

LING-UA 15: Language and Society
Course Information & Policies

Please visit our Brightspace page to access the online version of this document, which will be updated with links throughout the semester.

1. Course logistics

Lecture time	Tue/Thu 9:30–10:45am	
Location	Silver 401	
Instructors	Dr. Laurel MacKenzie laurel.mackenzie@nyu.edu	Dr. Gary Thoms gary.thoms@nyu.edu
Office	10 Washington Pl., Rm. 305	10 Washington Pl, Rm 412
Office hours	By appointment (in-person or virtually) via https://calendly.com/laurel-mackenzie	By appointment (in-person or virtually)

If you need to contact a professor, **please send your email to both of us.**

TAs	Alden McCollum amccollum@nyu.edu	José Alvarez Retamales jj.alvarezretamales@nyu.edu
Office	10 Washington Pl., Rm. 307	10 Washington Pl, Rm 307
Office hours	Tues 11:00am-12:00pm	Mon 11:00am-12:00pm
Recitation time	Mon 3:30–4:45pm	Mon 4:55–6:10pm
Recitation location	Tisch LC9	Tisch LC9

2. Required text, readings, and materials

- Textbook: Van Herk, Gerard. 2018. *What is Sociolinguistics?* Second edition. Wiley.
 - Available electronically through NYU Drive and NYU eBooks.
- Supplementary readings will be made available as PDFs.
- You're expected to have done each reading **before** its associated lecture.
- All course materials will be linked from the syllabus. We recommend that you make a shortcut to that 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.

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%

Both the lectures and the recitations of this class are designed to be interactive. You already know a lot about sociolinguistics, even if you don't realize it, purely by virtue of being a language user in the world. For this reason, we will often solicit your experiences and encourage your contributions in lecture. **Please come to class!** You will not only learn better by participating and asking questions, but you will enlighten your colleagues and improve the class by sharing your expertise as a language user.

Also, the lecture slides for this course are intentionally minimalist. The slides are meant to be visual aids, not lecture scripts. And the lectures are meant to explore concepts beyond the textbook's coverage of them, so definitions from the textbook will rarely be reiterated in class or on the lecture slides. If you miss a lecture, you will need to get notes from a classmate to reconstruct the content of the class.

Though we encourage you to come to lecture for all of the above reasons, we will not formally assess your lecture attendance. Your class participation grade will be primarily assessed on the basis of your recitation attendance record and your level and quality of participation in recitation discussions and exercises. Productive contributions to lecture may boost your grade up, but their absence will not hurt your grade.

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 teaching staff (cc'ing both professors and both TAs) at least 30 minutes before class**, and we 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 contact a professor or TA to fill in any gaps in your understanding.

4.2. Digital portfolio: 25%

Throughout the semester, you will be given brief assignments asking you to observe something particular in the language around you. You will record your observations and reflections on them in a digital portfolio using the app Padlet, with entries due on Wednesdays. There will be six portfolio entries in total

(plus an optional bonus one to replace the lowest grade). More information on this assignment is available on Brightspace.

4.3. Midterm exam: 20%

This will be a short take-home exam distributed on October 6, to be submitted by October 12. The exam will consist of no more than ten questions (short-answer and essay), covering the first six weeks of the course. It should take you around 2 hours, assuming you have kept on top of your reading and note-taking.

4.4. Research project: 25%

You will carry out a small research project over several weeks of the semester, due on November 9. You will get to choose between several possible topics. More information on this assignment is available on Brightspace.

4.5. Final exam: 20%

This will be a short take-home exam distributed on December 8, to be submitted by December 14. The exam will consist of no more than ten questions (short-answer and essay), focusing on the second nine weeks of the course. It should take you around 2 hours, assuming you have kept on top of your reading and note-taking.

5. Course policies

5.1. Deadlines

Assignments for this class are always due at 8pm. However, all assignments also have a grace period: **we will accept them until 11:30am the next day without penalty.** But please try your hardest to get your assignments in before the 8pm deadline. Sleep is important, and this class probably isn't worth staying up all night for.

5.2. Extensions

This grace period **cannot be extended without explicit permission from Prof. MacKenzie or Prof. Thoms.** If you know you are going to need more time on an assignment, you must set up a face-to-face meeting with a professor to arrange a revised deadline. **Work that is submitted after the grace period ends — by even one minute — will not be accepted without this meeting with the professor.** Your TA cannot grant extensions. Extensions will not be granted by email.

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 one of the professors with plenty of advance notice.

The very last day on which work for this course will be accepted is December 19. No work will be accepted past this date in any circumstances.

