

LING-UA 102: Research Seminar
Language Variation and Change Over the Lifespan
Course Information and Policies

1. Course & instructor logistics

Time & place Wed. 9:30am–12:15pm, 10 Washington Pl., Rm. 103

- We'll take a ~15-minute break halfway through.
- Generally, the first half of the allotted time will be used to discuss concepts and readings, and the second half will be used for hands-on practical research skills.

Optional communal work time Monday 9–11:30am & 2–4:30pm, 10 Washington Pl., Rm. 308

- The Sociolinguistics Lab will be open during these times for you to use as a workspace. It has table space, couches, and computers you can use. I will be in my office (down the hall), available on and off for drop-in advice and consultation.
- Please take advantage of this time to work alongside your classmates and support each other!
- If these times aren't working, or if there's demand for additional times, we can re-evaluate.
- I also suggest creating a virtual space where you can communicate and support each other outside of class. We can nominate someone to organize this during our first class meeting.

Professor Dr. Laurel MacKenzie (laurel.mackenzie@nyu.edu)

Office 10 Washington Pl., Rm. 305

Office hour Monday 9–10am and by appointment

- **Terms of address:** You're welcome to call me by my first name (*Laurel*) or "Professor MacKenzie." I use *she/her* pronouns.
- **Email:** I respond to student emails twice a day, during business hours, Monday through Friday.
- **Office hour:** Come to my office hour! You don't need to ask permission: I set that time aside just for members of this class. And office hours aren't only for questions about the homework or your grade! Drop by my office hour just to say hi or chat about language and linguistics. I love hearing from you.
- **Appointments:** If you can't make my office hour, or I need to cancel it, book an appointment to see me at a different time using my Calendly link. I don't book appointments over email.

2. Course description and goals

In this seminar, we'll study the acquisition and development of sociolinguistic variation over the lifespan. Questions we'll investigate include: When and how do children acquire the socially-meaningful variation used by the adults in their community? What is the role of adolescents in advancing language change? Can we change the way we speak in middle age and beyond? Students will carry out their own longitudinal study of a linguistic variable of interest in the speech of a politician, celebrity, or other public figure for whom longitudinal recordings are freely available, and connect their findings to topics discussed in the course. To this end, students will learn basic techniques for the collection and analysis of sociolinguistic data, and will receive guidance on the research process.

This course is designed to equip you with the skills needed to carry out sociolinguistic research. Through successfully completing this course, you will:

- gain exposure to cutting-edge research and debates in sociolinguistics.
- develop skills in critically reading and writing about academic literature.
- learn how to develop and test sociolinguistic hypotheses.
- gain currency with state-of-the-art technological tools for linguistic data collection and analysis.
- learn how to structure and present a rigorous linguistic argument supported with empirical data.

This course assumes a basic familiarity with phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax, such as that obtained in LING-UA 1 Language.

3. Course format

This is a seminar class, in which we will learn from each other through discussion of the papers we read and the issues they raise. Lecturing will be kept to a minimum.

- For this reason, participation in in-class discussion is essential. You'll be expected to ask, and answer, questions in class. If you are shy, come to office hours to strategize about how you can participate in class in a way that you're comfortable with. If you are the opposite of shy, please be mindful of your fellow students: if you've already spoken, wait a minute to give someone else a turn.
- Each week will have a reading-based homework assignment, in which you're expected to read 1–2 papers and answer questions about them. Homework assignments will be communicated at the end of class and due before the next class begins (see 5.1 below for more on deadlines). Because we'll discuss your answers to the homework questions in class, please bring the papers and your answers to the homework questions to class in some format (digital is fine).
- All homework assignments will take a few hours. Allow yourself plenty of time to work on these assignments!

This class also has a practical research component, in which you will learn sociolinguistic research skills through hands-on exercises. You will apply these skills to your own independent research project, culminating in a final paper.

- Ideally, you'll have a laptop you can bring to class for the hands-on “practical” portion of each class meeting. If this is unworkable for you, I'm happy to help you come up with an alternative, such as borrowing a Linguistics Department laptop.
- To ensure that you make steady progress on your project, each week's homework assignment will also have a project-related component, in which you'll be asked to work on some stage of your project and report on your progress.

The project component of this course requires multiple stages that cannot all be saved for the last minute. Staying on top of the weekly readings **and** the project requires considerable time management and organizational skills, particularly this year, when the course is being offered on an accelerated timeline. I am here to help you, but I also expect a commitment from you to stay on top of the course requirements.

4. Assignments & grades

Your grade for this course will be based on a combination of factors. The relative weight assigned in course evaluation is (approximately) as follows:

Class participation & attendance	20%
Homework assignments	50%
Final paper	30%

Instructions and deadlines for the final paper were circulated in class.

