

LING-UA 57: English Dialects
Course Information and Policies

Please visit our NYU Classes page to access a version of this document with links.

1. Course logistics

Lecture	Mon/Wed 2:00–3:15pm, 10 Washington Pl., Rm. 104
Recitation	Thu 12:30–1:45pm, 10 Washington Pl., Rm. 104
Professor	Dr. Laurel MacKenzie (laurel.mackenzie@nyu.edu)
Office	10 Washington Pl., Rm. 305
Office hour	Mon. 11am–12:15pm and by appointment via https://calendly.com/laurel-mackenzie
TA	Andrés Carvajal (cbc374@nyu.edu)
Office	10 Washington Pl., Rm. 310
Office hour	Thu. 1:45–2:45pm

2. Required text & readings

- Required text: Wolfram, Walt, and Natalie Schilling. 2015. *American English: Dialects and Variation*. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, third edition. (“W&S” in the syllabus.)
 - PDF chapters are linked throughout the syllabus. You can also download the entire book as a PDF, or read it on NYU eBooks. This is useful if you need to consult the table of contents or the index, or look up a reference.
- Additional readings are available as PDFs through NYU Drive and linked throughout the syllabus.
- You’re expected to have done each reading **before** its associated lecture.

3. Overview

What’s a dialect, and who speaks one? Why is it that nearby places can have such different ways of speaking? When and how did British and American English diverge? This course examines these and other questions about regional dialects of English in the United States and abroad. Dialect variation will be studied on many linguistic levels, from word choice to the pronunciation of vowels and consonants to the construction of sentences. Topics include the fundamentals of dialectology, the historical development of regional dialects, mechanisms of language change, and social evaluation of dialects. Connections will be made to techniques of quantitative data analysis and practical applications of dialectology.

Through successfully completing this course, you will:

- be familiar with the major dialect regions of the United States, the linguistic features that distinguish them, and their historical sources.
- be familiar with the characteristics, history, and social status of dialects of English as spoken abroad.
- understand the theory and methods underlying the field of dialectology.
- collect, analyze, and write about dialect data.
- be able to discuss matters of dialectal 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 discussions and exercises in lecture and recitation. 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. Homework assignments: 60%

There will be six homework assignments, each worth 10%. Assignments are linked from the syllabus and will be due on Wednesdays at 11:55pm. All assignments must be submitted through NYU Classes; no assignments will be accepted via email.

All assignments will take a few hours, and, in some cases, will require research that takes a few days. **Allow yourself plenty of time to work on these assignments!**

4.3. Essay: 20%

For your final paper, you will analyze the portrayal of an English dialect in a piece of popular media. This analysis is expected to include a linguistically-informed description of the dialect and the portrayal, a critical analysis of the accuracy of the portrayal, and a discussion of its merits and demerits as a representation of the dialect and its speakers. Visit the online version of this document for a link to detailed instructions for the essay. Expected length: 5–6 pages. Due date: **Monday, April 22.**

You will workshop your essay idea in recitation on **Feb. 28**, so have some idea of what you want to do by then. A short written proposal (1 page) will be due to NYU Classes on **Mar. 8**. Two other interim stages will be due on Mar. 28 and Apr. 11; see §3 of the essay instructions for details.

4.4. Class presentation based on essay: 10%

You will deliver a 10-minute presentation based on your essay in one of the four class sessions between May 2 and May 9. Visit the online version of this document for a link to detailed instructions for the presentation. Presentation slots will be assigned in class as May 2 approaches.

5. Course policies

5.1. Deadlines

Assignments for this class are always due at 11:55pm. However, all assignments also have a 12.5 hour grace period: **we will accept them until 12:30pm the next day without penalty.** But please try your hardest to get your assignments in before the 11:55pm deadline. Sleep is important, and this class probably isn't worth staying up all night for.

