

Language in a Multicultural America

ENGL 2371 (Fall 2013)
Texas Tech University

Linguistic or cultural homogeneity of even one group is in a sense a fiction... —D.P. Pattanayak

In language there are only differences. —Ferdinand de Saussure

I became Mr. Universe; I became a successful businessman. And even though some people say I still speak with a slight accent, I have reached the top of the acting profession.

—Former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

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English & Philosophy Building, Room 312C

Class Meetings: M/W/F, 10:00am–10:50am, English & Philosophy Building, Room 305

Office Hours: M/W/F, 11:00am–11:50am (and by appointment)

About this course

Language conveys meaning. But language is more than just the content of each word: peoples' speech also carries with it cues to speakers' social realities.

In other words, variables like race, gender, sexual identity, power asymmetries, and regional identity affect a speaker's language use. This in turn informs how listeners categorize and make assumptions about their speech partners. Your social background informs the way you speak, and the way you speak impacts how people perceive you.

By the end of this course, you should be able to...

- Demonstrate understanding of the basic concepts and methods used in analyzing language and its social variation
- Collect, describe, analyze, and report linguistic phenomena using these concepts and methods
- Demonstrate awareness, sensitivity, and appreciation of the many cultures in the U.S. and the language used in these communities.

Materials

All readings will be made available on the course Blackboard site. Please contact me immediately if you cannot access the site.

Assignments and Grading

Readings and responses

The readings from this course are drawn from textbooks, scholarly articles, and popular publications (listed on the schedule on the day they're due).

For each day's reading, you should write a brief response: What did you find to be the main point? Is anything still not clear to you? Are there any points you would like to discuss as a class? Did the reading contradict any beliefs that you had? These responses must be typed, and will be collected at the end of class, but should also be used to guide your participation in class discussions. Full credit will be given to responses that demonstrate that you've read and engaged with the material. It's ok if your response has more questions than answers.

Homework assignments

There will be 6 homework assignments, some of which may require a small amount of writing. Assignments will be assessed for both content and written expression.

Original research project

There will be a final paper, which is to be based on the collection and analysis of original data. In other words, you will be conducting real sociolinguistic research on members of a speech community to which you have access. More details to come later in the semester. A two-page double-spaced proposal will be due on October 25th (with a rough draft due on October 23rd), and the final paper itself will be due on December 4th (approximate scope: 5-7 double-spaced pages), You will also be required to give a presentation on your project at the end of the semester.

Grade breakdown

Category	Percent	Numerical score	Letter grade
Reading responses	5%	95–100%	A+
Homework assignments	40%	90–94.99%	A
Research project proposal	10%	85–89.99%	B+
Research project final paper	30%	80–84.99%	B
Research project presentation	10%	75–79.99%	C+
Attendance and participation	5%	70–74.99%	C
		65–69.99%	D+
		60–64.99%	D
		>60%	F

Policies and expectations

Attendance and punctuality

You are expected to come to (every) class and to participate fully in class discussions and exercises. Please make an effort to arrive on time. (Repeat tardiness may be counted as an absence.)

If you know you will be absent, *email me ahead of time*. If the absence is documented and justifiable, it *may* be excused (at the discretion of the instructor).

Number of absences	Consequence
2	0% for 'attendance and participation' category of final grade
5	Automatic F for the course

University policy (OP 34.19) requires that no penalty be imposed upon students who are absent from class because of religious observances, and allows for students to make up the work missed because of such absence. To exercise this right, *students must inform the instructor in writing prior to the absence*.

Late work

Assignments must be submitted on time—this is at the start of class, unless otherwise specified (e.g., the end of class for reading responses). *Assignments turned in after the deadline will receive zero points*. There is no partial credit for late work.

This course has a one-time no-questions-asked pass on this policy applicable only to homework assignments or reading responses. To use it, you must email the instructor *before* the original deadline, and turn in the assignment by the following class meeting.

Extraordinary circumstances

Life is complicated—illnesses and injuries happen. If these or other life events are interfering with your ability to meet course requirements, please *let me know as soon as possible*.

Email

Some course-related announcements will be made over email. These messages will be sent to your TTU address, which you should check at least daily. Failure to check your TTU email will not excuse you from any requirements assigned via email.

Please include the course number (2371) in the subject line of any emails you send me (as well as an actual subject). If you are sending from an account other than your TTU address, please include your full name in the message body.

Two tips that apply both in this course and with other instructors: (1) Allow about 24 hours for a response during the week (we get lots of email!) and longer on weekends. (2) Think carefully about the tone, register, and formality of your writing—a polite, well-written email can stand out in a full inbox.

Civility in the classroom

Students are expected to maintain a polite, civil environment that is conducive to learning for everyone.

This course deals with a number of sensitive topics, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, and disability. We all approach these topics with different experiences and opinions, but in order to effectively examine the intersections of language and society, we will strive to distance ourselves from these biases and remain objective.

