferences since I've found that's important for everyone's learning. You can have up to 3 absences with no explanations and still stay on contract.
2. **Class discussion and activities.** I invite everyone to join in class discussions since everyone's contributions are valuable. Being prepared is the best way to learn from and contribute to class discussions. I've found that bringing copies of the readings allows for deeper discussions of the ideas.
3. **Reading Responses.** Response questions to the assigned readings are on moodle. There will be about one per class meeting. Answering the response questions is a great way to be prepared for class, but I understand that life gets busy. To stay on contract you should be sure to complete 2/3.
4. **Turn in written assignments on time.** Assignments on moodle are due at the beginning of class on the due date. In class activities are due at the end of class. If you are worried that moodle isn't working, I invite you to email assignments.
5. **Revise your writing.** Quality writing requires substantial revising. Revising is a chance to completely change your paper, including your argument, organization, sections, and evidence.

Revising focuses on the big picture. I encourage you to visit the MAX Center and come to my office to talk through the organization and argument.

6. **Rewrite your papers.** Rewriting is the reorganization and restructuring at the sentential and paragraph level. The goal is clear writing. Outstanding writing requires attention to this level of structure.
7. **Edit your writing.** When completing second drafts and especially the final portfolio, aim for a paper free of mistakes and errors. It is a good idea to get editing help from fellow writers.
8. **Keep a portfolio.** We will keep a working portfolio of all your work throughout the semester. This will be managed in part by moodle but you can also keep a digital folder in which you keep my feedback and your drafts (except for reading responses on Moodle).
9. **Be aware of your progress and learning.** You will keep track of your progress in the course and whether you are staying on the contract for a B. We will do self-evaluations in Week 5 and Week 10. If you are unsure of your progress, schedule a meeting with me.
10. **Take writing assignments seriously.** Drafts are never perfect but everything you turn in should be complete and should reflect deep engagement with the material. There should be improvement between drafts from rough draft to "finished writing." I do not expect informal writing to be perfect either, but all your writing should show that you are thinking about the class



## Writing Assignments

There will be many types of written assignments. Some will give you the chance to craft more informal, non-academic writing such as reflections on course material and how it relates to your previous experiences. Others will give you a chance to apply techniques of analysis and theory that we will be learning about.

You will write one longer academic paper. There will be a series of smaller assignments that will help prepare you to write the final paper. In consultation with me, you will choose a topic that is related to the themes of the course or that expands one of the topics of the course but still relates to both language and nature. You should use previous academic research (secondary sources or library research) to answer your question. This means that you should not do your own study or analysis of data. You will draw on readings used in class, but I expect you to find other sources in addition to those readings. I do not want just a literature review. This should be a critical essay where you evaluate the research and draw your own conclusion (thesis). You will turn in an annotated bibliography, meet with a librarian, and do a peer-review of other students' papers.

For all your finished writing, you will aim for well-written, well thought out, and well organized writing. Always assume your audience is a smart, well-educated person who is not in our class (e.g. another Mac student).

## Guidelines for Reading

There will be a reading due (almost) every day we meet as a class. Here are some strategies for getting the most out of the readings and coming to class prepared to discuss the ideas/theories in the readings. Hint: don't read straight through.

1. Start out by reading the abstract (if there is one). Then the introduction and conclusion. This should allow you to identify the main argument (thesis) of the reading and the approach/theory/method being used. If the introduction is really long, just read the last paragraph or so.
2. Note where the article was published, e.g. journal or edited book. This should give you an idea of the field/approach.
3. Look at the title. Many titles are in the format – Topic: Thesis.
4. Then read the article through from the beginning. Notice the section titles. As you read the article, take notes on a few data/evidence/points that surprise you, or make you reassess your thinking, or that you think the author has misanalysed.
5. Feel free to look up jargon/terms on Wikipedia, but don't get bogged down in details. Focus on the main argument and main evidence that supports it.

## Other Policies

Many wonderful resources exist that will help you with this class. **The MAX Center**, located in Kagin, has peer tutors available to help students in all stages of writing. The **librarians** are always there to help with finding sources and using the library databases.

I am committed to supporting the learning of all students in my class. **If you are encountering barriers to your learning** that I can mitigate, please bring them to my attention. If you need disability related accommodations, please contact Allie Quinn, Director of Disability Services (aquinn2@macalester.edu) at the beginning of the semester to ensure that your accommodations are approved and in place.

**Academic dishonesty** erodes the basic foundations of higher education: exchange, debate, and the thoughtful consideration of what we know, how we know it, and why it matters. It has no place in this course. For Macalester's policies on academic integrity, see [bit.ly/1mKrAKF](http://bit.ly/1mKrAKF).

Our course's **Moodle website** has a detailed and up-to-date schedule that supplements the information in this syllabus. Go to <http://moodle.macalester.edu/>, and login using your email account's username and password. After logging in, click on the link to the course in the My Courses section.