5.3. Assignment submission

The midterm exam, research project, and final exam will be submitted through Brightspace. PDF format is ideal. You should always preview your submission once you've uploaded it to make sure that it looks right and that you're submitting the correct file.

Portfolio entries are "submitted" as soon as you post them to your Padlet. There is no need to submit anything to Brightspace for portfolio entries, and they are timestamped by Padlet, so we can ensure they were submitted on time.

In no circumstances will the grace period be extended due to submission errors, such as uploading the wrong file to Brightspace, failing to properly post a portfolio entry, or cases of internet outage. **Always preview the file you submit, and do not wait until the last minute to submit your work.**

5.4. Incompletes

A grade of Incomplete will only be granted in extraordinary circumstances, and never to a student who has completed less than 50% of the coursework by semester's end. A grade of Incomplete requires documentation. Medical documentation must be submitted through the Moses Center; it cannot be submitted directly to a professor or your TA.

5.5. Laptops

You're welcome to take notes on your laptop during lectures, but please try to avoid distractions out of consideration for your classmates' concentration.

5.6. 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 scholarly 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. Linguistics uses APA referencing style. A good reference for APA style is the Purdue Online Writing Lab. Use the links on the side of the page to learn how to format in-text citations. Citations for academic papers can often be found on Google Scholar when you search for the paper.

5.7. Academic accommodations for students with disabilities

Please don't hesitate to talk to the professors and your TA if there's anything we 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.

5.8. Questions in lecture

- If you have a **clarification question** about part of the lecture content, or are otherwise uncertain about anything that is said, please don't hesitate to put up your hand and ask it. Someone else almost certainly has the same question.
- If you have a **curiosity question** — that is, if something said in lecture sparks your curiosity about something else — please consider two things before you ask it:
 1. Is this a question that can be **answered quickly**? We have a preselected amount of material to cover each day in order to stay on track. Questions that require a long answer can delay us.
 2. Is this a question that **all students can benefit** from? You may have much more linguistics experience than your classmates, and they may not understand your question, or the answer. Classroom time is for all students' benefit.

If the answer to one or both of the above questions is no, your question is still valid! But please **write it down**, and then send it to your professor or TA via email, or bring it to office hours or recitation. If the answer to both questions is yes, ask away!

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

- Do the reading assigned to a lecture **before** the lecture it's assigned to.
- Attend all lectures, pay attention, ask questions, and take notes. Consider copying the lecture slides to your own Google Drive at the beginning of class and taking notes directly on them.
- As soon as you get a chance after each lecture, revisit and organize your notes from class by looking back over them, alongside 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.
- Attend all recitations, and get to know your TA and others in the class.
- Start your assignments as soon as you get them.
- Seek help on your assignments well before they are due.

7. Want to learn more?

- Come to your professors or TA's office hour!
- Check out the following podcasts about linguistics:
 - Lingthusiasm
 - The Vocal Fries
 - Spectacular Vernacular
- Take another course from NYU's Linguistics Department!

LING-UA 15: Language and Society
Syllabus

Please visit our Brightspace page to access the online version of this document, which will be updated with links throughout the semester.

Class leader: LM = Laurel; GT = Gary; AM = Alden; JAR = José

Week	Reading	Recitation topic	Lecture topics	Assignment
	<i>Please do each week's reading before the first lecture of the week, unless otherwise noted.</i>	<i>Recitations are held on Mondays.</i>	<i>Lectures are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays.</i>	<i>Assignments will be introduced in class on Thursdays.</i>
1 9/1–9/2	Van Herk, ch. 1 'Introduction'	n/a	Th: Introduction & overview (LM)	Due 9/7: Student info questionnaire
2 9/5–9/9	Van Herk, ch. 2 'Language and Society'	<i>No recitation: Labor Day holiday!</i>	T: Defining language: Dialect, variety, standard, non-standard (GT) Th: Defining language & society: Language differences, social groups (GT)	Due 9/14: Portfolio entry #1
3 9/12–9/16	Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015, excerpts from ch. 6 'Language variation'	Introductions & expectations; the standard language ideology	T: Sociolinguistic methods: Linguistic variables, data elicitation (GT) Th: Sociolinguistic methods: Data collection, data analysis (GT)	Due 9/21: Portfolio entry #2
4 9/19–9/23	Gaiimo 2016, 'Do you like dialect quizzes?' Van Herk, ch. 3 'Place'	Variables & variants; sociolinguistic data collection	T: Language & place: Dialectology (GT) Th: Language & place: Regional varieties of American English (LM)	Due 9/28: Portfolio entry #3
5 9/26–9/30	Van Herk, ch. 4 'Social Status' For next week's recitation: Labov 1966/2006 'The social stratification of (r)'	Enregisterment of features & varieties	T: Language & social status: Identifying groups, basic linguistic patterns (LM) Th: Language & social status: More linguistic patterns (LM)	Due 10/3: Read Research project instructions, bring questions to recitation Due 10/5: Portfolio entry #4

