LING-UA-15: Language and Society
Course Information

1. Course logistics

Lecture time   Tue/Thu 12:30–1:45pm
Location   Silver 411

Instructor   Dr. Laurel MacKenzie
Contact   laurel.mackenzie@nyu.edu (please allow 48 hours for a reply)
Office   10 Washington Pl., Rm. 305
Office hour   Tue 2:00–3:30pm and by appointment

TAs	Dan Duncan	Zack Jaggers
Contact	dad463@nyu.edu	zackjaggers@nyu.edu
Office	10 Washington Pl., Rm. 511	10 Washington Pl., Rm. 507
Office hour	Wed 1–2pm	Tue 2–3pm
Recitation time	Mon 3:30–4:45pm	Mon 4:55–6:10pm
Location	10 Washington Pl., Rm. 104	7 East 12th St., Rm. 129

2. Required text

Meyerhoff, Miriam. 2011. *Introducing Sociolinguistics*. New York: Routledge, second edition. **Available electronically through BobCat.**

Supplementary readings will be available on NYU Classes. You should do all the readings **before** the associated lecture.

3. Overview

This course investigates the ways in which language reflects and creates the social order. We'll study how variation in speech relates to social factors like gender, age, social class, and ethnicity, and we'll explore the social contexts under which languages are born, die, and change. The course will feature hands-on research projects, allowing you to collect and analyze data on how people use language in real life.

Through successfully completing this course, you will

- be familiar with the major social correlates of variation and change in language.

- understand the theory and methods underlying the field of sociolinguistics.

- collect, analyze, and write about real-world linguistic data.

- be able to discuss matters of sociolinguistic variation with scientific rigor and cultural sensitivity.

4. Assignments & grades

4.1. Class participation & attendance: 10%

Class participation will be assessed on the basis of your recitation attendance record and your level and quality of participation in class discussions and exercises. Don't be afraid to ask questions in class! If you are shy, come

to office hours to get your questions asked and to strategize about how you can participate in class in a way that you're comfortable with.

If you know that you will miss a class due to a religious holiday or an athletic event, please let your TA know in the first two weeks of the semester.

4.2. Sociolinguistic journal: 15%

You will keep a sociolinguistic journal recording your observations of data relevant to topics we are studying. Journal entries will be recorded weekly before each recitation, and will be a source of data for class discussions; they may also provide data for your first research paper.

4.3. Research assignments & homework: 45%

There will be two research assignments, each worth 20%: one a study of sociolinguistic variation, and the other examining the use of languages other than English in a local neighborhood (normally done in a group).

A short homework assignment, worth 5%, will be distributed in the first few weeks of the semester.

4.4. Final examination: 30%

The final exam will cover material from the entire semester. More information on the structure of the exam will be provided closer to the end of the term. Our final exam is scheduled for Dec. 22, 12–1:50pm.

5. Course policies

5.1. Assignment submission

- Assignments are due at the end of the day on the day of submission.
- All coursework should normally be submitted electronically through NYU Classes.

5.2. Course materials and technology

- All readings and assignment materials will be posted on NYU Classes.
- You may take notes on your laptop during lectures, but please **sit on the perimeter of the room**, and avoid multitasking out of consideration for your classmates' concentration. (And note that research shows you learn better when you take notes by hand!: `http://goo.gl/5DeXtF`)

5.3. Late and missed assignments

- The late penalty for assignments is one letter grade if submitted within 24 hours of the deadline. Later submissions will not be accepted without well-documented extenuating circumstances.
- There is no grade penalty for missed lectures (Tue/Thu), but be aware that it is your responsibility to make up any content you miss, and that you will do your best if you come to class on time, every time.

If you have a diagnosed disability that requires special accommodations, please bring your paperwork to class and talk to the professor and to your TA.

