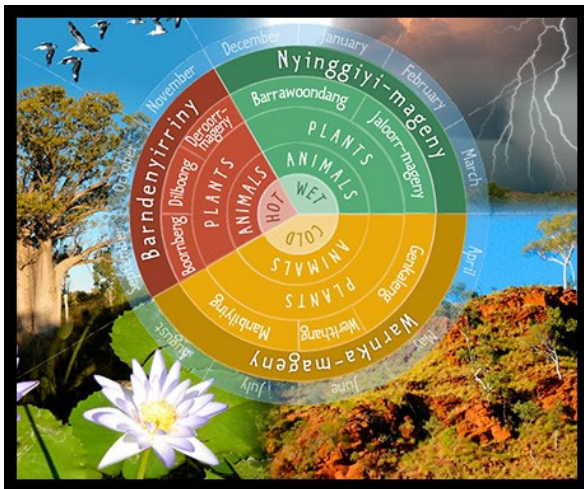


# 100 Words for Snow: Language and Nature

Syllabus for LING/ENVI 225 - spring 2023

## 100 Words for Snow: Language and Nature

Spring 2024



Miriwoong Seasonal Calendar (Australia)  
<http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/miriwoong/>

### Course Description

Human beings have an unprecedented ability to shape the environment around them, yet the environment powerfully shapes both individuals and species. Two main questions run throughout this course: 1. How does language influence the way we think about and perceive nature, which in turn influences the way we interact with and shape nature? 2. How has our environment shaped the Language faculty and individual languages? To answer these questions, we'll learn how linguists define Language, and look at the many definitions of nature. Other topics we will cover include placenames, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, the evolution of Language, the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis,

and endangered languages and the connections between linguistic diversity and biodiversity. No prerequisites. Distribution Requirements: Social science. WA.

**This syllabus is subject to change.**

### Navigating Online Course Information

There are three online locations for information:

1. **This syllabus** gives basic information on the course, ungrading and course policies.
2. The daily schedule is in **Google Sheets**. It lists what we're doing, when and why for each day of the semester. It will link to readings and assignments in Moodle.
3. **Moodle** is where you will find detailed directions on assignments and submit completed assignments.



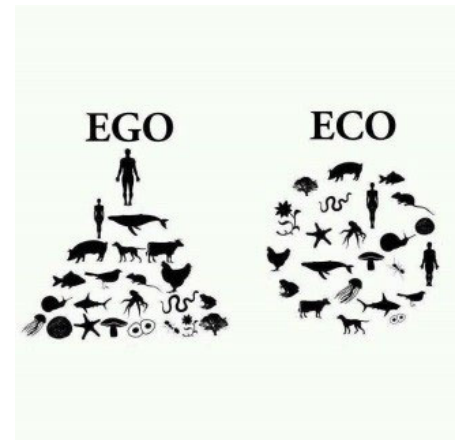
"We cannot be too suspicious of ordinary language." Whitehead

## Learning Goals

- Learn and apply theories used in ecolinguistics such as Critical Discourse Analysis
- Recognize the linguistic structures used in environmental discourse
- Examine and reflect on your own ecological philosophy
- Respect ways of knowing that are not western/scientific.
- Understand how Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is remembered, shared and encoded in language and stories
- Describe different definitions of "nature" and "language"
- Explain the complexity of and controversy over the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (how language, thought, and perception of the world are connected)
- Learn how to read scholarly articles by identifying the main argument, the theoretical framework, or the methodology.

This course is designated as fulfilling the WA general education requirement. This means that as a class we will work on...

- 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, using evidence to support it.
- 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 using the APA citation style.
- Formatting a paper in linguistics style.



## Contact Information

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Phone: 651-696-6166

[mmillig1@macalester.edu](mailto:mmillig1@macalester.edu)

You can always reach me by email or text to my office phone number. I will usually get back to you quickly, and always within 24 hours on weekdays.

## Call me "Marianne" (She/hers)

Students are sometimes not sure what to call their professors. Like many others at Macalester, I invite you to use my first name, though if you are feeling formal, "Professor" or "Professor Milligan" or "Dr. Milligan" are all fine. Please be sure to share what you would like to be called, as well!

## Office (Student) Hours

Office (student) hours: Office hours are times that professors have set aside to meet with students about whatever you need, e.g. to talk about the course, the department, assignments, grad school, etc. Office hours are the best time to meet with professors though it isn't the only time. You can email professors to find other times.