Class leader: LM = Laurel; GT = Gary; AM = Alden; JAR = José

Week	Reading	Recitation topic	Lecture topics	Assignment
	<i>Please do each week's reading before the first lecture of the week, unless otherwise noted.</i>	<i>Recitations are held on Mondays.</i>	<i>Lectures are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays.</i>	<i>Assignments will be introduced in class on Thursdays.</i>
6 10/3–10/7	Van Herk, ch. 5 'Time'	Discussing Labov 1966/2006	T: Language & time: Language change (GT) Th: Language & time: Language & age (LM)	Due 10/12: Midterm exam
7 10/10–10/14	Van Herk, ch. 6 'Ethnicity'	<i>No recitation: Fall Break!</i>	T: <i>Note: Legislative Day – Monday schedule – recitation canceled – work on your midterm!</i> Th: Language & ethnicity: Ethnolects, ethnolinguistic repertoires (GT)	Due 10/19: Research project, stage 1: select a topic and start collecting data
8 10/17–10/21	For next week's recitation: Rickford & King 2016 'Language and linguistics on trial'	Exploring semantic change in the OED	T: Language & ethnicity: African American English (GT) Th: Language & ethnicity: <i>Signing Black in America</i> and <i>Talking Black in America</i> (excerpt) film screening and discussion (LM+GT)	Due 10/26: Research project, stage 2: finish collecting data
9 10/24–10/28	Van Herk, ch. 7 'Gender'	Discussing Rickford & King 2016	T: Data analysis tutorial (LM) – bring a laptop/tablet! Th: Language & gender: Direct indexing, difference & dominance (LM)	Due 11/2: Portfolio entry #5 (Due 11/9: Research project report)
10 10/31–11/4	<i>No reading this week!</i>	Research project work time – bring a laptop/tablet!	T: Language & gender: Labov's principles & the Gender Paradox (LM) Th: Language & gender: Gender beyond the binary (LM)	Due 11/9: Research project report

Class leader: LM = Laurel; GT = Gary; AM = Alden; JAR = José

Week	Reading	Recitation topic	Lecture topics	Assignment
	<i>Please do each week's reading before the first lecture of the week, unless otherwise noted.</i>	<i>Recitations are held on Mondays.</i>	<i>Lectures are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays.</i>	<i>Assignments will be introduced in class on Thursdays.</i>
11 11/7–11/11	Van Herk, 'Interlude' Van Herk, ch. 8 'Style', up to the section 'Defining and measuring style' Van Herk, ch. 9 'Interaction'	Research project work time – bring a laptop/tablet!	T: Language & interaction: Communicative competence, politeness (LM) Th: Language & interaction: Conversation (LM)	Due 11/16: Portfolio entry #6
12 11/14–11/18	Van Herk, ch. 8 'Style', starting with the section 'Defining and measuring style' Dyer 2007 on language & identity Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015 on Martha's Vineyard	Sharing portfolio #5	T: Language & style (AM) Th: Language & identity (JAR)	<i>No assignment this week!</i>
13 11/21–11/25	Van Herk, ch. 10 'Multilingualism'	Communicative competence, politeness, style	T: Language contact: Societal & individual multilingualism (LM) Th: <i>No lecture – Thanksgiving holiday!</i>	<i>No assignment this week!</i>
14 11/28–12/2	Van Herk, ch. 11 'Language Contact' Van Herk, ch. 13 'Language as a Social Entity'	Sharing portfolio #6, code-switching	T: Language contact: Borrowing, contact languages (GT) Th: Language contact: Language maintenance, shift, policy, & planning (GT)	(Due 12/7: Optional bonus portfolio assignment)

Class leader: LM = Laurel; GT = Gary; AM = Alden; JAR = José

Week	Reading	Recitation topic	Lecture topics	Assignment
	<i>Please do each week's reading before the first lecture of the week, unless otherwise noted.</i>	<i>Recitations are held on Mondays.</i>	<i>Lectures are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays.</i>	<i>Assignments will be introduced in class on Thursdays.</i>
15 12/5–12/9	Van Herk, ch. 12 'Attitudes and Ideologies'	Pidgin & creole languages	T: Language attitudes and ideologies (GT) Th: TBD (Language and the internet?) (GT)	Due 12/14: Final exam
16 12/12–12/14	<i>No reading this week!</i>	<i>No recitation: work on your final!</i>	T: Wrap-up, summary, research project findings (LM+GT)	