COURSE UNIT (MODULE) DESCRIPTION

Course unit (module) title	Code
Discourse Strategies and Contemporary Communication: Language and the Power of Persuasion Diskurso strategijos ir šiuolaikinė komunikacija: kalba ir įtaigos galia	

Lecturer(s)	Department(s) where the course unit (module) is delivered
Greta Maslauskienė	Department of English Philology Institute of English, Romance, and Classical Studies

Study cycle	Type of the course unit (module)
1st	Optional

Mode of delivery	Period when the course unit (module) is delivered	Language(s) of instruction
Face to face	Spring semester	English

Requirements for students	
Prerequisites: Advanced English language proficiency (B2, C1)	**Additional requirements (if any):**

Course (module) volume in credits	Total student workload	Contact hours	Self-study hours
5	150	32	118

Purpose of the course unit (module): programme competences to be developed
This elective course helps students from all faculties become more effective communicators by exploring how language shapes knowledge, authority, and influence. Through the analysis of authentic materials—such as interviews, political speeches, TED talks, and social media posts—students investigate how stance, engagement, and persuasion operate across different discourse types and communicative contexts. The course combines theory with practical insight, enabling participants to recognize persuasive strategies and apply them purposefully in their own communication. By the end of the semester, students will have developed a sharper awareness of how language works—and how it can be used to inform, inspire, and persuade.

Generic Competences:

- Critical and creative thinking to approach communication from fresh, informed perspectives.
- Advanced oral and written communication skills for academic, professional, and public contexts.
- Intercultural awareness and adaptability in diverse communicative situations.

Subject-Specific Competences:

- Ability to analyze spoken and written discourse through key linguistic frameworks (e.g., *stance and engagement*, k. Hyland 2005), deepening understanding of how meaning and influence are constructed.
- Awareness of how communication varies across disciplines and professional communities.
- Capacity to apply stance, engagement, and persuasion strategies effectively in different real-world contexts.

Learning outcomes of the course unit (module)	Teaching and learning methods	Assessment methods
Students will acquire: • The ability to explain and distinguish key theoretical perspectives on discourse (e.g. Harris, Widdowson, Gee). • The skills to identify and analyze linguistic features of stance, engagement, and persuasion in authentic communication. • The capacity to compare and evaluate discourse strategies across diverse communicative genres and contexts (e.g., academic lectures, TED talks, political speeches, media discourse). • The competence to apply corpus-assisted and qualitative tools (e.g., *AntConc*) to explore typical linguistic and rhetorical patterns. • The ability to produce clear, persuasive, and audience-appropriate oral and written discourse grounded in linguistic insight.	• Reading and discussion of theoretical material – students engage with core readings before seminars and discuss key ideas and frameworks during class. • Interactive seminars and guided discussions – critical engagement with theoretical and empirical texts through dialogue and problem-based tasks. • Short theoretical tutorials – concise explanations of major discourse-analytic approaches and key concepts. • Text analysis, comparison, and discussion – close reading and collaborative interpretation of authentic spoken and written discourse (e.g., academic lectures, TED talks, political speeches). • Group analysis of authentic data – small-group exercises identifying stance, engagement, and persuasion strategies across genres. • Corpus-assisted analysis using *AntConc* – hands-on exploration of language patterns and rhetorical strategies in fragments of authentic language data.	**Test 1 (20% of the Final Grade)** A written assignment focusing on topics discussed during the first part of the semester. **Test 2 (20% of the Final Grade)** A written assignment focusing on topics discussed during the second part of the semester. **Final Project (60% of the Final Grade)** Students apply linguistic and discourse-analytic knowledge to authentic communication through one of two formats, combining practical production with critical analysis. **Option A – Written Project** (a 700–900 word persuasive text (e.g. commentary or opinion piece, short essay, conference proposal, or public awareness post) + a 500–700 word analytical

	commentary explaining linguistic and rhetorical choices in terms of stance, engagement, and persuasion, supported by theory.

