

**LING-UA 15: Language and Society**  
Course Information

**Please visit our NYU Classes page to access a dynamic version of this document, which will be updated with links throughout the semester.**

**1. Course logistics**

**Lecture time** Mon/Wed 11:00am–12:15pm

**Location** Silver 208

**Instructor** Dr. Laurel MacKenzie

**Contact** laurel.mackenzie@nyu.edu (please allow 48 hours for a reply)

**Office** 10 Washington Pl., Rm. 305

**Office hours** Mon. 10–11am and by appointment

**TAs** Maddie Gilbert

Sarah Phillips

**Contact** maddie.gilbert@nyu.edu

sarah.phillips@nyu.edu

**Office** 10 Washington Pl., Rm. 308

10 Washington Pl., Rm. 308

**Office hours** Wed. 3:00–4:30pm and by appointment

Thu. 2:30–4:30pm

**Recitation time** Wed. 4:55–6:10pm

Wed. 3:30–4:45pm

**Location** 25 West 4th St., C-13

10 Washington Pl., Rm. 104

**2. Required text & readings**

- Van Herk, Gerard. 2018. *What is Sociolinguistics?* Second edition. Wiley.
  - Available electronically through NYU Drive and NYU eBooks. The NYU bookstore only has the first edition of the book; we're using the second, so if you want a hard copy, look elsewhere.
- Supplementary readings will be made available in PDF on NYU Classes.
- You're expected to have done each reading **before** its associated lecture.

**3. Overview**

This course investigates the ways in which language reflects and creates the social order. We'll study how variation in language 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, 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 answered 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. Digital portfolio: 25%**

Most Mondays, you will be given a brief assignment asking you to observe something particular in the language around you over the coming days. You will record your observations and reflections on them in a digital portfolio using the app Padlet, with entries due on Sunday nights. There will be nine portfolio entries in total. Portfolio entries will be graded, with the lowest grade dropped, and students will share their entries in the following recitation. Each student will be expected to share at least one entry during the course of the semester, counting toward the recitation participation grade, with entries submitted past the deadline ineligible for sharing. Detailed instructions for this assignment are available from the online syllabus.

##### **4.3. Midterm exam: 20%**

The midterm exam will occur in class on Oct. 31 and will cover material through Lecture 13 (on African-American English). More information on the structure of the exam will be provided closer to the date of the exam.

##### **4.4. Research project: 25%**

You will carry out a short research project in the second half of the semester, due on Nov. 19. You will get to choose between several possible topics. Detailed instructions for this assignment will be provided later in the semester.

##### **4.5. Final exam: 20%**

The final exam will occur in class on Dec. 12, and will primarily cover material from the second half of the semester. More information on the structure of the exam will be provided closer to the date of the exam.

## 5. Course policies

### 5.1. Late work and extensions

We realize that sometimes life happens. Thus, all students are entitled to a **48-hour grace period** on all assigned work, no questions asked.

If you are using this 48-hour grace period to complete a portfolio (Padlet) entry late, **we request that you email your TA before the Sunday night deadline informing her of this.** A one-sentence email is all that's needed — you don't need to ask permission, you just need to give your TA a heads-up so she knows to come back to your portfolio after the grace period has ended.

Please recognize that your grade and feedback on late work will be delayed, and late portfolio entries will not be able to be shared in recitation.

This grace period **cannot be extended without explicit permission from Prof. MacKenzie.** If you are going to be more than 48 hours late in completing a portfolio entry or submitting your research project, you must set up an in-person meeting with Prof. MacKenzie to arrange a revised deadline. **Work that is more than 48 hours late will not be accepted without this in-person meeting with the professor.**

In no circumstances will this grace period be extended due to submission errors (uploading the wrong file to NYU Classes, attaching the wrong file to an email, etc.). **Always double-check the file you submit!**

There will be no extensions on the midterm or the final exam.

### 5.2. Extra credit

The midterm and final exams may include some extra credit questions, and additional extra credit opportunities may be offered throughout the semester. Extra credit is an equal opportunity for everyone in the class to improve their grades, so it will not be issued to individual students upon request. If you want some grade security, we suggest completing all the portfolio entries, doing all the readings, and not missing class.

### 5.3. Laptops

You may take notes on your laptop during lectures, but please avoid distractions 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>)

### 5.4. Academic honesty

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated, and may result in a zero on an assignment. **You must complete all work individually, without help from other students.** If you use any resource other than the textbook and lecture slides as you prepare your portfolio entries or research project, you must provide a scholarly citation for the resource.

### **5.5. Academic accommodations for students with disabilities**

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](http://www.nyu.edu/csd).

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

- Attend all lectures and recitations.
- Do the reading **before** the lecture.
- Take good notes and pay attention during lecture.
- As soon as you get a chance after each lecture, revisit and organize your notes from class, looking back over the lecture slides and the reading to solidify your understanding.
- Make note of where you have questions about the lectures or the readings.
- Bring your questions to recitation or office hours.
- Start your assignments as soon as you get them.
- Seek help on your assignments well before they are due.

### **7. Want to learn more?**

Check out the following podcasts about (socio)linguistics:

- Lingthusiasm
- The Vocal Fries
- NPR's Code Switch

Or take another course from NYU's Linguistics Department!

