

Institute for Forensic Linguistics, Threat Assessment and Strategic Analysis, Hofstra University

LING 220 / LING 181 / H2007

ONE-WEEK INTENSIVE FORENSIC LINGUISTICS COURSE

Three credits earned in one week of class time. Fully online and synchronous.

SPRING DATES: April 7-11, 2025

FORENSIC LINGUISTICS IN COUNTER-TERRORISM, INTELLIGENCE, COUNTERINTELLIGENCE, THREAT ASSESSMENT, AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Institute and the Linguistics Program at Hofstra University are proud to announce that James R. Fitzgerald, MS, retired FBI Supervisory Special Agent and program director of forensic linguistic services for the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU) of the Critical Incident Response Group, National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, will join Dr. Robert Leonard as co-instructor of this unique one-week long experience.

About the course

This one-week intensive course predates the formal Forensic Linguistics program at Hofstra and is modeled after the FBI Forensic Linguistics week-long "boot camp" course that then-Supervisory Special Agent Jim Fitzgerald conceived, organized, and taught (and recruited Leonard to also teach) at Quantico.

The course was run by the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU), Critical Incident Response Group, National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, to teach agents of the FBI and other agencies such as the ATF, Secret Service, Capitol Police, etc. When Fitzgerald retired from the FBI, he and Leonard moved the week-long intensive course to Hofstra, where it became LING 220, now offered each spring, and also often in the summer.

Cases

Case studies and class participation exercises are largely from those worked by Fitzgerald or Leonard, which include the JonBenet Ramsey Case, UNABOM Case, National Football League Terrorism Threat Case, Philadelphia Bombing Case, Anthrax Case, Daniel Pearl Case, Barbie Doll Case, Washington, DC Sniper Case, UK School Bus Bombing Threat/Extortion Case, Coleman triple homicides, the Facebook Catfishing Executions, and the Hummert Murder Case.

Course content

A case-based approach to solving legal and law enforcement problems through linguistic analysis:

- **Demographic Linguistic Profiles:** Dialectology, sociolinguistics and linguistic variation analyses can indicate a writer's regional and local geographic origin, education level, occupational training, and other demographic features.
- **Authorship Analysis:** Text comparisons can indicate whether two sets of texts have common authorship. The role of authorship analysis in investigation and litigation is exemplified and discussed through several cases.
- **Threat Level Analysis:** State-of-the-art techniques, based on thousands of FBI cases, assess the probability of harm. How likely is the threat to be carried out? What are the overlaps between Threat Assessment and Forensic Linguistics? How can corpora such as the FBI's Communicated Threat Assessment Database (CTAD) best be used?

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Through lecture, case study, and workshop formats, this course elucidates forensic linguistic responses to challenges of:

- Intelligence and Counterintelligence.
- Domestic and foreign terror campaigns.
- Threats to government, officials, workplace, schools, and private individuals.
- Criminal Communications such as extortion, ransom notes, criminal intelligence disinformation, intercepted communications.

Instructors

James R. Fitzgerald, MS, is a violent crime consultant and forensic linguist. An FBI Supervisory Special Agent (ret.), criminal profiler, and program director of forensic linguistic services for the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU) of the Critical Incident Response Group, National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, Mr. Fitzgerald focused his efforts on counterterrorism, threat assessment, and other forensic linguistics services. He created and developed the CTAD, a one-of-a-kind computer repository for all criminally-oriented communications in the United States. It was Fitzgerald's groundbreaking forensic linguistic work on the Unabomber case that led to the FBI's recognition of the strategic necessity of forensic linguistics, and prompted his real-life persona to be the central character in the 2017 Discovery Channel scripted series *Manhunt: Unabomber*—"an engrossing deconstruction of the Unabomber case, including how the FBI profiler, Jim "Fitz" Fitzgerald ("Avatar's" Sam Worthington), employed then-nascent techniques of dissecting speech quirks in his quarry's notorious Manifesto to unearth him"—CNN. He the author of a three-book memoir series titled *A Journey to the Center of the Mind*.

