

# ***ESL Academic Listening Skills, ESL:4130:0001***

**The University of Iowa  
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
Fall, 2026**

## **Description of Course**

This course focuses on developing listening skills necessary for success in a U.S. academic setting. Students learn strategies for listening to academic lectures, practice note-taking skills, and participate in classroom discussions. Students will learn about aspects of spoken English that make listening difficult, and improve their ability to listen for content, infer meaning, listen for details, and listen for “big-picture” ideas. This will include learning about spoken English, lecture structures, note-taking, strategies for building vocabulary, inference, making predictions, reflecting on challenges and progress, as well as study skills. Through exposure to a range of spoken English, students will increase their familiarity with English structure, rhythm, and sounds which can help them improve understanding.

## **Learning Objectives**

1. Students can demonstrate the ability to interpret a college-level spoken text (e.g. lecture, discussion) containing fillers, reductions, linking, pauses, and other distractors using evidence from intonation patterns, stress patterns, pausing, and other clues.
2. After listening to a college-level 20-minute text, students can demonstrate an understanding of the main idea, support, and relationships between ideas in order to ask follow-up questions and respond to test questions.
3. Based on evidence from the beginning of the semester, students will be able to demonstrate the ability to recognize and interpret a greater range and depth of vocabulary.
4. After listening to a college-level text, students can demonstrate effective note-taking skills that allow students to summarize the text, ask follow-up questions, and respond to test questions.
5. Students will be able to ask relevant follow-up questions (e.g. clarification, opinion) after listening to and taking notes over a college-level text.
6. The student will demonstrate an awareness and understanding of academic honesty with a focus on proper attribution of ideas.

## **Outline of Course Topics**

| Week |                                                       | Week |                                    |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------|------|------------------------------------|
| 1    | • Introductions & Diagnostic                          | 2    | • Pre-lecture notes; Acad. Honesty |
| 3    | • Spoken English bottom up skills; office hours visit | 4    | • Study guide                      |
| 5    | • Verbal cues; test prep                              | 6    | • Fast speech features             |
| 7    | • Note-taking & Summary writing                       | 8    | • Midterm                          |
| 9    | • Accents & dialects                                  | 10   | • Lecture styles                   |
| 11   | • Big picture listening                               | 12   | • Direct & Indirect Signals        |
| 13   | • Announcements; Culture & vocabulary                 | 14   | • Informal Speech; Clichés & puns  |
| 15   | • Reflection Journal                                  | 16   | • Final Exam                       |

## **Required Textbooks, Readings, and Other Materials**

The **required materials(s)** for this course are:

1. Subscription to [Disney+, Hulu \(student\)](#) (\$6.99/month with ads, if you want to have no ads, you will need to pay \$19.99/month)
2. One 8.5 x 11-inch package of “College Ruled,” heavy-duty, loose-leaf paper (minimum 100 sheets) with red margin line (reinforced is OK)
  - a. Other paper sizes, types, forms are not acceptable.
3. One 1.5-inch or 2-inch 3-ring binder to keep notes & assignments organized ***that you use only for this class***
  - a. Taking notes on a laptop or by typing on a tablet or phone is not allowed unless an accommodation is obtained from Student Disability Services – reasons for this will be explained in class
  - b. **Your Listening binder & notes & assignments must be separate from any folders & notes you use in other courses.**
    - i. I will often ask you to use, rewrite, or reread (study) notes taken in earlier Listening classes or review and study printed assignments for activities and assessments, and it important that you keep those notes organized and together with each other.

4. Dividers for 3-ring Binder (minimum 5)
5. A 3-ring hole punch for adding printed assignments to your 3-ring binder
  - a. If you don't have one or have daily access to one, you must get one.
6. A pen or pencil (you must be ready to write notes by hand every day)
7. Microsoft Office
  - a. NOTE: All homework that will be uploaded to ICON, unless otherwise indicated by the instructor, must be completed in Microsoft Word or saved as a PDF. ICON's feedback tool does not always work well with other formats. All students can receive a copy of Microsoft Office for free by the instructions on [this page](#).
8. **Textbook:** There is no required textbook for this course, but you must have the required materials EVERY day. You may also be required to access and/or print articles and/or worksheets for class – these will be on ICON. You can print in any of the [Instructional Technology Centers \(ITCs\)](#) on campus.

## Types of Assessments

- ★ Extensive Listening & Vocabulary Journals, Listening Logs
- ★ Note-taking & Study Guides
- ★ Quizzes
- ★ Midterm & Final Exam

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**Course meeting time and place** 12:30-1:45 PM Tuesdays & Thursdays in 172 Van Allen Hall ([VAN Map](#))  
**Department of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures, and Cultures** <https://lllc.uiowa.edu>

## Instructor

Sue Almén-Whittaker, Associate Professor of Instruction

### Phone

(319) 467-1242

### Email

[sue-almen-whittaker@uiowa.edu](mailto:sue-almen-whittaker@uiowa.edu)

### Office location

636 Phillips Hall (636 PH) ([Map](#))

### Student drop-in hours

#### Student drop-in hours (Also known as: Office Hours)

- Thursdays, 2:30-4:00 PM (in person or Zoom), Fridays 12:30-2:00 PM (Zoom only) & by appointment
- If you plan to visit me on Zoom, please send me an email beforehand so I can reserve specific time for you that won't conflict with other students who might be meeting with me.
  - Zoom Room Link: <https://uiowa.zoom.us/my/suealmenwhittaker> (You will need to login using your HawkID & password. You can do that by selecting SSO as your login provider and the domain is: **uiowa.zoom.us**. This will take you to the HawkID login page and then you can connect to my Zoom room)

## Departmental Executive Officer (DEO)/Department Chair

Dr. Jill Beckman

### Email

[jill-beckman@uiowa.edu](mailto:jill-beckman@uiowa.edu)

## Student Complaints

Students with a complaint about a grade or a related matter should first discuss the situation with the instructor and/or the course supervisor (if applicable), and finally with the DEO (Chair) of the department, school or program offering the

course. Sometimes students will be referred to the department or program's Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) or Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

Undergraduate students should contact [CLAS Undergraduate Programs](#) for support when the matter is not resolved at the previous level. Graduate students should contact the [CLAS Graduate Affairs Manager](#) when additional support is needed.

### Course's College (Administrative Home)

#### For undergraduate courses

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the home of this course, and CLAS governs the add and drop deadlines, academic misconduct policies, and other undergraduate policies and procedures. Other UI colleges may have different policies.

### Drop Deadlines for Courses

**For ESL Courses:** Undergraduates are not allowed to drop ESL courses, but you may change sections of the same course if available.

**For Non-ESL Courses:** Undergraduates may drop an individual course before that course's drop deadline; after this deadline you will need collegiate approval. You can look up a course's drop deadline [here](#). When you drop a course, a "W" will appear on your transcript. The mark of "W" is a neutral mark that does not affect your GPA. To discuss how dropping (or staying in) a course might affect your academic goals, please contact your Academic Advisor. Directions for adding or dropping a course and other registration changes can be found on the [Registrar's website](#). Undergraduate students can find policies on dropping CLAS courses [here](#).

### UI Email

Students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for any communication with instructors or staff in the UI community. For the privacy and the protection of student records, UI faculty and staff can only correspond with UI email addresses.

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### Course ICON site

To access the course site, log into [Iowa Courses Online \(ICON\)](#) using your Hawk ID and password.

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### Grading System

Final grades will be awarded based on the following ranges:

|                |                                                                                                        |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A = 94% - 100% | Consistently demonstrates all course objectives and consistently exceeds the student learning outcomes |
| A- = 90% - 93% |                                                                                                        |
| B+ = 87% - 89% | Demonstrates all course objectives, meets all student learning outcomes, and exceeds in some areas     |
| B = 83% - 86%  |                                                                                                        |
| B- = 80% - 82% |                                                                                                        |
| C+ = 77% - 79% | Demonstrates most course objectives and meets most student learning outcomes, but may not meet a few   |
| C = 73% - 76%  |                                                                                                        |
| C- = 70% - 72% |                                                                                                        |
| D+ = 67% - 69% | D/F = Fails to demonstrate most course objectives and fails to meet most/all student learning outcomes |
| D = 63% - 66%  |                                                                                                        |
| D- = 60% - 62% |                                                                                                        |
| F = Below 60%  |                                                                                                        |

Late homework will receive an automatic 10% per day deduction up to 3 days. Homework which is turned in more than 3 days (72 hours) late will receive a zero and will not receive feedback.

For undergraduates, a minimum grade of a C (2.0) is required to satisfy the University of Iowa's English Language Proficiency Requirement. **This means that undergraduate students who earn a grade of C- or below will be required to retake the course.**

Please note that ESL classes count towards your GPA. This course is not graded on a curve<sup>1</sup>. Each student will earn a grade based on the quality of their work and how well they have achieved the course goals. Other students' scores do not affect your score in any way. Grading criteria and/or rubrics will be provided for each graded assignment and assessment throughout the semester.

## Course Grades

Final course grades will be assessed based on your performance in the following activities:

- ★ Extensive Listening, Vocabulary Building, Listening Logs & Other Assignments = 15%
- ★ Pre-Lecture Notes, In-the-Moment Notes & Study Guides = 20%
- ★ Tests & Quizzes = 40%
- ★ Midterm Exam = 10%
- ★ Final Exam = 15%

**Extensive Listening, Vocabulary Building, Listening Logs & Other Assignments:** There will be a variety of assignments given this semester to expose students to a broad range of listening and academic study skill topics and situations. This is achieved through listening to selected TV episodes, learning and sharing new vocabulary with classmates, focused listening activities in the form of Listening Logs, and several other assignments.

**Pre-Lecture Notes, In-the-Moment Notes & Study Guides:** Academic study skills, such as taking notes on preparatory materials and rewriting your in-the-moment notes is a key component of this class. You will learn the benefits of pre-lecture notes, how to improve your in-the-moment note-taking, and how to prepare study guides after the lecture to help your academic success.

**Quizzes & Tests:** To ensure that students are completing the course preparatory material and understanding the in-class lectures, regular quizzes covering assigned readings, vocabulary, and lecture material will be given. Most quizzes and tests will occur in-class, but a few will be administered on ICON. Starting around week four, the quizzes will be offered at roughly one-week intervals. They will evaluate key information presented in the course lectures and preparatory materials for the time covered by the quiz.

**Midterm & Final Exams:** A midterm worth 10% and final exam worth 15% will be given in this class. Each exam will cover material from approximately half of the course, including information presented in lectures, in-class discussions, vocabulary, and the assigned preparatory material. The exams will test students' knowledge of basic concepts, terms, and general trends discussed in the course as well as application of such knowledge. Study guides that the student created will **not** be allowed to be used during the exams but should be used to prepare for them. In addition, each student will submit study questions to ICON about a week before the exam in order to help everyone prepare. Suggested study techniques for the exam are for the student to complete all the assigned readings for the exam and then to use course notes and any additional readings or materials to be sure that they are familiar with all the terms and concepts outlined on their study guides. The format will be similar to previous unit quizzes, requiring students to listen and take notes on a video lecture, pull out main ideas, write a summary from their notes, and then answer questions about the lecture.

## Attendance and Accommodations

Attendance in this class is mandatory. Consistent attendance will help you succeed because you will hear new topics being presented, practice with your instructor and classmates, and receive feedback to help you improve.

Note that an absence will be recorded if you:

- Do not attend the class
- Arrive more than 10 minutes late
- Leave classroom before class ends
- Are disengaged from class activities (e.g., sleeping, persistent device use, etc.)

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<sup>1</sup> "Grading on a curve" is when grades are arranged along a bell curve (also known as normal distribution), and your grade depends on how well or poorly your classmates score. This class does not use a curved grading system.

- Behave in a disruptive manner so learning is not taking place. In accordance with the University of Iowa Code of Student Life (<https://dos.uiowa.edu/policies/code-of-student-life/>), negatively affecting the learning of those around you will not be tolerated and you may be asked to leave the class if you are not demonstrating responsible and respectful classroom conduct.
- Use unauthorized electronic devices

However, because illness or other unexpected circumstances may occur during the semester, students may be absent from three class sessions without any grade penalty. Students are encouraged to notify the instructor about absences in advance using the CLAS absence form on [ICON](#) (under **Student Tools** at the top before you select a course link). This form will allow for discussion with the instructor and course supervisor of options for engaging with the class and its content.

