

Sign Language Through Pop Music: A Student-Taught Course

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Purpose

In this class we will learn sign language to the rhythm of well-known music! Each class will cover a different topic, starting at fingerspelling and basic conversation and moving to specific topics like family and school. The history of sign language and deaf culture will be explored as well. Each week the assignment will be to learn the signs for the chorus of a song using the words learned in class. The final project is to create your own sign language music video.

Course Plan

Week	Class Date	Topic	Song / Assignment	Song Due
1	8/25	Fingerspelling	ABC	9/8
-	9/1	LABOR DAY	[NO CLASS]	
2	9/8	Greetings	?	9/15
3	9/15	Emotions	?	9/22
4	9/22	Conversation	?	9/29
5	9/29	School	?	10/6
6	10/6	Time	? study for midterm	10/13
7	10/13	Places (MIDTERM)	?	10/20
8	10/20	Family	?	10/27
9	10/27	Clothes, Colors	?	11/3
10	11/3	Animals, Nature	? choose project song	11/10
11	11/10	Food	Work on ASL song translation	11/17
12	11/17	Project Office Hours	make project video	11/24
13	11/24	Presentations (FINAL)	Thanksgiving Break: no more assignments!	
14	12/1	Game Show / Party		

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Have a working sign language vocabulary.
2. Interact in basic sign language conversation.
3. Use facial expression and body language with sign.
4. Learn about what it's like to be deaf or hard-of-hearing.
5. Better understand deaf culture.
6. Know about deaf history and the societal changes surrounding deafness.

Reference Materials

There is no textbook for this course besides the reference of our course website.

However, here are several helpful websites with collections of videos that serve as a sign language dictionary:

<http://www.aslpro.com/cgi-bin/aslpro/aslpro.cgi>

<http://www.handspeak.com/word/>

Course Help

For each week, I will post a video of the homework assignment for your reference. If you cannot find a sign that you are interested in learning (especially for the final project), feel free to contact me. I can meet you in person, post a video, or try to describe it in words.

Attendance

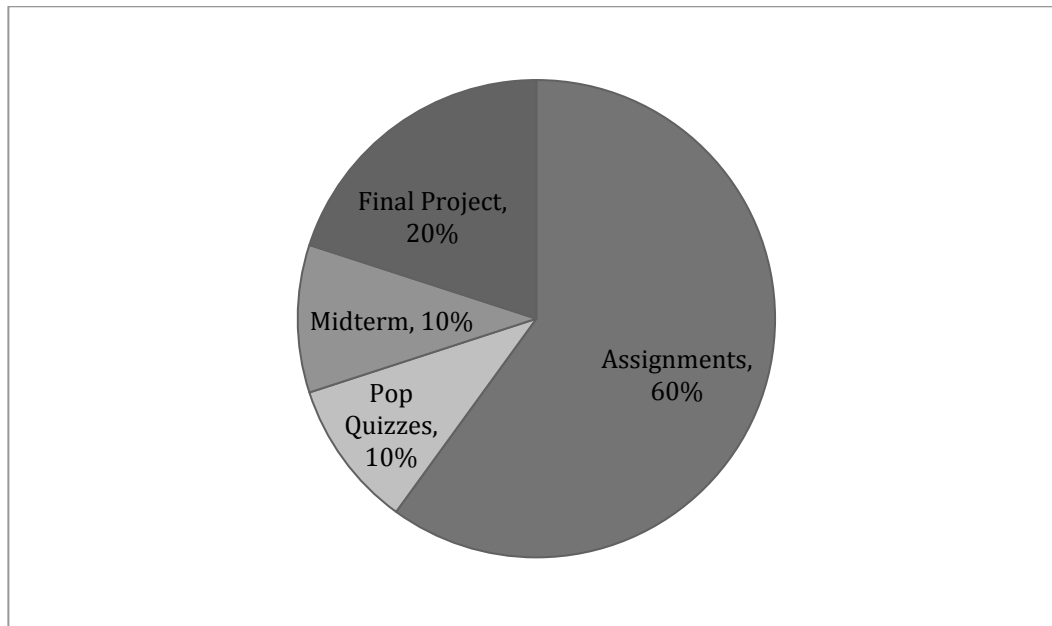
Make sure to email me about any planned class absences. While this is a StuCo, class time is highly important due to the interactive nature of this course. It will be hard to catch up on the material presented and I am not going to "make up" classes for people who miss class.