It is important that class discussions on sensitive topics remain respectful, and I expect you to foster a classroom environment conducive to productive discourse. If you are uncomfortable with the way something is discussed in class, or have other concerns about a topic on the syllabus, please let me know privately.

Accommodations for students with disabilities

Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements, should contact the instructor as soon possible to make the necessary arrangements. Students must present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor's office hours. Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodation to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, please contact Student Disability Services office in 335 West Hall or call (806) 742-2405.

Note that it is your responsibility to provide your instructor with a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) within the first week of class, or within one week of receiving the LOA, so please bring me your LOA as soon as possible. Further, the LOA becomes effective only after it is signed by the instructor, and is *not* retroactive.

Academic integrity

Academic integrity will be policed vigorously in this course. Please familiarize yourself with TTU's policy on academic integrity, which can be found in the *Student Handbook & Code of Conduct*, §II.B, X.B3 (<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/dos/handbook/>), and the University's Operating Policies & Procedures §34.12.3 (<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/opmanual/OP34.12.pdf>).

Some broad outlines of the University policy:

- *The attempt of students to present as their own any work not honestly performed is regarded by the faculty and administration as a most serious offense and renders the offenders liable to serious consequences, possibly suspension. (OP §34.12.3)*
- "Cheating" includes, but is not limited to: copying from another student; using unauthorized materials during an exam; using, buying, or transporting test keys or homework solutions; collaborating on assignments without authority to do so; falsifying data.

- “Plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to: presenting others’ work as one’s own academic work; failure to appropriately give credit to quotes or ideas taken from other sources including books, magazines, Internet sources, and scholarly works.

You are encouraged to form study groups outside of class to help you understand the course material and discuss readings. Your reading responses may well spring from such discussions, though note that (a) there cannot be any overlap in your reading responses, and (b) you must note at the top of your reading response any person you discussed the readings with. You may not collaborate on homework assignments.

I will allow multiple-author original research projects on a case-by-case basis, though note that the scope of any such project would necessarily be greater than a single-author project. Please see me as early as possible if this option interests you.

If you have any questions, please consult the instructor, a dean, or the University’s academic integrity policy.

Suggestions and complaints

I welcome suggestions and complaints at any time. The sooner an issue is brought to my attention, the sooner it can be remedied. You may provide anonymous feedback at any time via the course Blackboard site.

Schedule

This schedule is subject to change. Please pay attention for announcements in class and via email.

Ⓕ HW due Ⓔ Reading/response due Ⓔ^S Suggested reading Ⓔ Project-related deadline

INTRODUCTION

M	8/26	What is language? What is (socio-)linguistics? Goals of this course		
W	8/28	What does it mean to know a language? Language Variation	· <i>Language Myths</i> Ch. 10: <i>Some Languages Have No Grammar</i> (Bauer, 9pp.) · Wardhaugh, pp. 1–6 · <i>Body Ritual among the Nacirema</i> (Miner 1956, 4pp.)	Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ

F	8/30	Speech communities	·HW 1 out ·Wardhaugh, pp. 9–12, 17–19, 119–129	ℝ
M	9/2	No Class	Labor Day	
W	9/4	The scientific study of language Observer's Paradox The fourth floor	·HW 1 due ·Wardhaugh, pp. 8–9	ℝ ℝ

IDENTITY OF PLACE

F	9/6	<i>American Tongues</i>		
M	9/9	National identity American identity	·Coulmas, pp. 171–177 · <i>English is a Dialect with an Army</i> (Coates, 3pp.) · <i>Language in the USA</i> , Ch. 2: <i>American English and its Distinctiveness</i> (Finegan, 21pp.)	ℝ ℝ ℝ ^S
W	9/11	Regional variation in the US	· <i>Language Myths</i> Ch. 17: <i>They Speak Really Bad English Down South and in New York City</i> (Preston, 11pp.) · <i>Language in the USA</i> , pp. 39–44, 53–55	ℝ ℝ
F	9/13	Regional identity in the US	·HW 2 out · <i>Language Myths</i> Ch. 20: <i>Everyone has an Accent Except Me</i> (Esling, 7pp.) · <i>The Grammar Rules Behind 3 Commonly Disparaged Dialects</i> (Okrent, 3pp.)	ℝ ℝ
M	9/16	The language(s) of Texas	·Wardhaugh, pp. 88, 96–100, 101–117 · <i>Language Diversity in the USA</i> : Ch. 4 <i>Spanish in the USA</i> , pp. 66–72, 75–80 (Potowski and Carreira)	ℝ ℝ ^S
W	9/18	<i>Do You Speak American?</i> (Pt. 2)	·HW 2 due	ℝ

“STANDARD”, “POLITE”, AND “HIGH-CLASS” LANGUAGE

F	9/20	What’s “standard?” What’s “non-standard?” Why speak the standard?	·Wardhaugh, pp. 49–54	ℝ
M	9/23	Attitudes towards speech	· <i>Language in the USA</i> , Ch. 26: <i>Language Attitudes to Speech</i> (12pp.)	ℝ
W	9/25	Politeness and solidarity T-V distinction	·HW 3 out · Wardhaugh, pp. 260–262, 267–269, 276–277, 281–282	ℝ
F	9/27	Class and prestige	· Wardhaugh, pp. 146–153 · Coulmas, pp. 17–18, 27–30	ℝ ℝ