LING-UA-15: Language and Society
Syllabus

9/6   Introduction & overview. What do sociolinguists study? How do we do our research? What kinds of findings do we achieve? How can our work contribute to society?
Reading: Meyerhoff, ch. 1 'Introduction' (p. 1–9)
Sociolinguistic journal assigned.

9/8   Foundational concepts in the study of language & society. Language, dialect, accent, variety. Standard, non-standard. Descriptivism, prescriptivism.
Reading: Lippi-Green, 2012, ch. 1 'The linguistic facts of life' (p. 1–26), ch. 4 'The standard language myth' (p. 55–65)

9/12   Recitation: Sociolinguistic journal assignment. Exploring sociolinguistic variation.

9/13   The building blocks of language: sounds, words, sentences, meanings.
Reading: Bigham, 2014 'How many vowels are there in English?' (`http://goo.gl/LuiSxm`), 'The sounds of American English' (`http://goo.gl/qtUaoj` – explore the sounds, symbols, & videos), Wolfram and Schilling, 2015, ch. 3 'Levels of dialect' (excerpt, p. 68–95)
Homework assigned.

9/15   Variation and variables. Inherent variability. Dependent and independent variables in sociolinguistics.
Reading: Meyerhoff, ch. 2 'Variation and language' (p. 10–30)

9/19   Recitation: Homework assignment. Sounds & variables.

9/20   Sociolinguistic data collection. The speech community and the vernacular language. Mitigating the Observer's Paradox. Ethics in data collection.
Reading: Meyerhoff et al., 2015, ch. 3 'Ethics and archiving' (p. 28–34), ch. 5 'Interviews as a source of data' (p. 46–54)
Homework due.
Research assignment 1 assigned.

9/22   Methods in sociolinguistic data analysis. Defining the envelope of variation. The Principle of Accountability. Quantitative methods and statistical significance testing.
Reading: Meyerhoff et al., 2015, ch. 2 'Sample design and the envelope of variation' (p. 16–27), ch. 12 'Analyzing your data' (122–133)

9/26   Recitation: Research assignment 1. Data collection & analysis.

9/27   Language change. Change from above and below the level of conscious awareness. Real and apparent time. Change in progress and completed changes. Stable variation.
Reading: Meyerhoff, ch. 7 'Real time and apparent time' (p. 135–163)

9/29   Sociolinguistic variation & age. Age-grading. Lifespan change. Retrograde change. The critical period hypothesis. The linguistic marketplace.
Reading: Eckert, 1997 'Age as a sociolinguistic variable'

10/3   Recitation: Generational change & age-grading. Data analysis.

10/4   Sociolinguistic variation & style. Attention paid to speech. Audience design. Indicators, markers, stereotypes.
Reading: Meyerhoff, ch. 3 'Variation and style' (p. 31–57)

10/6   Sociolinguistic variation & gender. Sex versus gender. Direct & indirect indexing of gender in language. Sexist language and gender bias in language commentary. Pragmatic differences between men's and women's speech, and explanations for them.
        Reading: Meyerhoff, first part of ch. 4 'Language attitudes': p. 58–68, first part of ch. 10 'Gender': p. 212–218, last part of ch. 10 'Gender': p. 233–248

10/10   No recitation: Fall Recess!

10/11   Sociolinguistic variation & gender, continued. Gender differences in changes in progress and stable variables. The Gender Paradox.
        Reading: Meyerhoff, remainder of ch. 10 'Gender': p. 218–233

10/13   Sociolinguistic variation & social class. Defining social class. Social stratification of stable variables. Sharp versus gradient stratification. Linguistic insecurity. Parallels between stylistic and social stratification.
        Reading: Meyerhoff, ch. 8 'Social class' (p. 164–193)

10/17   Recitation: Gender, social class.
        Research assignment 1 drafts collected for feedback (optional), here and at office hours.