Along with the StuCo policy, if you have more than three unexcused absences, you will receive a failing grade for the course.

Classtime Structure

Each weekly session will be 80 minutes. The class will begin with a Pop Quiz/Review of prior vocabulary, for 10 minutes. Following that, we will learn the new vocabulary for the week for about 30 minutes. Following that, the Then depending on the length of the assignment chorus and the deaf culture topic, we will spend the rest of the 40 minutes first learning about an aspect of deaf culture and then going over the new chorus for the week.

Grading Weights



Assignments

Each week the assignment is to learn the correct signs for the chorus or verse of a song. You will submit to Dropbox a video of you signing the chorus. For each incorrect or missed sign, I will deduct points, depending on the mistake. However, I will be lenient, and will take into account speed of lyrics and the difficulty of the song. You may use the audio from the reference video while you sign, but you are not allowed to watch the video as you sign it (and should be making eye contact with the camera).

These assignments will be due every **Sunday at 11:59 PM** on Dropbox. Make a shared folder on Dropbox with title of pattern "andrewid-firstName" and then share it with my email: epintar<at>andrew.cmu.edu. Turn in your assignments in this folder each week.

Late Policy

For late assignments, within 24 hours late, they will have a max score of 80%. After that, you can turn assignments in at any point before the last day of the semester, for a maximum of 60%.

For pop quizzes and the final, there will be no late work accepted. If you miss the midterm class period, you will have to schedule a makeup with me that can only receive a max score of 70%.

Pop Quizzes

At the beginning of class each week, I will ask each person a word from the previous week's vocabulary list (or perhaps even older vocabulary). If you sign the word

correctly, you will get a point. Six points throughout the semester will get you full credit (out of 11 weeks of vocab). Extra points will be extra credit, in proportion to what a normal pop quiz point is worth.

These will be done in the first two minutes of class, so if you come late to class, you cannot make up these points. Be on time!

Extra Credit

Extra credit opportunities may arise. Small opportunities will give you a pop quiz point. Large ones can give you a whole assignment grade.

Midterm

The midterm will take place at the beginning of the seventh week's class. Each student will be randomly placed in one of six groups and the group together will be asked to sign a randomly picked song (assignment) from the previous six weeks. Your grade will be based 50% on sign completeness and 50% on effort.

Final Project

For the final project, students will pick a song with lyrics to present to the class through the form of a well-crafted music video. You are encouraged to work in groups, and for the size of the group, the minimum time required is variable as shown below.

You should start your project by selecting which part of the song you are going to do (or for fun and challenge, tackle a whole song!). With the lyrics, you will work to translate the song into ASL. Try to be creative with it, using the beauty of ASL you will have discovered throughout the semester. There will also be a class period of Project Office Hours to assist you with new signs you need to learn and working with ideas for ASL translation. Also, online dictionaries are a good resource for looking up new signs, so try to come into that class period prepared with your lyrics and a rough translation.

You will be graded 50% on sign correctness and 50% on creativity, showmanship, and effort. If you are doing minimum time, the time begins when the lyrics begin. You are allowed to edit the songs, do a mashup, take turns on the verses, create a boyband dance, etc. Be creative! Have fun.

Group Size	1	2	3	4/5
Min Song Length	1:00	1:20	1:30	2:00

Note: Project Presentations are planned for the Monday of Thanksgiving Break week. As it is the culmination of the course, try not to be one of those folks who skips the whole week.