

**LING-GA 1510: Sociolinguistics**  
Course Information

**1. Logistics**

**Time** Thu. 9:30am–12:15pm  
**Location** 10 Washington Pl. #103

Plus two exceptional out-of-class meetings (so we can end the semester early), scheduled for:

- Friday Feb. 10 2–4:45pm
- Friday Feb. 17 2–4:45pm

**Instructors** Dr. Laurel MacKenzie  
**Contact** laurel.mackenzie@nyu.edu  
**Office** 10 Washington Pl. #305  
**Office hour** Monday 9–10am (shared with undergrads) and by appointment

**2. Course description**

This course is an introduction to the theory, methods, and central concerns of sociolinguistics, the study of the relationship between language and society. Our focus will be on the social correlates of language variation and change. By reading and discussing classic and contemporary papers in the field, we will address a number of fundamental questions about how language varies and changes: across speaker groups, within individuals, and over time. Emphasis will be placed on exposing students to topics of current interest and active debate in sociolinguistic research, with the aim of preparing students to contribute to the field.

This course assumes a basic familiarity with phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax.

**3. Course materials**

Everything you will need for the course will be linked from this syllabus document. I recommend that you make a shortcut to this document on your own Google Drive by doing File > Add shortcut to Drive. Then organize it somewhere where you can easily find it each time we meet.

Access to course materials is restricted to NYU Google accounts. If you're told that you "do not have permission" to access some course material, you are likely logged in through a personal Google account. Switch to your NYU account and try again.

#### 4. Requirements

- **Readings, annotations, and participation (20%).** All participants are expected to do the assigned reading (before class) and to participate in discussion of the material in class. You are also requested to annotate the readings with questions/comments/complaints as you read them — at least two annotations per class session, ideally with those annotations in at least two different readings. Readings will be linked PDFs hosted on Google Drive. Google Drive allows you to highlight a passage and comment on it, as well as to reply to others’ comments. These annotations will form the basis for our in-class discussions.
  
- **Article presentation/discussion leading (20%).** Throughout the semester, we will have several “case study” days, where we read recent empirical studies relevant to a particular foundational topic. Each student will select and lead discussion of one “case study” paper. Discussion leaders should prepare a handout (digital is fine) with summary points and discussion questions. As the discussion leader, your jobs will be to summarize and contextualize the article; to critically evaluate the authors’ claims and evidence; and to facilitate discussion by posing questions, identifying avenues of further research, and incorporating your classmates’ annotations.
  
- **Assignments (60%).** Three assignments will be due throughout the semester, as follows:
  - Assignment 1: Sociolinguistic interview and report, due Fri. Feb. 10
  - Assignment 2: Quantitative study of a sociolinguistic variable, due Fri. Mar. 10
  - Assignment 3: Term paper, due Fri. Apr. 14
 All assignments should be typed, PDFed, and submitted by email.

#### 5. Schedule

Week	Class topics and readings
1 1/26	Introduction: Perspectives and approaches to the study of language in society  <b>For students with no prior exposure to sociolinguistics:</b> Chambers & Trudgill 1998 ch. 1 <b>All students:</b> Weinreich, Labov, & Herzog 1968 §0, §3.4, §3.5; Fruehwald 2022 §27.1–§27.3; Eckert 2012; Fishman 1972; Gumperz 1981 <b>Optional,</b> for students with interests in phonology: The rest of Fruehwald 2022 <b>Optional,</b> for students with interests in syntax: Adger et al. 2020
2 2/2	Sociolinguistic methodology: Data collection, research ethics, data analysis  Tagliamonte 2006 ch. 1–4, Bayley 2013
3 2/9	<b>Case studies:</b> The sociolinguistic variable  Cheshire 2005, Dinkin 2016

Week	Class topics and readings
3 2/10	<p><b>Out-of-class meeting</b> (Friday 2/10 2–4:45pm, Sociolab [10WP 308])</p> <p>Language and social organization: Speech community, social class, social networks, communities of practice</p> <p>Guy 2011, Milroy &amp; Milroy 1992, Bucholtz 1999  <b>NB.</b> Try not to get too bogged down in the details of Milroy &amp; Milroy, which I find kind of vague and hard to grasp – just try to get the main points. We can go through the details of their Belfast study (which is interesting but not well explained in this paper) in class.</p> <p>Time to discuss Assignments 1 &amp; 2</p>
4 2/16	<p><b>Case studies:</b> Language and social organization</p> <p>Dialect contact: Otheguy et al. 2007            Language maintenance and standardization: Bleaman 2022</p>
4 2/17	<p><b>Out-of-class meeting</b> (Friday 2/17 2–4:45pm, Sociolab [10WP 308])</p> <p>Language, time, and age: Real time, apparent time, age-grading, lifespan change</p> <p>Tagliamonte &amp; D’Arcy 2009 §1–3, Wagner 2012, Sankoff 2019</p>
5 2/23	<p><b>Case studies:</b> Language, time, and age</p> <p>Actuation of change in childhood: Sanz-Sánchez &amp; Moyna to appear            Incrementation of change in adolescence: Holmes-Elliott 2021</p>
6 3/2	<p>Language and gender</p> <p>Gal 1978, Eckert 1989, Zimman 2017</p> <p>Time to discuss/work on Assignment 2</p>
7 3/9	<p>Language and style: Accommodation, audience design, speaker design</p> <p>Rickford &amp; McNair-Knox 1994, Coupland 1985, Sharma 2018</p>
3/16	<p>Spring break! Class will not meet!</p>
8 3/23	<p><b>Case studies:</b> Indexicality, social meaning, and semantics/pragmatics</p> <p>Johnstone &amp; Kiesling 2008, Acton 2019</p>

Week	Class topics and readings
9 3/30	Sociolinguistic perception & cognition  Lambert et al. 1960, Labov et al. 2011 pp. 431–439 (up to “Experiment 2”), Campbell-Kibler 2016 pp. 123–134 (up to “Sociolinguistic Cognition Is a Kind of Cognition”)
10 4/6	Sharing Asst. 2 findings/Asst. 3 ideas  Language and ethnicity, linguistic injustice  Benor 2010, King 2020, Craft et al. 2020
11 4/13	<b>Case study:</b> Dialect loss  Jamieson 2020  Sociolinguistics and linguistic theory  Eckert & Labov 2017, MacKenzie & Robinson 2021
12 4/20	Laurel on leave! Class will not meet!
13 4/27	
14 5/4	

## Bibliography

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