Option B – Spoken Presentation or Project: a 5–7 minute persuasive talk, presentation, or video (e.g. TED-style talk, short lecture, business pitch, or awareness video) + a 500–700 word analytical commentary explaining linguistic and rhetorical choices in terms of stance, engagement, and persuasion, supported by theory. |

Content: breakdown of the topics	Contact hours						Self-study work: time and assignments	
	Lectures	Tutorials	Seminars	Exercises	Laboratory work	Internship/ workplacement	Contact hours	Self-study hours	Assignments
Module 1 **What Is Discourse and Why It Matters?** **Understanding discourse as language in action—how it constructs meaning, identity, and power.** Introduces discourse analysis as social practice, comparing Harris's structural view, Widdowson's contextual meaning, and Gee's social discourse theory. The module also focuses on the practical analysis of authentic examples of various communication forms to explore how, in both oral and written forms, effective communication is shaped, fostering a deeper			6				6	15	Adapted texts from Jones (2024), Section D "The Three Perspectives Revisited": Zellig Harris (reprinted from Language 28(1) (1952): 1-30) Henry G. Widdowson (reprinted from his unpublished

understanding of the strategies people use to convey meaning clearly and persuasively.								doctoral dissertation 1973) James Paul Gee (reprinted from Introduction to discourse analysis (2010): 28-29)
Module 2 **Stance, Engagement, and Persuasion Across Contexts** This module explores how communicators express opinions, confidence, and audience alignment through stance and engagement. Using authentic materials from diverse genres—such as TED talks, academic writing, interviews, and media texts—students analyze how speakers and writers build authority and credibility. The module combines analytical exploration with practical application (analysis of authentic examples) helping students not only apply persuasive strategies in their own writing and speaking but also recognize these strategies in everyday communication.		6				6	15	Hyland (2005), Chapters. 3–4; Adapted texts from Jones (2024), Section D "Genres, Discourse Communities and Power.": John Swales (reprinted from J. Swales, Genre Analysis, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 24-27) Vijay K. Bhatia (reprinted from World Englishes 16(3): 359-371) Additional texts and materials for analysis will be provided on the VLE course site.
Module 3 **Disciplinary Voices: How Experts Communicate Knowledge across Different Science Fields and Disciplines** This module examines how experts construct and communicate knowledge within and across different academic disciplines. Students explore how disciplinary norms and traditions shape stance, engagement, and persuasion in both written and spoken discourse, drawing on authentic data such as research articles, academic		6				6	15	Hyland (2012), Ch. 2 Additional texts and materials for analysis will be provided on the VLE course site.

essays, interviews, lectures/seminars and conference presentations. Emphasis is placed on developing analytical awareness of how authority and credibility are established through language and on applying these insights to students' own disciplinary projects. The knowledge and skills gained in this module can be directly applied to BA theses, essays, and academic presentations, helping students become more effective members of their disciplinary communities.								
Module 4 **Language: Power, Ideology, and Influence** Introduces Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and explores how discourse reflects and reproduces ideology and power. Students analyze how influential speakers and organizations frame ideas, values, and identities through a variety of genres, such as: • Political speeches and debates (e.g., election addresses, UN speeches, parliamentary debates) • Corporate presentations and product launches (e.g., Apple keynotes, brand campaigns, CEO statements) • Public apologies and crisis responses (e.g., company or institutional responses to controversy) • Media coverage and commentary (e.g., news framing, editorials, opinion journalism) • Advocacy and social campaign messages (e.g., NGO, environmental, or equality initiatives)		5				5	15	Adapted texts from Jones (2024), Section D "Ideologies in Discourse": Norman Fairclough (reprinted from *Discourse and Social Change*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, pp. 101-2). James Paul Gee (reprinted from Social Linguistics and Literacies, London: Taylor and Francis, 1996, pp. 69-79) Recommended: Fairclough (1995), Chs. 1–2; van Dijk (1993). Additional texts and materials for analysis will be provided on the VLE course site.
Module 5 **Analyzing Discourse Strategies in Real Communication via Corpus Tools (*AntConc*)**		5				5	15	Paltridge (2021), Ch. 2;

This module introduces corpus-assisted discourse analysis as a practical extension of earlier work on stance, engagement, and critical discourse analysis. Students learn how corpus tools can be used to trace linguistic patterns and explore how persuasive and evaluative meanings are constructed across authentic texts from public, academic, and professional domains. The module enhances both analytical and technical skills, enabling students to investigate real-world communication and apply corpus-based insights in their own disciplinary projects. The sessions combine short demonstrations, guided practice, and group interpretation tasks using *AntConc*. Students work with small, authentic corpora—such as news reports on refugees, climate change debates, or academic writing samples—to uncover recurring linguistic and evaluative patterns. **Corpus Functions to be discussed and practiced** include: • **Wordlist** – identifying frequent lexical items and keywords to trace thematic focus or bias. • **Concordance** – examining how key terms (e.g., *refugee*, *illegal*, *help*, *crisis*) appear in context to reveal underlying attitudes and representations. • **Collocates** – exploring words that regularly occur near target terms (e.g., *refugee + crisis*, *influx*, *victim*) to examine framing and associations. • **Clusters / N-grams** – detecting recurring phrases and stance markers (e.g., *it is important to*, *we must ensure*, *it can be argued that*) to identify evaluative or persuasive strategies. These functions will be practiced through guided tasks and discussed in relation to frameworks from stance and engagement, critical discourse analysis, and corpus-assisted approaches to meaning and ideology.								Adapted text from Jones (2024), Section D "Finding 'Discourses' with Corpus-Assisted Analysis.": Paul Baker and Tony McEnery (reprinted from Journal of Language and Politics 4(2), 2005, pp. 197–226) Additional texts and materials for analysis will be provided on the VLE course site.
Final assignment		2				2	43	
Feedback		2				2		
TOTAL		**32**				**32**	**118**	

