In EIL 460, we study the historical, philosophical, theoretical and practical aspects of language testing. We examine purposes and types of language tests in relation to theories of language use and language teaching goals, and we discuss testing practices and procedures related to language teaching and language research. The class covers the planning, writing, and administration of tests, basic descriptive statistics, and test analysis. Graded projects are required. The prerequisite is EIL 489, or an equivalent course in second language acquisition, or the consent of the instructor.

EIL 460 offers three credit hours for undergraduate students and four credit hours for graduate students. The workload and expectations are identical for graduate and undergraduate students. Undergrads needing an additional credit hour may enroll via my undergraduate independent study number – please contact me about this if you are interested in doing so.

Please be certain that you register for the appropriate section status: graduate or undergraduate. You may use the rubric you wish or which is required by your degree program of study: EIL, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, or SLS 460, or Ed Psych 487. ‘EIL 460’ is the controlling rubric and number for the course and will appear as the sole course name and number in all course discussions, references, and handouts.

Successful completion of EIL 460 (with a final grade of 'A' or 'B') can fulfill the language assessment requirement of the State of Illinois ESL or Bilingual Education Teacher Endorsements. To do so, you will be asked to structure some of your work in this class so as to meet the Endorsement requirements. See me if you are interested in the State of Illinois ESL Teacher Endorsement. Because our class contains both Endorsement and non-Endorsement students, I will produce a letter for the Endorsement students to attest that this course has fulfilled its requirements. Please request this letter from me at the end of the semester – submit a request along with the third mini-paper (see the agenda below). I do not generate this letter automatically. You must request your letter at the end of this semester. In addition, I give the letter to you, and it is then your responsibility to make a copy for your files and then send the original to the correct office and/or person at the correct time. I do not transmit this letter for you. The State of Illinois teacher endorsement in ESL is undergoing revision. It is my understanding that there will be no changes for at least a year, and hence, EIL 460 still fulfills that requirement.

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1 This syllabus is also available at my website, for which the web address is given above.
2 Here are some special notes concerning my office hours:
(1) Excluding UIUC holidays, I hold office hours only between the scheduled start and end dates for instruction for this semester, inclusive of those dates, if relevant. I do not hold office hours during finals week.
(2) Office hours may be canceled due to travel. If so, I will always try to post a note on my office door.
(3) Office hours are drop-in: first-come, first served. I do not schedule appointments during office hours.
(4) If office hours are not convenient, or if you wish to see me outside of the semester instruction dates, contact me to schedule an appointment. In this event, please give me as many days and times as possible to arrange an appointment.
(5) I have a mailbox inside the 4080 FLB office suite. You may also safely leave things for me in the doorbin at my office: 3040 FLB. I prefer to receive materials in the 3040 FLB doorbin.
For UIUC MATESL students, this course is one area assessed in our comprehensive examinations. If you are graduating this semester, there will be two firm deadlines (to be announced and posted on Moodle later): one to negotiate the 460 comps task and the other to submit it. If you are not graduating this semester and wish me to evaluate your 460 comp, then you must (a) negotiate the 460 comp task with me before the end of this semester’s Finals week, and (b) submit it by or before 01 Nov 2014; otherwise, a subsequent 460 prof will handle your comp. Further details on these requirements will be explained after our course is underway.

Work load:

1. Prompt class attendance and full participation in all in-class activities.

2. Prompt completion of the assigned reading.

3. Three graded mini-papers (MPs). The due-date for each paper is shown in the course agenda, below. We will discuss each mini-paper in the weeks preceding its due date.

4. Active participation in small group test development projects, in which you will create test specifications (blueprints). This work yields a class packet of testing materials which informs MP2 and possibly MP3. 

   Groups are expected to work collaboratively and to meet outside of class, coordinate work electronically, as well as meet in class.

5. Participation in online elements of the course, notably (a) accessing and downloading material from the course Moodle site, and (b) participation in Moodle discussion forums as such arises. Further information about Moodle will be provided during the early weeks of class.

6. Final course grading is done by portfolio, stored on the instructor’s computer. If you wish to add things to this electronic portfolio, they must be received by or before the “portfolio closure” time and date, shown in the agenda below.

Course Reading:

There is one required textbook for this class; please purchase it:


The above book is divided into ‘units’ (i.e., chapters). There are three parts to the book: A, B, and C, and the topics of the units parallel each other in conceptual "triplet" sets: A1 with B1 and C1 form Triplet One; A2 with B2 and C2 form Triplet Two, and so forth.  

Please see also the companion website for this book:

All other materials (described below) will be provided in downloadable PDF through the UIUC Moodle system. You will get downloading instructions after the class has begun.

Historically, there has been a second textbook for this class and some excerpts from it will be on the Moodle site:


You do not need to purchase the 2002 book.

Other recommended readings and materials will be provided as class discussions warrant.

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3 The term ‘triplet’ does not appear in the book – it is a terminological convenience invented for EIL 460.
In addition, we will generate a course packet of language test materials, mostly in the form of test specifications. Each of you will receive a copy of the entire packet – in digital form. That packet and your notes about it (from class discussions) constitute the third “textbook” for our course. The packet is an extremely important outcome of the class.