10/18   Sociolinguistic variation & social class, continued. Social stratification of changes in progress.
        Reading: Labov, 1966/2006 'The social stratification of (r) in New York City department stores'

10/20   Locally-salient categories. The "second wave" of sociolinguistics. The Martha's Vineyard study. Jocks & Burnouts at Belten High.
        Reading: First part of Eckert, 2005 'Variation, convention, and social meaning': p. 1–15

10/24   Recitation: Research assignment progress & feedback.

10/25   Social networks & communities of practice. The Belfast study. Strong & weak ties.
        Reading: Meyerhoff, ch. 9 'Social networks and communities of practice' (p. 194–211)

10/27   Individual circumstances & sociolinguistic variation. Children's acquisition of sociolinguistic variation. Leaders of linguistic change. The "third wave" of sociolinguistics.
        Reading: Remainder of Eckert, 2005 'Variation, convention, and social meaning': p. 15–end
        Research assignment 1 due

10/31   Recitation: The "waves" of sociolinguistics.

11/1   Sociolinguistic variation & ethnicity. Ethnolects. African American English.
        Reading: Watch John R. Rickford's Presidential Address to the Linguistic Society of America 2016 Annual Meeting, 'Language and Linguistics on Trial: Hearing Vernacular Speakers in Courtrooms and Beyond' (`https://youtu.be/sMMxufNN4pg`)

11/3   **No lecture!** We will be at NWAV45 in Vancouver: `http://linguistics.arts.sfu.ca/nwav45/`
        Reading: Follow #*NWAV45* on Twitter Friday–Sunday and come prepared to share an interesting tidbit from the feed in recitation on Monday.

11/7   Recitation: NWAV recap. Language, ethnicity, & discrimination.

11/8   Societal multilingualism. Language planning and policy. Code-switching.
        Reading: Meyerhoff, ch. 6 'Multilingualism and language choice' (p. 107–134)
        Research assignment 2 assigned.
        N.B. Election Day! Please vote if you can.

11/10   Language contact. Borrowing. Pidgins and creoles. Linguistic interference.
         Reading: Meyerhoff, second part of ch. 11 'Language contact': p. 259–277

11/14   Recitation: Research assignment 2. Multilingualism & language contact.

11/15   Language birth, death, & revitalization. Language shift.
         Reading: TBD

11/17   Sociolinguistic variation & geographical region. The methods and aims of dialect geography.
         Sources of regional dialect divisions. Geographical diffusion of linguistic features.
         Reading: Wolfram and Schilling, 2015, ch. 5 'Regional varieties of English' (excerpt, p. 125–148)

11/21   Recitation: Dialectology.

11/22   Dialects of American English. Major dialect regions and the features that distinguish them.
         Variation and change in US regional dialects.
         Reading: Sultan, 2006 'It's not the sights, it's the sounds' `http://goo.gl/0VxdWE`

11/24   **No lecture!** Thanksgiving Day.

11/28   Recitation: American dialects.

11/29   Dialect contact. Second dialect acquisition. Koineization.
         Reading: Meyerhoff, first part of ch. 11 'Language contact': p. 249–259

12/1   Language attitudes. Methods for studying language attitudes. Perceptual dialectology. Covert
         prestige. Linguistic discrimination.
         Reading: Meyerhoff, remainder of ch. 4 'Language attitudes' (p. 69–83)

12/5   Recitation: Dialect contact & language attitudes.

12/6   Politeness. Face theory. Politeness strategies across cultures.
         Reading: Meyerhoff, ch. 5 'Being polite as a variable in speech' (p. 84–106)

12/8   TBD: time to catch up if we're behind, or topics requested by the class.
         Sociolinguistic journal due.

12/12   Recitation: Exam structure and review.

12/13   **No lecture!** Monday schedule. Recitation: Exam review.

12/15   Summary, conclusions, & extensions.
         Reading: Meyerhoff, ch. 12 'Looking back and looking ahead' (p. 278–288)
         Research assignment 2 due.

12/22   Final exam, 12–1:50pm.