Robert A. Leonard, PhD, Professor of Linguistics, is Director of the Graduate Program in Linguistics: Forensic Linguistics at Hofstra as well as the Institute for Forensic Linguistics, Threat Assessment, and Strategic Analysis. *The New Yorker Magazine* calls Leonard "One of the foremost language detectives in the country". He is Senior Consultant, Intelligence Advanced Research Projects (IARPA) "Linguistic Fingerprint" project. A Fulbright Fellow for his doctoral work at Columbia University, he has consulted to the FBI and police, counter-terrorism, and intelligence agencies throughout the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and continental Europe, as well as to many defense teams. Other clients include Apple, Facebook, the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force, and the Prime Minister of Canada. Leonard's testimony proved pivotal in investigating and prosecuting several high-profile cases, including the JonBenet Ramsey murder, death threats to judges and U.S. Congress members, and the triple homicide of the Coleman family in Illinois. He has been qualified as a forensic expert witness in linguistics and language in courts in 15 states and 11 U.S. federal district courts and has also testified before International Tribunals in Washington DC and Paris.

Requirements and credits

There are no prerequisites. Graduate and undergraduate students earn three credits upon successful completion of all requirements which include participation in classroom team analyses, preparing concept maps of readings, short summary paper reporting the major cases and themes of the course, and, for grad students, a case report. Details of requirements, and readings, appear below. Non-degree professional participants will also attend and participate.

For more info on the Hofstra Forensic Linguistics program, go to <https://www.hofstra.edu/academics/colleges/hclas/cll/linguistics/ma-forensic-linguistics/>. Direct any questions to ForensicLinguistics@hofstra.edu.

Spring 2025 ONE-WEEK INTENSIVE FORENSIC LINGUISTICS COURSE

Fully online and synchronous

SYLLABUS

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Zoom link is at end of this document

Fitzgerald and Leonard

11:00 AM-6:00 PM Eastern Time synchronous (plus, for degree students, a required additional asynchronous video, TBA)

HANDOUTS we will be using in class are at
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/15d4m1ZCZgbR-mFfhBljhH6WnVDPK8rlx?usp=drive_link

Professional Development LING H2007 participants will receive a “Professional Development Confirmation of Completion” and need only do the readings and fully participate in class activities. They do not need to (but certainly can if they wish to) prepare and submit the concept maps and/or other assignments described below.

LING 220 Grad (and LING 181 Undergrad students) will receive three credits and have these additional tasks:

- Concept maps of 8 of the 11 articles – *your choice* which ones
- Summary paper (Grads have extra feature)
- Case Report (Grads only)

There are 11 **REQUIRED READINGS** for the course, available at
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1VohOQ4JdfiVAGe4yVmSWJWwgpTYXsDQ1?usp=share_link

Non-linguists (and linguists) may want to begin with my 2004 non-technical article for a straightforward exploration of some foundational concepts.

1. Leonard, Robert A. 2004. Forensic Linguistics in NYPD Blue. In: Yeffeth, G. (Ed.) *What Would Sipowicz Do? —Race, Rights and Redemption in NYPD Blue*. Benbella Books, 91-119.

This is a non-technical piece that explores some important concepts and techniques. Feel free to just skip the TV show-related pages if you are not familiar with the classic TV police procedural show (now on Hulu) that prompted the book (though I heartily recommend the show as drama.)

- The linguistics of courtroom procedure
- Schemas, pragmatics, inference
- Police interrogation
- How memories can be shaped by questioning
- The sociolinguistics of language as identity
- Code-switching
- Linguistic accommodation

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- Grice, pragmatics, and discourse analysis
 - Dialect and “idiolect”
2. Fitzgerald, James R. 2004. Using a forensic linguistic approach to track the Unabomber. In Campbell, John H. *Profilers: Leading Investigators Take You Inside the Criminal Mind*
 3. Leonard, Robert A. 2018. Communicating linguistic theory and analyses to judge and jury in the highly adversarial US justice system: theatrical cross examinations vs. the facts. In: G. Tessuto, V.K. Bhatia & J. Engberg (Eds.) *Frameworks for Discursive Actions and Practices of the Law*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 219-247.

