American Sign Language (ASL) in the Modern Classroom

Course Syllabus

Course Description

This introductory course offers students a foundational understanding of American Sign Language (ASL) and Deaf Culture. Participants will learn essential communication skills, including how to appropriately gain attention, use backchanneling, and navigate Deaf-friendly environments. Students will develop introductory conversational skills centered around topics such as family, school, work, and life milestones. Key elements of ASL—such as handedness, fingerspelling, facial expressions, and the language's object-subject-verb (OSV) structure—will be explored to build both fluency and cultural competency. The course also highlights the rich history of ASL and addresses equity issues in education and employment, encouraging students to recognize the power of language in promoting inclusion and accessibility.

This course enhances classroom teaching effectiveness and supports improved student outcomes by introducing new knowledge in American Sign Language communication, Deaf culture, and inclusive practices that promote accessibility and cultural understanding.

Course Objectives
At the end of this course you should be able to:

1. Recall and introduce yourself, family members, school/work roles, and personal milestones using basic ASL vocabulary.
2. Recognize and describe appropriate ways to gain attention, use backchanneling cues, and behave respectfully in Deaf-friendly spaces.
3. Apply facial expressions to accurately convey emotions and grammatical structures in ASL conversations.
4. Construct sentences using ASL's object–subject–verb (OSV) structure in signed communication.
5. Identify and demonstrate correct dominant hand usage and hand positioning for fingerspelling names and basic words.
6. Analyze and reflect on the values, traditions, and social norms of the Deaf community, comparing them with hearing cultural practices.
7. Explain the history, function, and cultural impact of cochlear implants within the Deaf community.
8. Develop and propose ideas for promoting accessibility in education and employment, explaining how learning ASL fosters a more inclusive society.

Modules

- Module 1: Getting Started with ASL Conversations, Quiz 1
- Module 2: Respectful Interactions in Deaf Culture, Quiz 2
- Module 3: The Power of Facial Expressions in ASL, Quiz 3
- Module 4: Identify and Apply ASL Grammar Rules, Quiz 4
- Module 5: Use Fingerspelling and Handedness Correctly, Quiz 5
- Module 6: Describe Key Aspects of Deaf Culture and Community Norms, Quiz 6
- Module 7: Examine the Development and Cultural Impact of Cochlear Implants, Quiz 7
- Module 8: Recognize Equity Barriers and Advocate for Inclusion, Quiz 8

Grading

Each quiz must be passed at an 80% or higher (three attempts allowed).

Format

This is a self-paced, asynchronous (no required live meetings) course. Throughout the PD course, you will find it helpful to take notes along the way to assist with the quizzes. Within each module, you will find reflection assessments that are not graded but will help in your journey through the course. There is an interactive forum in the course to help you connect with peers and instructors, share ideas, and collaborate on best practices throughout your learning journey.