416B Language and Gender

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Articles and peer readings posted on WebCampus

Course Description:
Language use includes much more than simply the knowledge of linguistic rules and grammar. It also requires that we as speakers are aware of how variable linguistic behavior both conveys and allows us to manifest and interpret a great deal of information about our own social identities and that of others in our speech communities. In fact, our speech style does not simply reflect a static social identity but actually performs and creates this identity.

This is a course about we learn the habitual features of speech that are socioculturally associated with the gender order. This course is also about how we also use speech as a means of portraying ourselves and defining others as to how they fit our expectations. As this course progresses, we will not only be examining how speakers are able to exploit linguistic resources to serve both functional and social male and female roles but also try to explain how and why such variation continues to exist in our speech communities. We will explore whether language is inherently sexist and if it can really be claimed that language and how we use it is in fact reflective of basic social inequities between the sexes. We will also look at how variation is judged by other members of the speech community and delve into the stigmatization and prestige of linguistic varieties and their speakers.

Crucial to this course is YOU -- your views, your experiences and your input. Therefore, this course is designed to develop your ability to critically and fairly examine your intuitions and beliefs about language and gender. In this class, we will attempt to separate legitimate claims about gender from traditional assumptions. While many stereotypes may spring forth from a grain of truth, many are simply the result of the naturalization of the social order. During the semester, we will explore issues and perspectives in language and gender both through articles summarizing/presenting recent research in the field and through our own fieldwork and discussions.

Specific Learning Objectives:
Students should be able to:
- Define key concepts in language and gender studies
- Articulate, in written materials and in class discussion, the different approaches of language and gender researchers and the socio-historical context in which they emerged.
- Articulate arguments about the naturalization of gender in our social world by examining and synthesizing primary research articles and summary texts.
- Display through class presentations and written materials an informed perspective on the question of how the gender order is enacted and reproduced through linguistic variation
- Show mastery of basic field based methodological concepts and the scientific method through our own fieldwork and research.
- Identify, through class discussion and written materials, the reality of and main forces behind beliefs about gendered speech

This course satisfies Core Objective 10:
**CO10:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of diversity through courses that focus on topics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, physical ability, language, and/or social class with an emphasis on the analysis of equity. Students will apply and evaluate approaches or modes of inquiry used to analyze diversity and equity and the social barriers to these goals.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

**Participation and Quizzes - (25%)** As a discussion-based course, participation and attendance are MANDATORY elements to successful completion of the semester. Regular absences and lack of participation in class will seriously impair your good grade potential. In addition, it is ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL that you read the text and assigned articles BEFORE they are due. Thus, you will have very regular quizzes that will test your reading comprehension.

**Group Leader - (15%)** When it is your turn as discussion leader (times assigned early in the term) you will be expected to prepare (and turn in):
1. A series of 5 to 7 questions critically probing the week’s issues that you will subsequently ask and discuss with your fellow students.
2. A detailed class handout or PPT presentation that summarizes your article’s major points, methods and findings and provides topics/ideas for collaborative discussion in class. If you use PPT, please turn in a master print out.

There is additional relevant information posted on the WebCampus site. Please be sure to read these instructions before your presentation.

**Language Projects (2)(30%)** At different points in the semester, you will be asked to do projects that explore more deeply a topic from class (instructions posted on Webcampus). These are not rigid graded-for-grammar papers- I want you to use this as a chance to think about language use and language ideology in daily practice.

**Final Research Paper/Presentation (30%)** Each student will be expected to develop a paper that examines a well-researched or highly-discussed L&G feature, summarizing and synthesizing the history and current research on this feature (min. 6 ACADEMIC sources). So, for example, a number of studies have examined women’s use of lexical items (lovely, adorable, fabulous). Where did this notion of women’s more extensive descriptive vocabulary come from? Are there any academic studies that have been published on the topic? What are their findings? How does this fit in with the concepts and analysis developed in class (e.g. the notion of gender performativity and the hall of mirrors)? You will be expected to turn in a topic proposal about halfway through the semester (see schedule below). Alternative paper topics, should you have a
particular interest, are open for discussion. Please prepare a brief topic proposal and schedule a meeting with me.

Final course grades: A = 93% or higher;  A- = 90-92.9%;  B+ = 87-89.9%;  B = 83-86.9%;  B- = 80-82.9%;  
C+ = 77-79.9%;  C = 73-76.9%;  C- = 70-72.9%;  D+ = 67-69.9%;  D = 63-66.9%;  D- = 60-62.9%;  F = < 60%  

GRADUATE STUDENTS: PLEASE SEE ATTACHED SYLLABUS SUPPLEMENT

WEEKLY PLAN AND ASSIGNMENTS:  
GV= Gender Voices, LG= Language & Gender. Readings due before class.