5. Course policies

5.1. Deadlines & extensions

Assignments are due to Brightspace before class begins. Wednesday morning submission is fine, but I really recommend getting your work in the day before. It gives me a chance to read it before class, which enables me to incorporate your contributions into my plan for the class discussion. Additionally, sleep is important to your health and mental well-being, and this class probably isn't worth staying up all night for.

If you're going to be late submitting an assignment, talk to me after class or set up a meeting to work out a plan for completion. Some deadlines can't be extended because we'll discuss the answers to the assignment in class, so I'll either give you a make-up assignment, or calculate your grade without that assignment.

Please plan ahead, comparing the syllabi for your courses now, to see when you have conflicting deadlines or difficult weeks. If things look impossible, please talk to me with plenty of advance notice.

The very last day on which work for this course will be accepted is Monday, May 10. No extensions that go past this date will be granted in any circumstances. Incompletes will not be granted because I will be on leave and not engaged in teaching duties from May–December 2023.

5.2. Collaboration

You are welcome to discuss the homework assignments with other students, but you must each write up your submissions separately and in your own words. Collaboration on the final paper is not allowed.

5.3 Course materials

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.

5.4 Remote attendance

If you feel unwell, have been exposed to Covid, or have to quarantine, do not come to class! If you feel well enough to join over Zoom, contact Laurel at least 15 minutes before class, and I will make an effort to connect

you. If you are too unwell to participate at all, contact a classmate to get the notes once you've recovered, and come to office hours or make an appointment to fill in any gaps in your understanding.

5.5. Academic honesty

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated, and may result in a zero on an assignment. If you use any resource as you prepare your homework assignments or project, you must provide a scholarly citation for the resource.

5.6. Academic accommodations for students with disabilities

Please don't hesitate to talk to Prof. MacKenzie if there's anything I can do differently to better accommodate your learning needs.

Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, or learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities over the phone at 212-998-4980, in person at 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, or online at www.nyu.edu/csd.

6. How to succeed in this (or any!) course

- Attend all classes.
- Do the reading **before** class. Read actively, by taking notes and asking questions.
- Take good notes and pay attention during class.
- As soon as you get a chance after each class, revisit and organize your notes from class, looking back over any handouts and the reading to solidify your understanding.
- Make note of where you have questions about class content or readings. Bring your questions to class or to office hours.
- Start your assignments as soon as you get them.
- Seek help on your assignments well before they are due.
- Work together with or alongside fellow students so you can support each other.

7. Want to learn more?

- Come to Prof. MacKenzie's office hour!
- Check out the following podcasts about (socio)linguistics:
 - [Lingthusiasm](#)
 - [The Vocal Fries](#)
 - [NPR's Code Switch](#)
 - [Many more...](#)
- Check out news and events from [NYU's Linguistics Department!](#)

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Schedule

Week Date	Class topics		Assignments		
	Conceptual	Practical		Reading (for after class!)	Project progress
1 1/25	Introduction and overview	Project examples	HW1	Tagliamonte 2012 ch. 1	Speaker research
2 2/1	Studying language variation and change	Working with sociolinguistic data	HW2	Tagliamonte 2012 ch. 2	Select a speaker, set up a progress spreadsheet
3 2/8	Social patterning of language variation and change	Finding and organizing references	HW3	Sankoff 2004, Tagliamonte & Molfenter 2007	Extract your audio files
4 2/15	Social & geographical mobility	Working with audio data: transcription, alignment with DARLA	HW4	Gries 2013, Trudgill 1983	Transcribe & align your audio
5 2/22	Developing a linguistic hypothesis	Statistics: overview, chi-square test	HW5	Nardy et al. 2014	Transcribe & align your audio
6 3/1	Forming the peer group in childhood	Coding variables with Praat scripts	HW6	Van Hofwegen & Wolfram 2010	Collect your data
7 3/8	Standardization in the school-age years	Supervised project work time	HW7	Annotated bibliography for your project	Collect your data
3/15	Spring break! Class will not meet!				
8 3/22	In-class project updates	Interpreting and making vowel plots	HW8	Rickford & Price 2013	Analyze your data
9 3/29	Age-grading, pt. 1	Analyzing vowel data: means & t-tests	HW9	Mechler & Buchstaller 2019	Analyze your data
10 4/5	Age-grading, pt. 2	Writing an academic paper	HW10	Harrington et al. 2000, Fabricius 2007	Make graphs/plots
11 4/12	Later-life participation in community change, pt. 1	Supervised project work time	HW11	Raumolin-Brunberg 2005	Draft one section
12 4/19	Later-life participation in community change, pt. 2	Supervised project work time	n/a	n/a	Write and submit your paper

Week Date	Class topics		Assignments	
	Conceptual	Practical	Reading (for after class!)	Project progress
13 4/26	Laurel on leave! Class will not meet! Write and submit your paper! Contact Chiara Repetti-Ludlow if you have questions or need help on your paper. Chiara will also be the point person if Laurel goes on leave early.			
14 5/3				
5/10	Last day to submit paper			

Bibliography

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