Assessment strategy	Weight, %	Deadline	Assessment criteria
Test 1 Students demonstrate their theoretical understanding and conceptual clarity of the topics covered in seminars and readings in the first part of the semester. **Test 2** Students demonstrate their theoretical understanding and conceptual clarity of the topics covered in seminars and readings in the second part of the semester.	20% 20%	During the semester During the semester	**Assessment criteria (for Test 1 & Test 2):** **Accuracy and Completeness (40%)** – Correctness and thoroughness of responses to theoretical questions. – Demonstrated understanding of key concepts and principles. **Clarity of Explanation (25%)** **–** Logical organization and clear articulation of ideas. – Use of appropriate terminology and theoretical language. **Depth of Understanding (20%)** **–** Ability to connect theories, provide examples, and show critical insight. **Structure and language use (15%)** – Proper structure, coherence, and adherence to academic writing conventions. – Neatness, readability, and correct citation (if applicable).
Final Project Students demonstrate their ability to apply linguistic and discourse-analytic knowledge to authentic communication by completing one of two project formats. Both options integrate practical production with critical linguistic analysis and represent comparable effort. **Option A – Written Project:** Produce a 700–900 word persuasive text, such as: • a commentary or opinion piece for a magazine, online platform, or university publication; • a short persuasive essay on a current social, cultural, or educational issue; • a student conference proposal or abstract presenting an academic idea or project; • a public awareness post or social media thread (e.g., LinkedIn, Medium, or Instagram carousel text) designed to inform, inspire, or persuade. In addition, submit a 500-700 word analytical commentary explaining linguistic and	60%	During the examination session	**Assessment criteria for the Final Project** **Option A:** **Clarity and Coherence (20%)** -Clear and logical organization of ideas with smooth progression and cohesive structure. -Effective paragraphing and transitions that enhance readability. -Clear statement of stance and purpose maintained throughout. -Style and layout appropriate to the chosen platform or genre. **Stance and Engagement (30%)** -Purposeful use of stance markers following Hyland's framework to construct authorial identity and authority. -Effective engagement markers to build reader rapport: inclusive pronouns, direct address, rhetorical questions, or shared knowledge cues. -Awareness of how these linguistic resources construct interpersonal meaning, credibility, and alignment with the reader. **Linguistic and Analytical Insight (30%)** -Analytical commentary demonstrates accurate and thoughtful application of Hyland's stance and engagement framework and CDA principles (ideology, power, representation, positioning). -Insightful analysis of how linguistic and rhetorical choices produce persuasive effects. -Theoretical grounding with relevant references (Hyland, Fairclough, van Dijk, etc.). -Reflection on how the text contributes to or challenges broader discourses in contemporary communication.

rhetorical choices in terms of stance, engagement, and persuasion strategies, supported by theoretical references. **Option B – Spoken Project or Presentation:** Deliver a 5–7 minute persuasive talk or presentation, presented either live in class or submitted as a pre-recorded video (e.g. TED-style motivational or educational talk, a short academic lecture or presentation, a business idea pitch or project proposal, or a public awareness video or creative message promoting a cause or initiative). In addition, submit a 500-700 word analytical commentary explaining linguistic and rhetorical choices in terms of stance, engagement, and persuasion strategies, supported by theoretical references.		8	**Audience Adaptation and Rhetorical Effectiveness (20%)** -Tone, register, and format effectively adapted to the intended audience and platform. -Coherent and strategic use of ethos, pathos, and logos appeals. -Persuasive techniques (lexical choices, metaphors, rhetorical structures) enhance impact. -Creativity and authenticity in message delivery within genre conventions **Option B:** **Clarity and Coherence (20%)** - Clear structure (introduction–development–conclusion) supporting the persuasive goal. - Logical sequencing and consistent focus on the central argument. - Effective verbal signposting for listener comprehension. - Delivery (pacing, articulation, rhythm) supports clarity and engagement. **Stance and Engagement (30%)** - Linguistic stance-taking: conscious and effective use of stance and engagement markers. - Interactional and prosodic cues (intonation, stress, rhythm, gesture) reinforce engagement naturally and appropriately. **Linguistic and Analytical Insight (30%)** -Analytical commentary links spoken performance to linguistic and discourse-analytic theory. - Demonstrates understanding of how spoken discourse features (prosody, repetition, emphasis, metaphor, framing) contribute to persuasion. - Applies CDA to interpret how the talk positions the speaker and audience within broader discourses. - Integrates theoretical references to support explanation and reflection. **Audience Adaptation and Rhetorical Effectiveness (20%)** -Delivery style, register, and multimodal elements (voice, gesture, visuals) adapted to the communicative context. -Persuasive appeals (ethos, pathos, logos) effectively combined for rhetorical impact. -Audience engagement sustained throughout through clarity, energy, and credibility. -Awareness of contemporary genres (TED-style, public awareness talk) and their persuasive conventions. **Note for both (A and B) options: The analytical commentary is an integral component and must explicitly reference relevant theoretical frameworks discussed in-class.**
Use of Vilnius University electronic learning system			