Missing classes and not engaging in the course material can significantly affect your grade:

- 0-3 class sessions = no final grade penalty
- 4-5 class sessions = final grade lowered by 1 grade (e.g. B lowered to B-)
- 6-7 class sessions = final grade lowered by 2 grades (e.g. B lowered to C+)
- 8-9 class sessions = final grade lowered by 3 grades (e.g. B lowered to C)
- ...and so on.

Absences related to [Student Disability Services \(SDS\)](#) accommodations follow different policies and procedures than those above; [visit the related website for more information](#).

[Absences from Class](#)

[Absences for Religious Holy Days](#)

[Absences for Military Service Obligations](#)

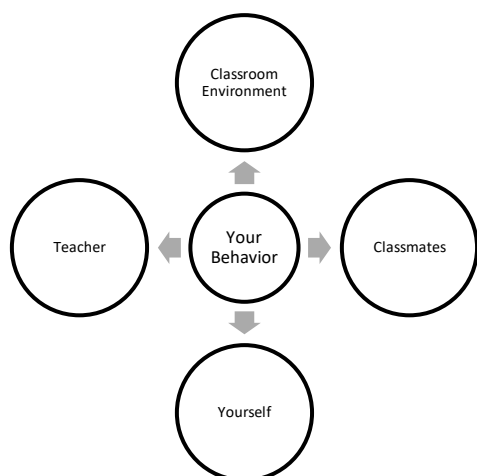
[Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#)

NOTE: If a midterm for a different course is scheduled outside of that course's normal meeting time, and it conflicts with another regularly scheduled course, your regularly scheduled course takes precedence over the scheduled exam. You should contact the professor of the course who is scheduling the exam to let them know that you have a conflict and need an alternative exam time. Please see the "Qualified Midterm Exam Policy" on the [Registrar's website](#) for more information.

If you have any questions or issues regarding absences, I encourage you to talk with me after class, during my office hours, or via email.

### Other Expectations of Student Performance

Students are expected to comply with University policies regarding appropriate classroom behavior as outlined in the [Code of Student Life](#). While students have the right to express themselves and participate freely in class, it is expected that students will behave with the same level of courtesy and respect in the virtual class setting (whether asynchronous or synchronous) as they would in an in-person classroom. Failure to follow behavior expectations as outlined in the [Code of Student Life](#) may be addressed by the instructor and may also result in discipline under the [Code of Student Life](#) policies governing E.5 Disruptive Behavior or E.6 Failure to Comply with University Directive.



Participation is an important part of this class. Being active and engaged allows you and your classmates to learn the content more deeply. I expect you to voluntarily participate (voluntarily = freely offer) in class or group discussions in a respectful and appropriate manner which contributes to the learning experience.

There are many ways to show engagement: paying attention throughout the class; having your materials and homework ready for each class; not being afraid to ask questions when you have them; following directions; working in groups; responding constructively (= in a way that is useful or beneficial) whether you are agreeing/disagreeing or answering questions; using only English with your classmates; and not using your electronic devices unless given permission to do so by the instructor.

Each of us has different comfort levels for speaking in a group. If you are shy or reluctant to speak in class, please challenge yourself to offer comments or visit my office hours to work on this issue. If you notice that you are talking too much, remember to give time and encouragement to less talkative members of the class so that they, too, can contribute their ideas. **Each person's diverse experiences, insights, and questions are important to the overall success of our class.**

Being disengaged from the class's activities, completing homework (for this or other classes), looking at or using your cell phone or laptop, chatting with classmates instead of doing the assignment, speaking in your native language, sleeping, etc. is not only disrespectful to your teacher, but can distract and hurt others' learning. Please take responsibility for your actions and act in the appropriate way. Your and your classmates' grades may be affected if you do not.

