UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE
The Literacy, Language, and Culture Program

EDU 563: ESL Testing and Assessment
Spring 2015

ONLINE (3 credits)

Course description

The focus of this course is on learner-centered approaches to constructive evaluation of language and content. Emphasis is predominantly on authentic, performance-based assessment practices but also includes the role of criterion-and norm-based formal testing procedures within a holistic evaluation framework. Comprehensive evaluation of language involves the whole learner, including an integrated approach incorporating socio-cultural, academic, and cognitive perspectives. Also included is an understanding of biases influencing formalized second language testing.

Course outcomes

1. To know the multiple and unique linguistic and cultural variables affecting English Language Learner academic achievement.
2. To understand the rationale behind alternative, authentic assessment.
3. To develop appropriate assessment curriculum applications aligned with state and local standards in the various content areas.
4. To develop appropriate rubrics suitable for a variety of assessment activities.
5. To demonstrate competence in applying varied assessment across a variety of content areas.
6. To understand the principles of intervention assessment.
7. To develop a working knowledge of portfolio assessment for English Language Learners and how this fits within mainstream classroom contexts.
8. To understand the rationale for and limitations of norm-and-criterion-based tests.
9. To know the varieties and limitations of common forms of standardized tests.
10. To understand reliability and validity and how they affect formal and informal assessment.

Values

• Democracy – Students will be exposed to multiple views and perspectives with regard to ESL testing and assessment, utilize inclusive dialogue, and be encouraged to express their views.
• Civility and Caring – The instructor will model the use of constructive communication, protection of individual dignity, and empathy, compassion, and openness. Students will be expected to demonstrate these qualities in their interactions with instructor and peers. Evidence of differentiation for students will be expected to be included in lesson plans.
• Equity and Diversity – Course content will include ways to differentiate for a variety of learner types including struggling readers and individuals from different cultures. Students will be expected to include differentiated elements in their lesson plans.
• Social Justice – Students will adjust instruction, as needed, to empower all learners to develop literacy skills in order to be active members of society.
• Ethical Practice – Instructor will engage in and insist on the highest level of professional practice.
• Scholarship – Students will examine research, theory and best practices to guide their own content area instruction and assessment.
• Professional Learning and Continuous Improvement – Students and instructor will participate in ongoing dialogue to exchange ideas for mutual and continuing professional growth.

Required materials


2) Additional readings and videos (see the course outline, below).

Requirements and grading policy

1) Participation in class activities and discussion (30%).

You need to be online regularly to be able to participate in the collaborative learning process. Because knowledge is constructed socially, it is extremely important that you log in at least three times a week, Monday through Saturday (Sunday is our day off), prepared and ready to participate in the online discussion:

• Take notes as you read the articles on Blackboard, visit the websites, watch the videos, and analyze your own thoughts on the subject.
• Be ready to participate in our discussion online, bring your questions, and share your understanding of the reading materials with others.
• Two points (3%) will be deducted for each unexcused absence, i.e., each week missed.
• If you miss three weeks, you will not be able to pass this class.

2) Annotated bibliography (10 items) (30%). Due: 3/9.

An annotated bibliography is a structured collection of citations pertaining to various sources related to the subject of your inquiry and/or research. Each entry is accompanied by a short descriptive paragraph (annotation) summarizing and evaluating the source. **Important: Use the APA format (6th edition).** As with any bibliography, the citations are listed in a strict alphabetical order, from A to Z. Each annotation will be 100-200 words long and may focus on the degree of relevance of the information to the topic you are interested in, quality of the source, the author’s ethos, significance of the problem, and so on (the choice is yours). All items
must be relevant to one particular topic under the general umbrella of “ESL Testing and Assessment.”

3) Final project (30%) and presentation (10%). Due: 4/27.

You will be asked to create an L2 assessment tool specific to your own professional context. This will allow you to demonstrate the ability to create an assessment plan, analyze the final product, and evaluate each item in terms of the new knowledge acquired this semester. Your optional journal/researcher’s log and, ideally, annotated bibliography will be instrumental in helping you complete this task: continue taking notes as you work on the final project. You will also create a short PowerPoint presentation, save it as a PDF file, and post it on Blackboard during the last week of class.

OPTIONAL: If you wish, you may keep a journal/researcher’s log. Take notes in it as you read and after you read as well as when you do additional research on your own throughout this semester. This can be done once or twice a week. The content is more important than the format because you will use some of it when working on the projects. Things you can include: thoughts and concerns, information from different sources, summaries, quotations, questions, side notes, vocabulary, pictures, graphs, charts, poetry, emoticons, and anything else related to your work/research – whatever helps you generate ideas. It is not a required graded assignment to submit but simply a learning tool that I highly recommend.