**LING-UA 15: Language and Society**  
Syllabus

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Wk. 1	W 9/5	Lecture 1: Introduction & overview. Reading: Van Herk, ch. 1 'Introduction' <b>Complete student info questionnaire by the end of next week.</b>  Recitation 1: Introductions, expectations. Your sociolinguistic history.
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Wk. 2	M 9/10	Lecture 2: Defining language: Dialect, variety, standard, non-standard. Reading: Van Herk, ch. 2 'Language and Society' <b>Portfolio entry #1 assigned, due 9/16.</b>
	W 9/12	Lecture 3: Defining language & society: Language differences, social groups.  Recitation 2: The standard language ideology. Identifying sociolinguistic variation at different levels of language. Exploring social groups.
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Wk. 3	M 9/17	Lecture 4: Sociolinguistic methods: Linguistic variables, data elicitation. Reading: Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015, excerpts from ch. 6 'Language variation' <b>Portfolio entry #2 assigned, due 9/23.</b>
	W 9/19	Lecture 5: Sociolinguistic methods: Data collection, data analysis.  Recitation 3: Sharing portfolio entry #1. Sociolinguistic research methods.
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Wk. 4	M 9/24	Lecture 6: Language & place: Dialectology. Reading: Giamo 2016, 'Do you like dialect quizzes?' Reading: Van Herk, ch. 3 'Place' — don't worry about memorizing all the linguistic characteristics of the different varieties, but make sure you don't miss the section "method: dialect geography" at the end. <b>Portfolio entry #3 assigned, due 9/30.</b>
	W 9/26	Lecture 7: Language & place: Regional varieties of American English.  Recitation 4 — <b>bring a laptop or tablet:</b> Sharing portfolio entry #2. Exploring American regional dialects.

- Wk. 5    M 10/1    Lecture 8: Language & social status: Identifying groups, basic linguistic patterns.  
Reading: Van Herk, ch. 4 'Social Status'  
Reading: Labov 1966/2006 'The social stratification of (r) in New York City department stores'  
**Portfolio entry #4 assigned, due 10/7.**
- W 10/3    Lecture 9: Language & social status: More linguistic patterns.
- Recitation 5: Sharing portfolio entry #3. Discussing Labov 1966. Social status.
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- Wk. 6    T 10/9    **Note Tuesday class!**  
Lecture 10: Language change.  
Reading: Van Herk, ch. 5 'Time'  
**Portfolio entry #5 assigned, due 10/14.**
- W 10/10    Lecture 11: Language & age.
- Recitation 6: Sharing portfolio entry #4. Exploring semantic change in the OED.
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- Wk. 7    M 10/15    Lecture 12: Language & ethnicity.  
Reading: Van Herk, ch. 6 'Ethnicity'  
Reading: Rickford & King 2016, 'Language and linguistics on trial'  
**Research project assigned, due 11/19.**  
No portfolio entry assigned this week.
- W 10/17    Lecture 13: African-American English.
- Recitation 7: Sharing portfolio entry #5. Discussing Rickford & King 2016. Language, ethnicity, and discrimination.
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- Wk. 8    M 10/22    Lecture 14: Language & gender: Direct indexing, difference & dominance.  
Reading: Van Herk, ch. 7 'Gender'  
**Portfolio entry #6 assigned, due 10/28.**
- W 10/24    Lecture 15: Language & gender: Labov's principles, the Gender Paradox, language & sexuality. Catch-up time if needed.
- Recitation 8: Midterm review.

Wk. 9 M 10/29 Lecture 16: Data analysis tutorial – **bring a laptop!**  
No reading assigned.  
No portfolio entry assigned this week.

W 10/31 **Midterm exam.**  
**No recitation!**

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Wk. 10 M 11/5 Lecture 17: Language & identity.  
Readings: Dyer 2007 on language & identity  
Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015 on Martha's Vineyard  
**Portfolio entry #7 assigned, due 11/11.**

W 11/7 Lecture 18: Language & style.  
Reading: Van Herk, 'Interlude'  
Reading: Van Herk, ch. 8 'Style' through the first paragraph under 'identity performance' plus the 'summing up' section at the end

Recitation 9: Sharing portfolio entry #6. Midterm answers. Style & register.

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Wk. 11 M 11/12 Lecture 19: Multilingualism. Guest lecture by Sarah.  
Reading: Van Herk, ch. 10 'Multilingualism'  
**Portfolio entry #8 assigned, due 11/18.**

W 11/14 Lecture 20: Language contact.  
Reading: Van Herk, ch. 11 'Language Contact'

Recitation 10: Sharing portfolio entry #7. Multilingualism, language contact.

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Wk. 12 M 11/19 Lecture 21: Language as a social entity.  
Reading: Van Herk, ch. 13 'Language as a Social Entity'  
**Research project due.**  
No portfolio entry assigned this week.

W 11/21 **No lecture or recitation!** Thanksgiving break.

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Wk. 13 M 11/26 Lecture 22: Language & interaction: Communicative competence, cooperation.  
Reading: Van Herk, ch. 9 'Interaction'  
**Portfolio entry #9 assigned, due 12/2.**

W 11/28 Lecture 23: Language & interaction: Politeness.

Recitation 11: Sharing portfolio entry #8. Language, politeness, and interaction.

- Wk. 14 M 12/3 Lecture 24: Language attitudes: Case study of language on the Uruguay/Brazil border. Guest lecture by Maddie.  
Reading: Van Herk, ch. 12 ‘Attitudes and Ideologies,’ but skip the sections “Reading, responding, and representing” and “Representing language.”
- W 12/5 Lecture 25: Language & the internet.  
No reading assigned.
- Recitation 12: Sharing portfolio entry #9. Final exam review.
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- Wk. 15 M 12/10 Final exam review.  
No portfolio entry assigned this week.
- W 12/12 **Final exam (in-class).**
- No recitation. **Have a great winter break!**