August 26-28: Introduction: Language and the gender order

Assigned Readings (due this week): GV Chapter 1 and LG, chap 1, pp. 15-51.

Sept 2-4: Labor day holiday Monday  
The gender order: Analytic practice and the hall of mirrors  
Discussion-group leaders’ topics assigned (starting week 4).  

Readings: LG, Chap.1 (from last week) and LG, Chap 2, pp. 79-90  
Assignment: Lab project#1. Details on WebCT. Due Sept. 16

Sept. 9-11: The biological and social foundations of gender  
Readings due: LG, remainder of Chapter 1 (pp. 1-15), Fausto-Sterling “the five sexes”  
(Grad students add: “The questions of questions”- Bing and Bervall article (WebCT) and prepare  
2 questions for Wednesday based on that article)

Sept. 16-18: The biological and social foundations of gender  
Lab project 1 discussion Wednesday

Readings due: Body, bias and behavior article by Longino and Doell, also Fausto-Sterling  
chapter (p. 72-85), Start GV Chapter 2

Sept. 23-25: The biological and social foundations of voice  
1st Discussion group leaders (Grads) Wednesday

Readings due: Finish GV Chap 2, (for wed) peer-posted articles
Sept. 30 - Oct. 2: Speech communities vs. communities of practices
Examining ‘gay speech’ as a differential model
Discussion leaders Wednesday

Readings due: LG chap. 2 (p. 52-79) and peer posted articles

Oct. 7-9: Understanding the system of language
Lab project idea development

Readings due (WC): Wolfram and Schilling-Estes “Levels of Dialect” especially p. 51-65

Oct. 14-16: Gender and Conversation: Difference, Dominance?
Graduate discussion leaders on early L&G research

Readings due: GV Chap. 4
Articles: Daniel Maltz and Ruth Borker “A Cultural Approach to Male-Female Miscommunication”
Tannen “Talk in the Intimate Relationships: His and Hers.”

Oct 21-23: Gender and Conversation
Discussion leaders Wednesday
Draft proposal for final paper topic due

Readings due: LG Chap. 5 and peer posted articles

Oct 28-30: Politeness and conversational rules
Field methods (lab project) discussion

Readings due: Read your background article for lab project and posted peer-articles

Nov. 4-6: Sociolinguistic variation: Sex and Standards
Lab Project due next week
FINAL PAPER PROPOSAL SHOULD BE TURNED IN

Readings due: GV Chapter 3 pgs. 58-67, LG Chap. 8

Nov. 11-13: Researching language: lab project issues and findings
Discussion group leaders Wednesday

Readings due: GV Chap 5
Nov. 18-20:  
Is Language itself Sexist?  
Discussion group leaders Wednesday

Readings due:  Posted peer-articles, and article D. Cameron “Naming of Parts: Gender, culture and terms for the penis among American college students.”

Nov. 25-27:  
Language and Social Structure  
HAPPY THANKSGIVING!  Yes, class held on Wednesday

Readings due: GV Chapter 6, Grad students also read and prepare two Qs on Eckert article “Entering the heterosexual marketplace”

Dec. 2-4:  
The construction of style and exploring ‘male’ style  
Discussion Group leaders Wednesday

Readings due: LG Chap 9 and peer articles

Dec. 9:  
Graduate paper presentations.  UG Final papers due.

*Dec. 16  
Final meeting/discussion.  Graduate papers due.

*Finals week

Policy statements:

Academic dishonesty policy:  Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in any form. Please see http://www.unr.edu/stsv/acdispol.html for full definition of what constitutes academic dishonesty and specific procedures that will be undertaken if such an event occurs.

Disability policy:  The English Department is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented physical disabilities or documented learning disabilities. Should you require any assistance, please contact the instructor to discuss appropriate accommodations to ensure equity in grading, classroom experiences and outside assignments. The instructor will meet with the student and staff members of the Student Services Center to formulate a written plan for appropriate accommodations

Academic Success Services: Your student fees cover usage of the Math Center (784-4433 or www.unr.edu/mathcenter/ <http://www.unr.edu/mathcenter/> ), Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring/ <http://www.unr.edu/tutoring/> ), and University Writing Center (784-6030 or www.unr.edu/writing_center <http://www.unr.edu/writing_center> ). These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student.

Statement on Audio and Video Recording: "Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded."