LING-GA 2530 Linguistic Variation
Syllabus

Instructor   Dr. Laurel MacKenzie
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Office   10 Washington Pl. #305
Office hour   By appointment

Time   MW 9:30–10:45am
Location   Sociolab (10 Washington Pl. #308)

Course description

This course is an intensive graduate-level introduction to quantitative variationist sociolinguistics. It assumes a basic familiarity with phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax such as would be gained in an undergraduate linguistics major. The course has two goals:

1. Students will gain an understanding of the fundamental questions in variationist sociolinguistics. These concern how variation in language is structured and how it is represented formally.
2. Students will gain currency in methods for the analysis of variationist sociolinguistic data. This comprises quantitative and statistical techniques and the processing of corpus data.

In class, we will learn by reading and by doing. During the first two months, we will read and discuss classic and recent papers in the field addressing the two points above. Throughout the semester, and especially during the last month, we'll work on a group project studying the structure of a particular linguistic variable decided on by the class. Ideally, this will culminate in a co-written abstract to be submitted to NWAV 48 (deadline for abstracts: June 1).

Requirements

- **Readings and participation (10%).** All participants are expected to do the assigned reading and to participate in the discussion of the material in class.
- **Assignments (40%).** Most weeks until May, you will be asked to do one or two short assignments connected to the readings and/or the group project.
- **Choose and present a paper (10%).** Propose a paper connecting to the course for the class to read, and lead discussion on it in one of the last class sessions (marked "Student-led class" on the syllabus). Papers need to be decided on by **4/17** so that we have time to read them. You'll sign up for sessions on this day, too.
- **Individual project (40%).** Research some topic of interest to you, whether a continuation of the group project or something else. This can take the shape of a small empirical study, a synthesis of existing work, or a proposal for future research with some pilot data. Talk to me at some point **before spring break** about your project idea. Give us a brief (10 minutes + 5 for questions) overview of your project **in the final class session.** Write up your findings in a paper (5–10pp) to be due on **5/20.**

Wk. 1	M 1/28	Introduction & overview.
	W 1/30	Variationist methodology. Reading: Labov 2006, Bayley 2013 up until the section "Extending the Variationist Paradigm."

Wk. 2	M 2/4	Operationalizing the sociolinguistic variable. Reading: Wolfram 1993.
	W 2/6	Operationalizing the sociolinguistic variable. Reading: Rickford et al. 1991.

Wk. 3	M 2/11	The sociolinguistic variable beyond phonology. Reading: Lavandera 1978, Labov 1978.
	W 2/13	The sociolinguistic variable beyond phonology: syntactic variation. Reading: Romaine 1984.

Wk. 4	M 2/18	**No class!** Presidents' Day holiday.
	W 2/20	The sociolinguistic variable beyond phonology: discourse variation. Reading: Pichler 2010.

Wk. 5	M 2/25	Project workshop: Deciding on a variable to study. Choosing a corpus.
	W 2/27	Project workshop: Collecting and coding corpus data.

Wk. 6	M 3/4	Representing sociolinguistic variation: The variable rule. Reading: Cedergren & Sankoff 1974.
	W 3/6	Representing sociolinguistic variation: Variation as competition. Reading: Kroch 1994 §1–3 and 6, Embick 2008.

Wk. 7	M 3/11	Complicating the sociolinguistic variable: Variables with multiple loci. Reading: MacKenzie 2013, Tamminga 2016.
	W 3/13	Complicating the sociolinguistic variable: Variant-centered variation. Reading: Dinkin 2016.

	M 3/18	**Spring break!**
	W 3/20	**Spring break!**

Wk. 8	M 3/25	Sociolinguistic cognition. Reading: Tamminga, MacKenzie, & Embick 2016.
	W 3/27	Sociolinguistic cognition. Reading: Thomas 2011.

Wk. 9	M 4/1	Project progress session.
	W 4/3	Statistical methods: Statistics for sociolinguistics. Reading: Gorman & Johnson 2013.

Wk. 10	M 4/8	Statistical methods: Getting started with R. Reading/tutorial: Betsy Sneller's R mini-course.
	W 4/10	Statistical methods: Regression. Reading/tutorial: Bodo Winter's linear models tutorials (both).

Wk. 11	M 4/15	Project work session.
	W 4/17	Project work session. **Have a paper for presentation selected by this day. Slots assigned in class.**

Wk. 12	M 4/22	Project work session.
	W 4/24	Student-led class.

Wk. 13	M 4/29	Student-led class.
	W 5/1	Student-led class.

Wk. 14	M 5/6	Student-led class.
	W 5/8	Student-led class.

Wk. 15	M 5/13	Student project presentations.