I have set up appointment slots on [my calendar](#) where you can select a time that works for you. I'm happy to meet over zoom or in my office (or if the weather is nice, outside walking around). If there aren't any appointment slots that work for you, you should open your calendar and put my email in the "Meet with..." box on the left to see when I'm free. Then email me with a couple of times that work for both of us

Talking to students is one of my favorite things about being a professor. No question is too small, and no pretext to talk is too flimsy: if you want to talk, we can talk!



**“But the truth is that the [Inuit] do *not* have lots of different words for snow.... Anyone who insists on simply checking their primary sources will find that they are quite unable to document the alleged fact.” (Pullum 1991:160)**

## Ungrading

In this course, we will take an approach to assessment and grades that's often called ungrading ([Stommel 2020](#)) that is similar to contract grading. The intent is to create flexibility and give you agency so that you can focus on your learning, rather than on grades. The past few years have been challenging for everyone – as one wise colleague put it, we're not all in the same boat, but we're all in the same storm – and I've found that an ungrading approach is a great way to combine flexibility with high standards and real learning.

Following Stommel (2020) "While you will get a final grade at the end of the term, I will not be grading individual assignments, but rather asking questions and making comments that engage your work rather than simply evaluate it. You will also be reflecting carefully on your own work and the work of your peers. The intention here is to help you focus on working in a more organic way, as opposed to working as you think you're expected to." Assignments in this class are designed to give you a chance to do deep learning through practice and reflection. Both of us will be evaluating your work throughout the semester, but you won't get a grade until exam week when we meet to discuss it

## Final Course Grade

We will use a combination of Specifications Grading and a Portfolio to determine your final course grade. For the Specs grading part, you will earn points throughout the semester in three categories: class discussion (through attendance), class preparation, and written assignments. The final point totals (see table below) will give you a rough measure of my expectations as you assess and grade yourself. You will bring your final portfolio to a grading conference during final exams. For the Portfolio, you will choose your best/favorite/most meaningful work, revise it, and write a critical assessment of your learning and engagement in the course (full directions on [moodle](#)). During the conference, I will first read through your portfolio and then we'll decide your final course grade together, taking into consideration the grade range you reached through specs points and the quality of the portfolio (written assignment expectations can be found [here](#)).

## Specification Points

### Class discussion points

- The most important learning in this class comes from class discussions and activities. This learning can only happen if we are present in class. I will keep attendance and you will get one discussion point per class period. Each grade range has a set number of absences built-in with no questions asked. If you are missing more classes than the grade range you are aiming for, then, you must come talk to me about meeting this requirement. Total number is 40.

### Class Preparation

- These are **short** assignments (100-200 words) that are due before every class. You have many options to choose from (see list [here](#)). **No late class preps will be accepted.**
- The learning goal for these assignments is to ensure that you're prepared to participate in class discussions and activities. Part of being prepared for class is thinking about the ideas in the readings and how they connect to your previous experiences and previous knowledge and/or identifying aspects of the assigned texts that are confusing or unclear. The number of assignments you need to complete for each grade range is given in the table below. Total number is 40.

### Written Assignments

- Reflection Journals: These give you space to reflect on your learning in a more informal writing style. The number required for each grade range is in the table below. 700-1000 words. Directions are [here](#).
- Research Assignments: These give you the opportunity to collect, analyze your own data, and write up the results using typical academic writing. There will be several options to choose from but you must do two. (1000-1500 words). Direction are [here](#).
- Final Research Project: The final project is required if you want to earn an A or A- in the class. If you are doing the final project, after spring break, you will complete 4 assignments that build to the final project. Directions are [here](#). Anyone not doing the final project will write additional reflection journals instead which is why the A/A- grade range has a lower number of reflection journal points.

All of this means that you will have flexibility to choose which assignments to do, as well as how many activities and assignments you would like to take on, depending on your goals.

### Specification Point Totals and Grade Ranges

Grade Range	Discussion (Attendance) Points (of 40)	Class Preparation (of 40)	Written Assignments			
			Reflection Journals	Research Assignments	Final Project Assignments	Final Portfolio
A/A-	36+	34+	2	2	4 (5 if a podcast)	1
B+/B/B-	33+	30+	4	2		1
C+/C/C-	29+	27+	4	1		1

To earn points, written assignments will be evaluated on a credit/no credit basis. Written assignments include: reflection journals, research assignments, and assignments that are part of the final project. "Credit" will be awarded for work that:

- Is turned in on time. You are all given 4 days after the due date to turn in the assignment after the due date - no questions asked and no need to ask for an extension. (Note this doesn't apply to class preps). If you need longer than 4 days, you must reach out to me

to let me know when you expect to turn in the assignment. Therefore, on time means you turned it in within the 4 day window, or within the time period we agree on when you reach out to me.