[Free Speech and Expression](#)  
[Non-discrimination Statement](#)  
[Classroom Expectations](#)  
[Class Recordings](#)

### Academic Honesty and Misconduct

All students in CLAS courses are expected to abide by the [college's standards of academic honesty](#). Undergraduate academic misconduct must be reported by instructors to CLAS according to [these procedures](#). Graduate academic misconduct must be reported to the Graduate College according to Section F of the [Graduate College Manual](#).

In order to improve your language skills, you need to do your own work. If you need help, you are encouraged to visit your instructor's drop-in times (office hours). Unless told otherwise by your instructor, do not collaborate with anyone else on work for this class and do not use outside resources, such as translators for sentence-level translation or AI tools like ChatGPT. Students who misrepresent their work will be reported to the College for academic dishonesty. If you have questions, consult your instructor and the assignment information.

No unauthorized resources (phones, worksheets, dictionaries cheat sheets) are allowed during class, tests or exams unless approved by the instructor. Using an unauthorized device or tool may result in a recorded absence and may be considered an offense against the [Code of Academic Honesty](#).

See next section regarding the use of AI.

### Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The use of any **Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool** (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, AI glasses, agentic tools, etc.) **is prohibited**, unless expressly used on an assignment by the instructor as a teaching tool. Submissions that use any AI without teacher approval will be treated as plagiarism.

As it stands right now, AI often makes mistakes when it comes to English listening skills, and its ability to write and translate remains unnatural. The goal of this course is to improve your own English skills, so you do not need to rely on AI or translators for your future schoolwork. Repeated usage of AI tools will only serve to hinder your growth in developing strong competencies in this area. Therefore, unless teacher-approved, AI-generated submissions will be treated as plagiarism and subject to the [CLAS standards of academic honesty](#).

### **Date and Time of the Final Exam**

The final examination in an “in person” two-hour exam. The date and time will be announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes and it will be announced on the course ICON site once it is known. **Do not plan your end of the semester travel plans until the final exam schedule is made public. It is your responsibility to know the date, time, and place of the final exam.** According to Registrar's final exam policy, students **have a maximum of two weeks after the announced final exam schedule** to request a change if an exam conflict exists or if a student has more than two exams in one day (see the [policy](#) here).

### **Calendar of Course Assignments and Exams** (subject to change as course needs develop)

1. Each week after week 3 an Extensive Listening & Vocabulary Journal will be due
2. Approximately every 2 weeks a study guide will be due starting in week 5
3. There will be a quiz approximately every 3 weeks starting in Week 3

### **Student Support Resources and Related Policies**

#### Academic Support for this Course

If you have an issue that prevents you being able to complete your assignments on time, you must contact the instructor to explain the issue and what accommodation you are requesting in writing. If you feel more comfortable first discussing this with the professor face-to-face, you may set up an appointment to meet with them or attend student drop-in hours, but a written follow up will be required so that both you and your instructor have a documented record of your request and the agreed upon resolution.

Additionally, students are allowed to book an appointment with ESL faculty in the [English Language Center](#) if they need additional targeted help with concepts from this ESL class, as long as your ESL course instructor has approved it first.

You can also work with faculty in the English Language Center for general English issues not related to ESL classes. For non-ESL courses, students may use the [Writing Center](#) and the [Tutor Iowa central academic support site](#) for assignment help.

Helpful links to University of Iowa resources are listed below:

[Mental Health](#)

[Basic Needs and Student Support](#)

[Sexual Harassment/Sexual Misconduct and Supportive Measures](#)

[Conflict Resolution](#)

#### Class Recordings & Use of Class Materials

The unauthorized video or audio recording of academic activities (e.g., lectures, course discussions, office hours, etc.) by a student is prohibited. Students with a reasonable accommodation for recording approved by Student Disability Services should notify each instructor and provide the Letter of Accommodation prior to using the accommodation. A student may record classroom activities with prior written permission from the instructor and notice to other students in the class that audio or video recording may occur. Any and all classroom recording must be for personal academic use only. The distribution, sharing, sale, or posting on the internet (including social media or AI tools) of class materials (PowerPoints, PDFs, in-class handouts, etc.) or recordings, in whole or in part, is prohibited and doing so may be a violation of the Code of Student Life and/or state or federal privacy, copyright, or other laws.