PERSONAL IDENTITY

M	9/30	Social circles Jocks vs. Burnouts	·HW 3 due ·Wardhaugh, pp. 129–132, 212 · <i>Language in the USA</i> , Ch. 19, <i>Adolescent Language</i> , pp. 370–372 (Eckert)	HI ℝ ℝ
W	10/2	Race and ethnicity Linguistic profiling	·Smith/NPR (2001) podcast (7.5min.) ·Laferriere (1979, 15pp.)	ℝ ℝ
F	10/4	AAVE	·Wardhaugh, pp. 342–345 · <i>The Chicago Accent and the Chicago ‘Blaccent’</i> (Minoff/WBEZ, 7pp.)	ℝ ℝ
M	10/7	AAVE	·HW 4 out · <i>Language in the USA</i> , Ch. 5: <i>African American English</i> (Green, 17pp.) ·Clip from testimony of Rachel Jeantel (5 min). · <i>Rachel Jeantel’s Language is English— It’s Just Not Your English</i> (Bolotnikova, 2pp.)	ℝ ℝ ^S ℝ
W	10/9	<i>Do You Speak American?</i> (Pt. 3)		

F	10/11	Sex and gender	·HW 4 due ·Meyerhoff, pp. 201–202, 206, 225–227 · <i>Language Myths</i> , Ch. 6: <i>Women Talk Too Much</i> (Holmes, 10pp.)	HI R R
M	10/14	Sex and gender	·Coulmas, pp. 36–41 ·West and Zimmerman (1983, 12pp.)	R R ^S
W	10/16	Sex and gender	·HW 5 out ·Kiesling (2007), pp. 653–658, 660–662, 666–667, 669–670	R
F	10/18	Sexual orientation	·Research project proposal assigned · <i>Go Carolina</i> (Sedaris, 14pp.) · <i>Language and Sexuality</i> , Ch. 4: <i>Sexuality as Identity: Gay and Lesbian Language</i> , pp. 74–80, 86–92, 98–102 (Cameron and Kulick)	R R
M	10/21	Sexual orientation Transgender speech	·HW 5 due ·Zimman (2013), endnote 1 (p. 34), pp. 1–3, 33–34	HI R
Misc.				
W	10/23	Workshop: Collecting sociolinguistic data	·Proposal rough draft due (2 hard copies) ·Wardhaugh pp. 153–159	P R
F	10/25	Codes and secret languages	·Proposal final draft due (2 hard copies)	P
SOCIETY				
M	10/28	(Dis-)ability	· <i>Dealing with People First Language</i> (Donovan, 2pp.) · <i>People First Language</i> (Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities, 4pp.)	R R
W	10/30	Education	· <i>Language in the USA</i> , Ch. 18, <i>Language in Education</i> (Wong Fillmore, 23pp.)	R

F	11/1	The “Ebonics” controversy	· ‘Black English’ Proposal Draws Fire (CNN, 2pp.) · Elements of Igno-Ebonics Style (Cosby, 2pp.) · Language in the USA, Ch. 16, Ebonics and its Controversy (Baugh, 15pp.)	ℝ ℝ ℝ
M	11/4	Official languages English-only	· Language in the USA, Ch. 17, Language Planning, Language Policy, and the English-Only Movement (Wiley, 21pp.)	ℝ
W	11/6	Extermination/Preservation	· Language Diversity in the USA, Ch. 3 Native American Languages in the USA (McCarty, 20pp.)	ℝ
F	11/8	Politics	· HW 6 out · The War of the Words (The Economist, 3pp.) · Don’t Think of an Elephant, Ch. 1: Framing 101: How to Take Back Public Discourse, pp. 1–4, 21–26	ℝ ℝ

SIGNED LANGUAGES

M	11/11	ASL and the Deaf community	· HW 6 due · Language in the USA, Ch. 12: American Sign Language (Lucas and Valli, 16pp.)	III ℝ
W	11/13	Sociolinguistic variation	· The Sociolinguistics of Sign Language, Ch. 4: Sociolinguistic Variation, pp. 61–63, 76–77, 84–85, 87, 95–97 (Lucas et al.)	ℝ
F	11/15	Cochlear implants Sound and Fury		

ORIGINAL RESEARCH PROJECTS

M	11/18	Student presentations		
W	11/20	Student presentations		
F	11/22	Student presentations		
M	11/25	<i>Do You Speak American?</i> (Pt. 1)		
W	11/27	No Class	Thanksgiving Recess	
F	11/29	No Class	Thanksgiving Recess	
M	12/2	Workshop: Original research project		
W	12/4	Workshop: Original research project	·Research project due at 5pm 1 hard copy in English dept. office + Blackboard upload	IP