ENGLISH 103A - THE NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
(FALL TERM 1991)

Instructor: Dennis Quon  
Office: HU 260  
Hours: 2:00 - 3:00 Tues./Thurs.  
5:30 - 6:30 Tues./Thurs.; and by appt.  
Office Phone:  
Home Phone: (416) 972-1073 (Toronto)  
Class Time: 11:30 - 1:00 Tues./Thurs.  
Location: Optometry Room 403  
Text: George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. Metaphors We Live By (1980)  
Kinko's packet

This section of English 103A aims to introduce students to one view of the relationship between language and reality, particularly the role language plays in the perception, representation, and manifestation of reality. To my mind, an approach to appreciating this relationship that is particularly relevant to students of language and communication involves the examination of a series of related theoretical issues and concepts. Hence, our selection of readings will introduce students to the following topics:

- the nature and function of symbols  
- the relation among cognitive, symbolic, and metaphoric processes  
- the political and cultural nature of symbolic communication  
- the ontological and epistemological implications of the relationship between language and reality.

Though the degree of difficulty varies across the readings, our purpose is mainly to formulate an understanding of the fundamental concepts and issues informing this theoretical view. Where possible, we will test this theoretical formulation of the language-reality relationship against our own experiences with thought, perception, language, and communication.

The following assignments will assist you in your examination of the readings:

- 10% Quizzes  
- 30% Two summary responses  
- 20% Group-led discussion  
- 25% Exam I (Oct. 24)  
- 25% Exam II (To be announced)

To ensure that you have read the assigned materials in advance of the classes scheduled for discussion, I will give up to a total of 15 brief quizzes of no more than four questions each at the beginning of the period. Your top ten scores will be recorded. Subsequently, treat these quizzes, which require mainly the defining or explaining of terminology and concepts, as study guides for the final exam.
During each half of the term, a four-to-five page typewritten summary response is due; the first is due on or before Oct. 17, the second on or before Nov. 28. Limit your summary to two pages and your response to no more than three pages. The purpose of this assignment is two-fold. Your summary will demonstrate that you have synthesized the material into a brief and coherent statement. It will also serve to remind you of the key points or ideas in the reading, when you are reviewing for the exam. The response, the second part of the assignment, provides you with the opportunity to think about the material. Your examination can range from a challenge to an endorsement to a dismissal. You might choose to draw from and recount your experiences with language to illustrate a point of your own or to reinforce an idea from the reading. You might simply wish to elaborate your rejection of or disagreement with some idea. You might want to explore some concept, doing so in the form of questions, musings, or gut reactions. These are just a few suggestions. Above all, you should pick a reading to summarize and respond to that stirs your interest, treating the reading as a catalyst for your own thinking about the language issues. Consult with the instructor, if you're unsure about the assignment. Please note that you cannot select the same reading for your summary-response and group presentation.

In groups of up to three members, you will be responsible for leading the discussion of one day's reading. Your goal will be to direct and facilitate your colleagues' understanding of the key concepts and ideas in the material. When possible, you are encouraged to challenge the material and to share your critical reactions, that is, your response, with the class. In some cases, you will be required to field questions from the class; in other cases, you might simply raise questions or highlight points. All in all, your purpose is to engage your colleagues in an investigation of the material.

The midterm exam, scheduled for Oct. 24, will be a test of your understanding of the key concepts we have discussed during the first part of the term. To prepare for the exam, compile a glossary-like journal, in which you regularly record key terms and ideas from your reading. Record the definitions, explanations, or illustrations given. Or, better yet, attempt your own paraphrase of the terms or provide your own explications, in addition to those given in the original. Keeping the glossary will assist your conceptual grasp of the ideas, as well as provide you with a ready-made study guide.

Exam II, the date of which to be announced, will be similar in format and intention to Exam I. However, it will cover only the material from the second half of the course.
Schedule

Sept.
10 Introduction
12 Hayakawa, "Symbols"
17 * Langer, "Language and Thought"
19 # Burke, "Definition of Man" (Language As Symbolic Action)
24 Burke cont.
26 # Ong, "Writing Restructures Consciousness" (Orality and Literacy)

Oct.
1 Ong cont.
3 * Birk and Birk, "Selection, Slanting, and Charged Language"
8 * Allport, "The Language of Prejudice"
10 * Bosmajian, "Defining the American Indian"
15 * Hayakawa, "Contexts"
17 Catch-up
22 Review
24 Exam I
29 # Lakoff and Johnson, Chapters 1-8 (Metaphors We Live By)
31 * Lakoff and Johnson, Chapters 9-13

Nov.
5 # Booth, "What Do We know About Ourselves"; "The Self as a Field of Selves"; "The Purposes of Rhetoric" (Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent)
7 Booth cont.
12 * Frankfurt, "Reflections on B.S."
14 * Lakoff and Johnson, Chapter 25 "The Myths of Objectivism and Subjectivism"
19 * Weaver, The Unsentimental Sentiment" (Ideas Have Consequences)
21 * Weaver, "Relativism and the Use of Language" (Language Is Sermonic)
26 * Weaver, "Language Is Sermonic"

Dec.
3 Review
28 Catch-up
TBA Exam II

* Denotes day of group-led discussion (2 – 3 members)
# Denotes day of group-led discussion (3 – 4 members)