Finally, you will receive an annotated bibliography of readings in the history and philosophy of educational and psychological testing, and you may find those readings helpful (in particular) with the third mini-paper, if it takes a historical and philosophical direction.

Record-keeping:

After any course product has been graded, commented upon, and returned to you, keep it in a portfolio. My evaluation will emphasize evaluation of all of your work using the criteria below. Please also submit to this portfolio any other work which you feel may enhance your evaluation. In particular, be sure to include adjudicated rewrites (if any).

Method of grading:

The method of grading in this course is criterion-referenced. The criterial levels of performance are as follows. This is also known as a 'performance scale' and each paragraph below is a 'descriptor':

These grading policies are standard in my courses. References to a 'final project' may not apply in all of my classes. In some classes, there is no final project. If there is not, there is always a 'last-scheduled task', meaning the last graded activity of the semester. In courses with last-scheduled graded tasks (in lieu of a project), that task is typically due when the portfolio is submitted.

Grade of A:
Work at the A-level displays accurate understanding of claims by class sources (reading, lectures, and class discussions). Virtually no content accuracy errors are expected at the A-level. Furthermore, A-level work uses those claims (facts, quasi-facts, opinions, beliefs, values, etc.) in an identifiable, organized, balanced and coherent manner to support stances on issues. Additionally, A-level work displays synthesis and insight. It is not necessary for you to come to conclusions or proposals that nobody else has thought of, but rather to lead your reader to those conclusions in a fresh, insightful and argumentatively successful manner. Note: a 'successful' argument is one in which the general contention(s) is/are in fact upheld.

Grade of B:
Work at the B-level also displays accurate understanding of the claims made by class sources, though some very minor misunderstandings are possible. It uses those claims to support stances on issues. B-level work displays clear reconstruction of argumentative streams presented in class materials. That is, work at this level often paraphrases closely the readings and class discussions on which the course is based. The argument of B-level is also successful.

Grade of C:
Work at the C-level displays understanding of the majority of the claims made by class sources. Misunderstandings of those class sources may be present in a noticeable quantity. C-level work uses those claims to construct an argument, though the structure of the argument is probably not successful for reasons such as the following: (1) the argument may benefit from further tightening, or (2) the structure of the argument may be difficult to identify. C-level work probably also re-creates or paraphrases discussion streams presented in class. The streams may not be successful, possibly due to the misunderstandings noted above or possibly due to failure to completely re-create them.

Grades below C:
Intentionally, no description of work below C is given. If I feel that work is not reaching at least the C-level, then it is my responsibility to contact you individually and negotiate a resolution to the situation.

Plus and Minus:
In general, a 'plus' grade indicates that you have displayed the criteria of the grade to which it is attached "plus" a few criteria (or one important criterion) of the level immediately above. A 'minus' grade generally indicates that you have achieved the criteria of the grade level to which it is attached, "minus" a few criteria (or one important criterion) of that level.

Aggregation:
End-of-term aggregation of grades involves application of the above criteria descriptors to the overall trends in your work. Progress is noted most keenly. All of your course work will be returned to you. Evaluation is based on your entire portfolio, including the final project or last-scheduled task.

Incompletes (also known as an 'ex' grade):
Incompletes (i.e. 'ex' grades) will only be granted under the most exceptional circumstances. No automatic 'ex' grades will be granted simply because you turn in your final portfolio late. You must see me regarding any 'ex', and I have been forced to become very strict. It is very likely that I will refuse to grant an 'ex'. If you do not turn in your portfolio (all previous work and the final project) by the deadline, and if you have not gotten an approved 'ex' from me, I will give you a failing grade for the course. Be warned.

Negotiated Revision for Regrading:
Every piece of work you do during this class can be revised for re-grading, which is often called a 'rewrite'. Re-grading will never lower your grade. All proposed revision must be negotiated with the instructor. Rewrites for re-grading are a magnificent way to learn. A rewrite is complete (i.e. 'adjudicated') when you and I have agreed that it is: when the grade has gone up to a level we agree, or when we agree to stop working on it, or when you stop working on it. No rewrite is possible on any last-scheduled task. It is possible to turn in drafts of some or all of that work in lieu of a rewrite.

Alternate evidence:
For any assignment, you may submit something different and innovative, provided that you negotiate this substitution with the instructor. Alternate and additional evidence of your learning is always acceptable but must be approved before you undertake it. If you'd like to do something slightly different -- e.g. a new assignment instead of a rewrite, please take into consideration the timeframe of the course. Thank you.

Commenting:
It is my responsibility to comment your work adequately. This is important for two reasons: (1) it is necessary to justify the criterion-referenced grade awarded to the work, and (2) commenting enhances positive backwash of assessment.

Course Schedule (this is subject to change and negotiation):

| Assigned readings are due the first class day of each week (except for Week One) and are shown in italics. |
| Assigned tasks (e.g. Mini-papers) and other key events are shown in **bold italics**. |
| ‘LTA’ stands for Language Testing and Assessment (Fulcher and Davidson, 2007) |
| ‘T’ stands for the word ‘Triplet’; e.g., T1 refers to A1, B1, and C1 in LTA. |

Please see the Moodle site for the schedule.