TESL 531—Language Assessment  
Fall 2012

Class Meetings: Wednesdays, 5:30-8:00 p.m.; Watkins, 106  
August 29 - December 17, 2010 (*No class Nov. 21)
Instructor: Heather Linville
Contact Information: Letts, Lower Level  
linville@american.edu  
202-885-2130 (office)
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 3:00 – 5:30 p.m., 8:00 – 8:30 p.m.  
Appointments preferred.

Course Description:
The primary goal for this course is to increase the language assessment literacy of all TESOL professionals. Students will understand the processes of assessment in the language classroom, including an understanding of the movement in language assessment toward alternative (more authentic) testing. While learning the principles for evaluating and structuring assessments, students will analyze test types and create their own assessment tools. Students will also learn to design rubrics. Throughout the course, emphasis will be placed on acquiring language assessment terminology and concepts, learning ways to integrate assessment procedures into any curriculum, and designing assessment tasks that allow for improved learning. Finally, students will critically analyze case studies of language assessment dilemmas in order to recommend principled courses of action.

Course Goals:
By the end of this course, students will be able to:
- Define and explain main testing concepts including reliability, validity and washback.
- Describe assessment tasks and how to utilize them.
- Evaluate tests and other assessment tools according to the five principle of language assessment.
- Design valid and reliable assessments appropriate for specific learners in their language learning context.
- Discuss current assessment trends, including authentic testing and portfolio evaluation.
- Analyze and justify responses to a variety of assessment dilemmas inherent in any classroom setting.

Course Texts:
Required:
Suggested:

Supplementary materials will be distributed as needed or made available in Blackboard (BB).

Requirements:
Attendance is key for course success, as is active class participation. You are required to complete all assigned readings and tasks before class. All work must be handed in by the due dates established; late work receives a grade reduction. Blackboard posts are due by midnight of the Tuesday before the class period unless otherwise noted. Assignments have varying due dates as described below.

Academic Integrity:
You are subject to the Academic Integrity Code of American University. See http://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/regulations/reg80.cfm#list for more information. All work submitted must be your own or must be properly documented. Collaborative work and work previously submitted in another class must be approved in advance by the instructor.
### Class Schedule Overview:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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| 8/29  | Introduction to assessment  
The role of assessment in the language classroom  
**Please note: Due to instructor absence, this first class period will happen asynchronously online between Tuesday, 8/28 and Thursday, 8/30. Please complete the readings and two assignments by midnight, Thursday, 8/30.** | B&A Ch. 1  
FUL Ch. 1  
[http://languagetesting.info/whatis/lt.html](http://languagetesting.info/whatis/lt.html) (Fulcher’s website—explore this page, “What is language testing?”) | • Introduce yourself on Blackboard, highlighting your previous experience with assessment (100-200 words). Read your classmates’ posts and respond to 3.  
• Read the assigned chapters and participate in 3 of the 4 discussion board threads on Blackboard. |
| 9/5   | Principles of language assessment  
Classroom-based Assessment | B&A Ch. 2  
Fulcher Ch. 3  
Bailey Ch. 3 (BB) | • Bring to class an example of a language assessment that you have created, used, or experienced. Write a paragraph describing it in terms of the concepts and terminology learned. |
| 9/12  | Assessment design (I)  
Alternative assessment | B&A Ch. 3, 6  
O’Malley & Valdez  
Pierce Ch. 2 (BB) | • Create a brief assessment to assess your classmates’ knowledge of the first two class periods. Bring 2 copies to class. |
| 9/19  | Assessment design (II)  
Definitions and concepts quiz | FUL Ch. 4, 5  
Brown-2005 (BB) | • Definitions and concepts quiz  
• Describe in ~1 typed single-spaced page the learners for whom your sample assessments will be designed. Include such information as age, educational level, level of language proficiency, and language learning goals. |
| 9/26  | Assessing listening | B&A Ch. 7  
Coombe et al.-2007 (BB)  
[http://languagetesting.info/video/main.html](http://languagetesting.info/video/main.html) (#8) | • Assessment critique due |
| 10/3  | Assessing reading | B&A Ch. 9  
Cohen-1994 (BB)  
O’Malley & Valdez  
Pierce Ch. 5 (BB)  
[http://languagetesting.info/video/main.html](http://languagetesting.info/video/main.html) (#6) | • Assessment task design due (Group A) |
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<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>Cultural and ethical issues of assessment</td>
<td>B&amp;A Ch. 6 (review) Abedi-2011 (BB) Bailey Ch. 4 (BB) Garcia &amp; Kleifgen-2010 (BB)</td>
<td>Assessment task design due (Group B)</td>
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<td>Rubrics</td>
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<td>10/17</td>
<td>Assessing writing</td>
<td>B&amp;A Ch. 10 Bailey Ch. 12 (BB) Gotlieb Ch. 2 (BB)</td>
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<td>Academic language assessment</td>
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<td>10/24</td>
<td>Assessing speaking</td>
<td>B&amp;A Ch. 8 Bailey Ch. 11 (BB) <a href="http://languagetesting.info/video/main.html">http://languagetesting.info/video/main.html</a> (#9)</td>
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<td>10/31</td>
<td>Assessing grammar and vocabulary</td>
<td>B&amp;A Ch. 11 FUL Ch. 6 <a href="http://languagetesting.info/video/main.html">http://languagetesting.info/video/main.html</a> (#10)</td>
<td>Peer evaluation of rubric design. Bring 2 copies to class.</td>
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<td>Piloting an assessment</td>
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<td>11/7</td>
<td>Standards</td>
<td>B&amp;A Ch. 4, 5 FUL Ch. 8 Lippi-Green-1997 (BB)</td>
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<td>Standardized testing</td>
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<td>Statistics as a foreign language</td>
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<td>11/21</td>
<td>No Class: Thanksgiving</td>
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<td>11/28</td>
<td>Scoring and grading</td>
<td>B&amp;A Ch. 12 FUL Ch. 7 Winger-2009 (BB)</td>
<td>Assessment plan due</td>
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<td>On-going assessment planning</td>
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<td>12/5</td>
<td>Self-assessment</td>
<td>FUL Ch. 9, 10</td>
<td>Assessment investigation due</td>
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<td>Test administration</td>
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<td>Teaching test-taking strategies</td>
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<td>12/17</td>
<td>Final Projects Due</td>
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**Assignment Descriptions and Due Dates:**