This describes my testimony in the Coleman triple homicide case, and what the defense tried to pull to discredit me. Almost unbelievable things can happen in a courtroom, even in front of a judge, and a jury.

4. Fitzgerald, James R. 2007. The FBI's Communicated Threat Assessment Database-- History, Design, and Implementation. *FBI Bulletin*, February 2007 Volume 76 Number 2.
5. Leonard, Robert A. 2017. “Forensic Linguistics” in *Handbook of Behavioral Criminology: Contemporary Strategies and Issues*. Van Hasselt, Vincent, and Michael Bourke, eds. Springer.
6. Shuy, Roger. 2014. Linguistic Profiling. When There Is No Known Murder Suspect. *The Language of Murder Cases: Intentionality, Predisposition, and Voluntariness*. Oxford University Press.
7. Coulthard, Malcolm. 2004. Author Identification, Idiolect and Linguistic Uniqueness. *Applied Linguistics* 25, 4, 2004, 431-447
8. Rugala, Eugene, Fitzgerald, James R. 2003. Workplace Violence: From Threat to Intervention, in *Clinics in Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, eds. Carol Wilkinson and Corrinne Peek-Asa (Philadelphia, PA: W.B. Saunders, 2003), 778.

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9. Simons, André & Ronald Tunkel. 2013. The assessment of anonymous threatening communications. *International Handbook of Threat Assessment*, 517-522. Threat Assessment at the BAU.
10. McConnell, Blake. 2017. Criminal Interview and Interrogation in Serious Crime Investigations. *Handbook of Behavioral Criminology: Contemporary Strategies and Issues*. Van Hasselt, Vincent, and Michael Bourke, eds. Springer.
11. Fisher, Ronald P. (et al.). 2017. Investigative Interviewing. in *Handbook of Behavioral Criminology: Contemporary Strategies and Issues*. Van Hasselt, Vincent, and Michael Bourke, eds. Springer.

CONCEPT MAPS

How to write concept maps (remember, read all the articles, write on 8 of the 11; your choice)

Make each map of three concepts about a page, i.e., 250-300 words

1. Identify three concepts in each article you think are important to the understanding of what the author is saying.
2. Choose concepts that “speak to you” even if they do not seem to be the ones made most prominent by the authors.
3. Write those concepts up informally (you are not writing an academic article) and walk your reader (us) through them. We want you to engage with the content, and not merely report. What was the most surprising, or insightful concept? Why does it appear to you that these concepts are important? Keep the length to no more than about 250-300 words for each article.
4. Feel free to seek further information about the concepts from other sources.
5. If the article makes you think of a question you might like answered in class, please feel free to put that, titled “**Question**”—and **bold** it so it stands out to us.

As an example, here is an excerpt from a concept map from a past year’s course,:

Tabron, J.L. 2016. Linguistic Features of Phone Scams: A Qualitative Survey. *11th Annual Symposium on Information Assurance (ASIA '16)*. June 8-9, 2016, Albany, NY, 52-58

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Concept 3: There are multiple ways in which phone scammers are able to manipulate language to get the information they're looking for. One of the methods she discusses that I found interesting was topic control, typically used in conversations to show who has the authority within the group of speakers, though not necessarily a conscious thing. **What other types of cases can use topic control as a methodological tool?** You wouldn't verbally point out that you have the authority over others and will therefore be choosing the things the group will be talking about, but we do this naturally in our social interactions. Another reason why the average person can be cheated by phone scammers is because when the scammers use topic control in the conversation, they are communicating an authoritative stance. We like to be cooperative, and we tend to listen to and obey authority figures to avoid getting into trouble. Topic control is such a simple use of language, and if we practice it, we can take control of phone scamming situations and let the scammers know that they're not necessarily in charge.