5.2. Extensions

The 12.5 hour grace period **cannot be extended without explicit permission from Prof. MacKenzie.** If you are going to be more than 12.5 hours late in submitting an assignment, you must set up an in-person meeting with Prof. MacKenzie to arrange a revised deadline. **Work that is more than 12.5 hours late — by even one minute — will not be accepted without this in-person meeting with the professor.** Your TA cannot grant extensions. Extensions will not be granted by email.

Note that some assignments will be discussed in recitation, so their deadlines cannot be extended. In these cases, an alternate arrangement will be worked out (e.g. calculating your final grade without the 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 Prof. MacKenzie with plenty of advance notice.

The very last day on which work for this course will be accepted is Monday, May 13. No extensions that go past this date will be granted in any circumstances.

5.3. Assignment submission

Assignments must be typed and submitted electronically through NYU Classes. 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 submitted the correct file.

In no circumstances will the 12.5 hour grace period be extended due to submission errors, such as uploading the wrong file to NYU Classes, 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 Prof. MacKenzie.

5.5. 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 essay is not allowed.

5.6. Extra credit

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.

5.7. 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>)

5.8. Academic honesty

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

5.9. Academic accommodations for students with disabilities

Please don't hesitate to talk to Prof. MacKenzie 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.

5.10. Communicating with Prof. MacKenzie

- **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 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 here: <https://calendly.com/laurel-mackenzie>. I don't book appointments over email.

5.11. Questions and comments 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 either send it to Prof. MacKenzie via email, or bring it to office hours. If the answer to both questions is yes, ask away!

- **Comments** about how the lecture material connects to your personal life or experiences are usually better communicated after class, via email, or during office hours, unless part of the lecture is specifically dedicated to them. But again, don't be shy! Learning about how the course material connects to your life is one of my favorite parts of teaching this class. It's just not what class time is generally for.

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?

- Come to Prof. MacKenzie or your TA's office hour!
- Check out the following podcasts about linguistics:
 - Lingthusiasm
 - The Vocal Fries
 - NPR's Code Switch
- Take another course from NYU's Linguistics Department!

LING-UA 57: English Dialects
Syllabus

Please visit our NYU Classes page to access a dynamic version of this document with links.

Wk. 1	M 1/28	Lecture 1: Introduction & overview.
	W 1/30	Lecture 2: What's a dialect? Foundational concepts in the study of dialectology. Reading: W&S ch. 1. Homework 1, due 2/6: Linguistic autobiography.
	Th 1/31	Recitation 1: Exploring dialect data and notions of standard language.
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Wk. 2	M 2/4	Lecture 3: Where do dialects come from? Reading: W&S ch. 2 up to §2.2.1.
	W 2/6	Lecture 4: How do dialects differ? Part 1: Words. Reading: W&S §2.2.5, ch. 3 up to §3.3. Homework 2, due 2/13: Lexicography of a slang term.
	Th 2/7	Recitation 2: Exploring lexical innovations and slang. Word of the Year.
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Wk. 3	M 2/11	Lecture 5: How do dialects differ? Part 2: Sounds. Reading, students who have not taken <i>Language</i> or <i>Sound and Language</i> : Fromkin et al. 2014 ch. 5. Reading, all students: W&S §2.2.4, §3.3, and have the phonetic symbols chart handy as you read.
	W 2/13	Lecture 6: How do dialects differ? Part 2: Sounds, continued. No new reading for today. Homework 3, due 2/20: Sounds and symbols.
	Th 2/14	Recitation 3: Sounds, symbols, and phonological variation.
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Wk. 4	M 2/18	No class! Presidents' Day holiday.
	W 2/20	Lecture 7: How do dialects differ? Part 3: Structures, meanings, intentions. Reading: W&S §2.2.1–2.2.3, §3.4–3.5. Essay stage 1, due 2/28: Come up with an idea for your essay to workshop in recitation on 2/28.
	Th 2/21	Recitation 4: Grammatical and pragmatic variation.

