

LNGT0101A: Introduction to Linguistics

Fall 2014

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General guidelines for answering questions on homework assignments

Before attempting to answer the questions on each assignment for this course, please take a moment to read the following guidelines.*

There are two main goals for homework assignments in this class. The first goal is to test your understanding of the content we cover in class, in the textbook, and other supplementary materials. Therefore, it makes sense that you go over the materials (if you haven't done that already) *before* you attempt to answer the questions. If you try to answer a question without having a full understanding of the issues at hand, it's quite likely that you will misunderstand the question and therefore answer it incorrectly. *So, guideline #1: Make sure you read the relevant parts of the textbook, the slides on the website, and the notes you took in class, before you try to answer the questions on assignments.*

A second goal for the homework assignments is to help you use problem-solving skills as well as scientific argumentation to extend content covered in class to new data and new problems, using the same kind of reasoning and method of analysis presented and discussed in class and the readings. *So, guideline #2: For many of the questions, the answer is not something that we explicitly said or arrived at in class; rather, the answer is something that you will come up with, using objective evidence to support it.*

Also, while I may have some answer in mind for each of the questions on a particular assignment, more often than not, for **some** of these questions, *there is really no right answer*. I'm more interested in you showing me the logic you have used to arrive at your answer, than in you giving me the answer I have in mind. In fact, I'll be more impressed if you surprise me with an innovative answer that I haven't thought of before.

* Notice that these are guidelines for how to answer questions. For issues relating to grading, policy on delay in turning in assignments, and possibility of collaboration with your classmates on assignments, please refer to the syllabus I gave out on the first day of classes or see the relevant page on the course website: <http://sites.middlebury.edu/lngt101fall2014/assignments/>.

So, guideline #3: Do not think about these questions in a rigid manner. There are often different ways of answering some of the questions, hence multiple solutions. For me, what matters is the way you think about the problem and the way you support your solution with objective evidence. If you do that, you'll get full credit for your work, even if I happen to disagree with your solution.

And did I say “*Start working on the assignment early!*” (guideline #4)? Waiting till the last minute very often hurts your chances of getting a good score. As I already pointed out, many of these questions are not the kind that you will be answering simply by repeating materials from the textbook or class notes. You'll have to spend some time thinking about the questions, and perhaps reach one answer only to revise it again upon further thinking. Some questions also require watching a movie or reading an article, so, give yourself enough time to work on these problems by starting early.

Finally, and no less importantly, even though each ‘homework’ is an ‘assignment,’ it is primarily intended as a tool for learning, thinking, arguing, and problem-solving. So, *guideline #5: Do not let the negative connotation of ‘assignment’ take away from the pleasure of learning something new, debating something old, or finding a solution to a challenging puzzle.* The exact content of these assignments may not stay with you forever; but the skills you will develop doing them hopefully will.

As always, should you have any questions or face any problems with an assignment, please do come to my office hours, or schedule an appointment outside office hours if needed.

Good luck!