All of the texts, compulsory and optional study materials, handouts and other relevant course materials will be made available on the webpage of Vilnius University Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) at https://emokymai.vu.lt. It is students' responsibility to refer to the course website on a regular basis to be able to access course materials and submit assignments as requested. Unless indicated otherwise by the course instructor, all home assignments must be uploaded in due time on the course website.

Academic integrity

All assignments must be completed independently by the students complying with the requirements of academic conventions of fair citing, paraphrasing and referencing. In accordance with the university regulations (see articles 49 and 77.2 of the Study Regulations of Vilnius University (https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Vertimai/EN_Translation_Vilniaus_universiteto_studij%C5%B3_nuostatai_30_April_2025.pdf) and articles 21–22 of the Code of Academic Ethics of Vilnius University (https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Studies/Study_regulations/Code_of_academic_ethics_VU.pdf)), a student who commits an act of academic dishonesty (such as plagiarism or any other form of cheating) shall receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, any act of academic dishonesty shall result in the failure of the module and the student who has committed the act may be subject to the dismissal from the University. In their applications of AI tools in academic settings, students must comply with the Guidelines on Artificial Intelligence Usage at Vilnius University (https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Vertimai/EN_Translation_Dirbtinio_intelekto_naudojimo_Vilniaus_universitete_gair%C4%97s.pdf).

Lateness of task completion

All of the mandatory assignments are obligatory for all the students and are carried out only once. The course instructor informs the students beforehand about the time and date of the assessed assignments. In the case of missed classes, it is the student's responsibility to find out the time and the requirements of relevant tasks and to complete them until the set deadline. Failing to show up for any mandatory in-class task at the assigned time with no justifiable reason results in failing the task (marked 0) with no chance of make-up. To be able to make up for the missed assignment, the student is fully responsible for notifying the course instructor of their absence and provide a justifiable reason for it (cases of documented medical and other justifiable reasons). Documentary proof for the excused absence must be submitted to the course instructor and/or (upon request) to the Studies Division of the Dean's Office. In the case of documented medical reasons or other justifiable absences, make-up time will be allowed either at the end of the semester or at an allocated time during the examination session.

Requirements for passing the course

A student fails course if the mark awarded is lower than 5 (the final marks for each component are not rounded).

Attendance policy

Regular attendance, active participation in seminars, and completion of in-class and homework assignments are recommended and expected.

Course policy regarding the use of electronic devices in class

The usage of electronic devices (laptops, tablets, cell phones, smartphones, e-readers, music players, etc.) during class is only allowed for study and research purposes, when it is required for in-class activities (assigned by the course instructor).

Author	Year of publication	Title	Issue of a periodical or volume of a publication	Publishing place and house or web link
Compulsory reading				
Hyland, K.	2005	*Stance and engagement: A model of interaction in academic discourse*	*Discourse Studies,* 7(2), 173–192	SAGE Publications
Gee, J. P.	2014	*An introduction to discourse analysis* (4th ed.)	—	New York: Routledge
Paltridge, B.	2021	*Discourse analysis: An introduction* (3rd ed.)	—	London: Bloomsbury

Jones, R. H.	2024	*Discourse analysis: A resource book for students*	—	London: Routledge
Optional reading				
van Dijk, T. A.	1993	*Principles of critical discourse analysis*	*Discourse & Society, 4(2), 249–283*	SAGE Publications
Fairclough, N.	1995	*Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*	—	London: Longman

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