You will receive detailed instructions and checklists for all of the above in class. All assignments must be completed before the final grade for this course can be issued. Furthermore, plagiarism is prohibited. It is unethical and will result in a failing grade for the assignment in question or for the whole course. We will spend some time learning to work with sources. You will learn how to use other researchers’ ideas and give credit.

Important: Cite your sources using the APA (6th edition) format: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

A = 93-100%, A- = 90-92%, B+ = 87-89%, B = 83-86%, B- = 80-82%, C+ = 77-79%, C = 73-76%

Academic support

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. At any point, if you encounter difficulty with the course or feel you could be performing at a higher level, consult with me.

Students experience difficulty in courses for a variety of reasons. For problems with writing skills or time management, make an appointment to see a tutor at USM Learning Commons Tutoring (780-4228), http://www.usm.maine.edu/learningcommons/tutoring-services. Help is also available in Portland through the Counseling Center, 105 Payson Smith (780-4050), and the Office of Academic Support for Students with Disabilities, 242 Luther Bonney (780-4706).
Technology support (including Blackboard-specific questions and issues)

USM Help Desk: send an email to helpdesk@usm.maine.edu or call 780-4029.

Library support

Live support is available during business hours. Go to http://usm.maine.edu/library and click on “Ask us / A librarian is only a click away” to chat with a librarian. You can also call the USM Library in Portland (780-4270), Gorham (780-5345), or at LAC (753-6540). Remember that, as a USM student, you have already paid for access to online article databases through our library’s website (EBSCO Host/Academic Search Complete, JStor, and others).

Course outline

1/12  Week 1: Introduction to the course -- L2 assessment and interculturality

1/20  Week 2: L2 evaluation and assessment: Core concepts, ideas, and issues


Watch “Assessment of English Language Learners” by Dr. Lorraine Valdez Pierce: http://www.colorincolorado.org/webcasts/assessment

Brown & Abeywickrama, Chapter 1

1/26  Week 3: Principles of L2 assessment

Brown & Abeywickrama, Chapter 2


2/2  Week 4: Classroom tests – L2 and the “mainstream”

Brown & Abeywickrama, Chapter 3

2/9 **Week 5: Standards-based assessment and standardized testing**

Brown & Abeywickrama, Chapter 4

Read TESOL’s “PreK-12 English Language Proficiency Standards Framework”: [http://www.tesol.org/docs/books/bk_prek-12elpstandards_framework_318.pdf?sfvrsn=2](http://www.tesol.org/docs/books/bk_prek-12elpstandards_framework_318.pdf?sfvrsn=2)


2/16-2/22 **Winter break (USM)**

2/23 **Week 6: Standardized testing (continued)**

Brown & Abeywickrama, Chapter 5

Watch any three videos (or more) from the TOEFL TV Channel: [http://www.youtube.com/toefltv](http://www.youtube.com/toefltv)

Download sample TOEFL iBT questions: [http://www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/prepare/sample_questions](http://www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/prepare/sample_questions)

Watch “An English Test, and a Warning” by Voice of America: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQFzKJCr_Ao](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQFzKJCr_Ao)

3/2 **Week 7: Multiliteracies and alternative assessment**

Brown & Abeywickrama, Chapter 6

Watch “ESL Authentic Assessment Pilot at La Follette High School Semester 1 – Food”: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6P11l8oqF4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6P11l8oqF4)
Read “Assessment Portfolios: Including English Language Learners in Large-Scale Assessments” by Emily Gomez: 
http://www.cal.org/content/download/1517/15938/file/AssessmentPortfolios.pdf

Read “Young Language Learner Assessment” by Gerry Lassche (scroll down to p. 28): http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/pta_April_2009.pdf


3/9 Week 8: Assessing L2 listening

Annotated bibliography is due

Brown & Abeywickrama, Chapter 7


3/16 Week 9: Assessing L2 speaking

Brown & Abeywickrama, Chapter 8


3/23 Week 10: Assessing L2 reading

Brown & Abeywickrama, Chapter 9


3/30-4/5  **Spring break (USM)**

4/6  **Week 11: Assessing L2 writing**

Brown & Abeywickrama, Chapter 10


4/13  **Week 12: Assessing L2 vocabulary and syntax**

Brown & Abeywickrama, Chapter 11


4/20  **Week 13: Feedback as a future-oriented activity**

Brown & Abeywickrama, Chapter 12


4/27  **Week 14: Conclusion**

Post your PowerPoint presentations (PDF). **Final project is due.**