**Definitions and Concepts Quiz**  
*In class: 9/19*

Utilizing a traditional test format, in this quiz you will demonstrate your knowledge of the five principles and concepts presented in the first three class sessions.

**Assessment Critique**  
*Due: 9/26*

In order to apply the knowledge of the principles of language assessment, you will critique a given assessment. In the critique, you will first analyze the assessment according to each principle (one paragraph for each principle) and then make recommendations to improve the assessment, justifying your suggestions. The critique will be a total of 2-3 pages (typed, single-spaced). **Submit via Blackboard before class on 9/26.**

**Assessment Task Design**  
*Due: 10/3 (A), 10/10 (B)*

For this assignment, working with a partner you will create an assessment task to evaluate students’ receptive skills (listening or reading). **Group A** will write a sample assessment task for the skill of listening...
(due 10/3) while Group B will write a sample assessment task for the skill of reading (due 10/10). The sample assessment should be accompanied by an explanatory commentary of 1-2 typed, single-spaced pages, including a clear definition of the target audience (learner or group of learners for whom it is intended), explanation and justification of how the assessment task was written, evaluation of the assessment according to the five principles, and a reflection on the limitations of the assessment as written. The sample assessments will be discussed and evaluated in class. With your partner, bring a total of two hard copies of the sample assessment to class. Both partners should submit electronically via Blackboard before class on the date due.

Rubric Design  
Due: 11/14
Working with a partner, you will choose or design a rubric to accompany a sample productive skill assessment task (writing or speaking) that you also design, write, and pilot. The sample assessment and rubric should be accompanied by an explanatory commentary of 2-3 typed, single-spaced pages, including a clear definition of the target audience (learner or group of learners for whom it is intended), explanation and justification of how the assessment and rubric were written, evaluation of the assessment and rubric according to the five principles, and a reflection on how the assessment and rubric could be improved. Note: The sample assessments and rubrics will be discussed and peer-evaluated in class prior to piloting (on October 31). Bring two hard copies (1 per partner) of the sample assessment to class that day. Submit final version via Blackboard before class on 11/14.

Assessment Investigation  
Due: 12/5
After identifying an area of assessment that you are interested in exploring further, write a 4-6 page (typed, single-spaced) report drawing upon recent relevant literature on the topic (7-10 sources) and identifying the current state of the field. Include in your conclusion how the information you learned impacts you as an ESL/EFL teacher. Submit your paper to Blackboard before class on 12/5.

Final Assessment Project:  
Due: 11/28 and 12/17
For this assignment, there will be two parts.
Assessment Plan: For part one, you will receive a classroom-based assessment scenario for which you will decide upon an appropriate assessment plan. The assessment plan will include a written explanation and justification of the assessment tool(s) you have chosen to utilize, and a discussion of the dilemmas that arose in your decision-making processes, and a reflection on the possible outcomes (including difficulties) of implementing your assessment plan. Submit the 2-3 typed single-spaced pages of your assessment plan via Blackboard before class on 11/28.
Assessment Tool: Utilizing the knowledge you have gained throughout the course, write or choose the assessment tool(s) you outline in your Assessment Plan and pilot the tool. Write an explanatory commentary of 2-3 typed, single-spaced pages which reiterates and expands the explanation and justification of how the assessment was written, explains how the assessment was piloted and the results of the piloting, evaluates the assessment tool according to the five principles, and reflects on how the assessment could be improved. Make sure you answer the question: How would your assessment plan change now that you have written the assessment tool(s)? Submit a hard copy of both the Assessment Plan and the Assessment Tool to the TESOL office by 5:00 p.m. on 12/17.

Evaluation
In-class activities, discussions, and homework 10%
Definitions and Concepts Quiz 10%
Assessment Critique 10%
Assessment Task Design (receptive skill) 15%
Rubric Design (productive skill) 15%
Assessment Investigation 15%
Final Assessment Project
(Assessment Plan 10%)
(Assessment Tool 15%)
Total 100%