

## **An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Study of Language**

Through this project I will develop an interdisciplinary syllabus and corresponding sample lessons on the study of language. The syllabus and lesson plans are aimed at offering James Madison students an interdisciplinary exploration of language, identity, and authority via an honors option course that students are taking in the spring of 2011. As part of the lessons that I will be teaching, I will expose students to texts, which approach issues regarding language, identity, and authority from a range of disciplines,

Through a disciplinary approach I will show how a variety of other disciplines feed into the study of language and how they nurture new ways to think about our native language. For example, I will focus on the social issues associated with language, including attitudes toward dialects, language socialization, language and gender, first and second language acquisition, the influence of media and technology on language use, etc. While English will be the focus of the lessons, other languages might be explored in order to exemplify certain aspects being discussed, as well as giving a greater appreciation of how the students' native language and ways of communicating is similar to and different from other languages and cultures. The students taking the honors option course will discuss and analyze issues related to language and authority. Upon active participation in this course students will be able to:

- explore their own questions about English (or another language they know)
- connect different academic disciplines to the study of language and to the everyday use of the English language
- identify socio-cultural and linguistic factors that contribute to language variation
- demonstrate an awareness of language attitudes, why they exist and their effects
- question notions of language quality, standards, and correctness
- identify and discuss the socio-cultural and linguistic factors affecting first and second language acquisition

In summary, my goal is to deliver lesson sequences that develop and enhance awareness and understanding of the many interdisciplinary areas language study as well as an understanding of the richness of language and how it impacts our lives.