

From: Joely Proudfit <jproudfi@csusm.edu>
Date: Wednesday, March 8, 2017 at 3:24 PM
To: Michael Hughes <mhughes@csusm.edu>
Cc: jjameson <jjameson@csusm.edu>
Subject: RE: GEC: AIS 280

Hello –

Thank you for reaching out.

Tribal heritage languages are vehicles for cultural transmission, cultural expression, and cultural continuity. The recovery, revitalization, and continuity of a heritage language signals a critical link in the practice of decolonization. By undoing the forced assimilation and use of English, tribal language restoration supports tribal resilience through the revival of heritage languages that can restore songs, ceremonies, stories, and other critical cultural and social elements to tribal life and peoplehood. To study and learn about this process requires humanistic skills of textual analysis, unpacking the layers and meaning of Native philosophies, and comparatively critiquing the dominant and subjugated language groups (and the power dynamics that threatened/banned the Native language use to begin with).

Finally, students will acquire knowledge about the human experience and issues of cultural and individual identity formation challenging American Indians' due to language loss. They will read and analyze narratives that describe this disconnection from tribal culture, knowledge, and lifeways; and critique a variety of texts that depict this profound existential crisis that many American Indians experience and describe as being a "stranger" in one's homeland because they cannot speak their language and therefore have lost a vital link to tribal ways of knowing and being in the world.

I think it is important to be clear that while you may understand linguistic courses to focus on "transcription, linguistic analysis, database building and translation, and pedagogical materials." AIS 280 has some interest in these areas, but its stated focus on "techniques and social context for language maintenance and preservation" assumes that indigenous languages are living languages, similar to the study of Modern Languages in the Humanities. (The Masters track in Spanish includes a course called "Hispanic Cultures and Societies.") Because indigenous languages are also endangered languages, AIS 280 will address state, federal, and tribal policies that affect their maintenance and preservation. Perhaps the main term of contention here is "maintenance." AIS 280 will not focus on maintenance as "database building," but instead will focus on maintenance as understanding structures of power (e.g., political or institutional structures of power) that hinder or enhance the protection of endangered indigenous languages. American Indians are the only citizens in the U.S. with the legal distinction of being a "political" group first and foremost so the political cannot be separated from the cultural. I also want to assure this is NOT a linguistics course.

It's worth noting that the syllabus outline does not contain all the materials books, films, off site visits that will require students to acquire knowledge about the human experience and issues of cultural and individual identity formation challenging American Indians' due to language loss. They will have the opportunity to visit tribal communities, hear guest speakers, watch films, read and analyze narratives that describe this disconnection from tribal culture, knowledge, and

lifeways. I would be happy to add additional readings and materials to the syllabus to further highlight that point.

“American Indian Studies as a discipline has been in the process of emerging, not as a “corrective” or a “replacement” body of work, but rather as an autonomous approach to a vast body of knowledge concerning the cultures and histories of native peoples on this continent and the development of “endogenous” methods.” (Cook-Lynn, 2007)

Hope this helps you better understand how AIS 280 is truly a humanities course in its delivery and approach to language and culture.

Thank you, Joely

Nošúun Lóoviq!
My heart is good (Luiseño/Payomkowishum)

Joely (Luiseño/Payomkowishum)

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From: Michael Hughes

Sent: Monday, March 06, 2017 12:27 PM

To: Joely Proudfit <jproudfi@csusm.edu>
Cc: Julie Jameson <jjameson@csusm.edu>
Subject: GEC: AIS 280

Hi Joely,

I'm writing you today as one of the Humanities reps on GEC, I've included Julie on this thread since she's the GEC chair. As you know GEC is currently looking at AIS 280 (among other AIS courses). You've submitted AIS 280 as a humanities course, but linguistics is generally classified as a social science. Techniques and social context for language maintenance and preservation would also seem to fall mostly in the social sciences. Clearly, language is the primary means of transmission of culture, but linguistic analysis, while in the best of worlds starts from authentic texts, doesn't require literary or cultural analysis. That is, while a linguist who fails to engage in the culture likely won't have much success, and any maintenance program has to take cultural priorities into account, the tools used to implement the programs aren't necessarily tools from the humanities. In our work, for instance, we work with community elders and record important narratives of various categories, and then we work (typically with younger community members) on transcription, linguistic analysis, database building and translation, and pedagogical materials. We certainly listen to and try to understand the narratives as deeply as possible, but determining that deeper meaning isn't the *linguists'* main job.

I wonder if there would be a way to either submit this course for area D certification, or find a way to emphasize humanistic analysis of the narratives collected as the main focus of the course? I think that issues of language documentation, maintenance and/or revitalization are extremely important, and would benefit our students, I just would like to make sure that this course fits properly in the overall GE program.

Warm regards,
Michael