Wk. 5	M 2/25	Lecture 8: American English: Past, present, and future. Reading: W&S ch. 4.
	W 2/27	Lecture 9: Studying regional dialects. Reading: W&S ch. 5. Homework 4, due 3/6: Studying regional dialects. Essay stage 2, due 3/8: Write your one-page proposal.
	Th 2/28	Recitation 5: Essay topic workshop. Bring your idea for your essay to share.

Wk. 6	M 3/4	Lecture 10: Regional dialects of American English: New England and the North. Reading: Nagy & Roberts 2004, Gordon 2004 §5.
	W 3/6	Lecture 11: Regional dialects of American English: The South. Reading: Fridland 2012, Baranowski 2005. Homework 5, due 3/13: The North, the South, and New England.
	Th 3/7	Recitation 6: Doing dialect research. Northern & Southern dialect data.

Wk. 7	M 3/11	Lecture 12: Regional dialects of American English: The Midland and Appalachia. Reading: Ash 2006, skim Montgomery 2004 (the examples are interesting!).
	W 3/13	Lecture 13: Regional dialects of American English: The West and Canada. Reading: Eckert & Mendoza-Denton 2005, Boberg 2004 Homework (ungraded): Post our dialect survey on social media! Essay stage 3, due in recitation 3/28: Transcribing & collecting your essay data.
	Th 3/14	Recitation 7: Editing dialect articles on Wikipedia. Bring a laptop if you can.

	M 3/18	Spring break!
	W 3/20	Spring break!
	Th 3/21	Spring break!

Wk. 8	M 3/25	Lecture 14: Regional dialects of American English: New York City. Reading: Gordon 2004 §3.
	W 3/27	Lecture 15: Guest lecture: Prof. John Singler on “Brooklynese.” No reading for today. Homework 6, due 4/3: Analyzing our dialect survey data.
	Th 3/28	Recitation 8: Mapping and analyzing dialect data. Bring a laptop if you can.

Wk. 9	M 4/1	Lecture 16: Regional dialects of American English: Philadelphia. Reading: Gordon 2004 §4.
	W 4/3	Lecture 17: Studying social dialects. Reading: W&S ch. 6. Essay stage 4, due in recitation 4/11: Analyzing your essay data.
	Th 4/4	Recitation 9: Studying social dialects. Philadelphia and NYC dialect data.

Wk. 10	M 4/8	Lecture 18: Ethnic dialects of American English. Reading: W&S ch. 7.
	W 4/10	Lecture 19: African American English. Reading: W&S ch. 8. No homework. Start writing your essay, due 4/22!
	Th 4/11	Recitation 10: Analyzing African American English dialect data. Language, ethnicity, and discrimination.

Wk. 11	M 4/15	Lecture 20: English around the world: Regional dialects of British English. Reading: Upton 2015.
	W 4/17	Lecture 21: English around the world: Regional dialects of British English, continued. No new reading for today. No homework. Keep working on your essay, due 4/22!
	Th 4/18	Recitation 11: Analyzing British English dialect data.

Wk. 12	M 4/22	Lecture 22: English around the world: Southern hemisphere Englishes. Reading: Burridge (2010) up until the section “Distinctive cultural and discourse features” (ok to skim), Maclagan (2010) up until the section “The Maori language” (ok to skim).
	W 4/24	Lecture 23: English around the world: World Englishes and English-based creoles. No reading for today. No homework. Start working on your presentation!
	Th 4/25	Recitation 12: Analyzing English-based pidgin and creole data.

Wk. 13 M 4/29 Lecture 24: Guest lecture: Dr. Keisha Lindsay on Trinidadian English.
No reading for today.

W 5/1 Lecture 25: Real-world applications of dialectology.
Reading: W&S ch. 11.
No homework. Finish working on your presentation!

Th 5/2 Recitation 13: Presentations.

Wk. 14 M 5/6 Lecture 26: Presentations.

W 5/8 Lecture 27: Presentations.

Th 5/9 Recitation 14: Presentations.

Wk. 15 M 5/13 Lecture 28: Last day of class party! 🎉