SUMMARY PAPER

1. For undergrad_students: A **3-5 page summary report of cases and course topics**: Make an **inventory of every single one of the cases discussed in the class** and give a *short* description of their relevant points re forensic linguistics—in other words, an excerpt from your notes.
2. For grad students only. A **3-5 page (total) summary report of cases and course topics**: Make an **inventory of every single one of the cases discussed in the class** and give a short description of their relevant points re forensic linguistics—in other words, an excerpt from your notes. **For each case, also do your best to give what aspect of linguistic theory is involved.** Remember, as scientific forensic linguists, we explain the actual facts of a case as being instances of *patterns of linguistic behavior that have been described as theoretical constructs in the scientific literature* (or through our own data-gathering and analysis).

A past grad student suggested a chart, as below, for doing the case inventory. Just a suggestion. You may want to do this in prose instead. As there is often no end to the various theoretical notions involved, feel content to be non-exhaustive.

Case	Description	FL Concepts Addressed	Linguistic Theoretical Aspects involved
“devil strip” Ransom Note Roger Shuy	Pencil-Scrawled ransom note	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Region-specific terms· Inconsistent dumbing-down of language skills (kops, kan BUT cash, corner, come), excellent punctuation· Linguistic demographic profiling	<p>Linguistic geography; dialectology</p> <p>Formal standard English is acquired from higher levels of education; lay users not taught/aware of mechanics/different systems of language</p> <p>Linguistic geography; dialectology; community of practice; speech community, more</p>

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CASE REPORT (For grad students only)

Each student chooses one of the cases that they worked on and individually writes in some detail (2-3 pages) how your/your group's analysis proceeded and what (forensic) linguistic methods and concepts you used. You don't have to, but feel free to add more to the analysis than what you did in class.

WHEN to submit concept maps, summary paper, and case report

Concept maps:

Four by April 6, 9PM.

Then another four by April 12, 5PM

Summary paper: by May 1, 5PM.

Case Report: by May 1, 5PM.

HOW to submit concept maps, summary paper, and case report

Email to FLpapers42@gmail.com.

Send the concept maps in the body of the email (preferable) or as a single Word document. No links or Google Docs, please.

In Subject line, put a string of this info:

1. the title of the course LING 220
2. the word "concept map" or "summary paper" or "Case Report"
3. your name in one word

So, for example: **Ling 220 concept map Yourname**

or

Ling 220 summary paper Yourname

or

Ling 220 Case Report on Name of case Yourname

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Please DO NOT send QUESTIONS to the FLpapers42@gmail.com address. Feel free to send questions to cllral@hofstra.edu. In subject line, put QUESTION

ZOOM LINK:

Robert Leonard is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: 202502_LING_220_A_ H 2007 FORENSIC LING FOR CRIMINL JUST

Time: Apr 7, 2025 11:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Every day, 5 occurrence(s)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://hofstra.zoom.us/j/94447685176?pwd=0XF3JzFqaQXWd2UP3mvaNLH99zb82t.I>

Meeting ID: 944 4768 5176

Passcode: 757440

If you would like, download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Daily: https://hofstra.zoom.us/meeting/tjApc-6upj4rHdJ6Npxk_ectbfMNuq5IYRLy/ics?icsToken=DFNZDpij_CtQptbH3QAALAAAAOmLD2uugv0KNaM-OvknwuCoWZLwyyE2iqxP9L7y3RncR-T_iDHsKN5FzATSAc6bTVUMjE59yf3ycQv_ezAwMDAwMQ

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- +1 669 444 9171 US
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- +1 689 278 1000 US
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- +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

Meeting ID: 944 4768 5176

Passcode: 757440

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