- Assignments are complete and follow the directions.
- Assignments meet at least the B+ standard on the rubrics found [here](#).

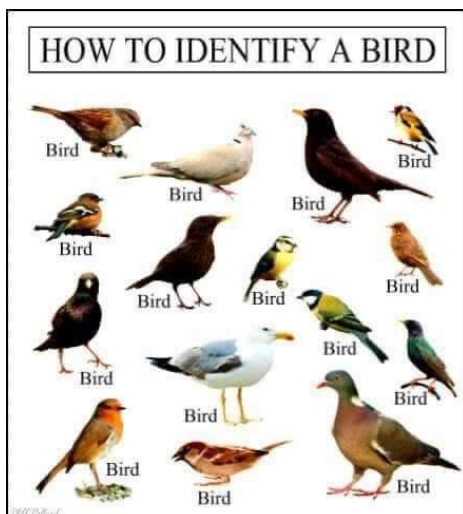
Let's learn and explore and aim as high as we're able, while acknowledging that there are some external limits on our time, energy, capacity, and attention that aren't within our control. Let's try to be kind and patient with one another and with ourselves.

## Expectations

**We will respect each other and create an inclusive classroom.** We want to create an environment that facilitates a robust exchange of ideas, assisting each of us to learn and grow based upon the content we grapple with together. We want each person in this classroom community to experience an authentic sense of belonging and feel supported to actively engage in and contribute to both the teaching and learning that occurs.

**We will all bring copies of the readings to class.** Electronic copies are ok as long as their use doesn't have a negative impact on class discussion.

I hope that during this time, you are all taking care of yourselves, and those in your community. I hope too that we are able to have a good semester, learn with and from one another and meet all of our goals. If something isn't working for you, please let me know privately.



“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

When you don't feel well, or are isolating/in quarantine

If you are in isolation/in quarantine but are feeling well when we are scheduled to meet in person, I will have an iPad in class that we can move around and add to small group discussions. But if you are not feeling well, please rest. I do not want to set up the expectation that you need to attend class via zoom when you are not feeling up to it. Each grade range has a number of absences built in.

## Helpful Resources on Campus

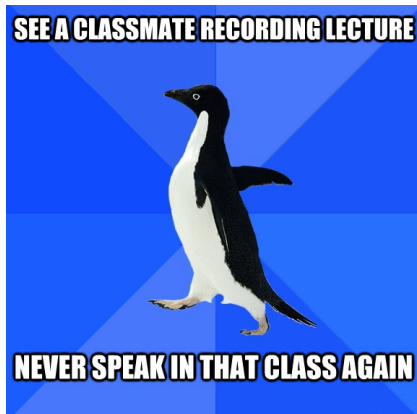
Many wonderful resources exist that will help you with this class. To book an online appointment with a writing counselor at the MAX Center, visit [WCOOnline](#). Our research and instruction librarians are also a great resource for many writing-related questions. You may book an online appointment with one of them [here](#), Talia and Beth are the two librarians who usually work with linguistic classes. Another useful resource is Macalester's [Write Well video series](#).

## Accommodations

I am committed to supporting all students in my class. If course design ever poses barriers to your ability to access or to demonstrate mastery of course content, please let me know. I will make reasonable academic accommodations in such cases. If you have a known disability and think that you may need formal accommodations, email [disabilityresources@macalester.edu](mailto:disabilityresources@macalester.edu) or call the office at 651-696-6874. You may find yourself needing things that you normally would not. In those cases, please let me know what is going on. I may be able to make reasonable accommodations that will help.

## Academic Dishonesty

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 at Macalester or in this course. Find Macalester's academic integrity policy [here](#). For help avoiding plagiarism, visit the Library's Academic Integrity materials [here](#). For the Quick Guide to the APA Manual of Style, the citation system used by linguists, visit [here](#).



Policy on class recordings: I have no current plans to record our daily class sessions. Should that change for any reason, such as to accommodate a documented disability, I will notify you in advance and any recording will be in a manner consistent with [Macalester's classroom recording policy](#). Please note that all lectures and other recordings distributed to the class on Moodle are covered by this policy, which states that members of the class may not share, replicate, or publish

any class recording, in whole or in part, or use any of the recordings for non-class purposes, without my prior written approval.