413A Sociolinguistics
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3. Supplemental articles 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 imparts a great deal of information about our own social identities and that of others in our speech communities. In essence, we will aim to discover how language lends itself to such manipulation by speakers and how we are able to translate very subtle, and often unconscious, variability into signals of social category membership such as age, status, gender and ethnicity. As this course progresses, we will not only be seeking to understand how speakers are able to exploit linguistic resources to serve both functional and social roles but also seek to explain how and why such variation comes to and continues to exist in our speech communities. We will also look at how such variation is often judged by other members of the larger speech community and how the complex intersection of language and society leads to the stigmatization or prestige of linguistic varieties and their speakers.

Course Structure:
During the course of the semester, we will explore sociolinguistic issues and perspectives by reading primary research articles and through our own fieldwork and research on a sociolinguistic topic. We will explore the procedures and methods involved in both conducting sociolinguistic research and in analyzing the results through several ‘mini-research’ projects. In addition, there will be a midterm and a final on the subject matter covered in the course.

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.

Student Learning Outcomes
Students will be able to:
- Define key concepts in dialect geography and variationist sociolinguistics
- Articulate, in written materials and in class discussion, the different approaches of researchers and laypersons to the study of regional and social dialects
- Recognize the role of varied social and linguistic perspectives on language variation and language subordination.
- Display through class presentations and written materials an informed perspective on the question of how race, gender, age, class and ethnicity are enacted and reproduced through linguistic variation
- Show mastery of basic field based methodological concepts and the scientific method through their own fieldwork and research on a sociolinguistic topic.
- Identify, through class discussion and written materials, the main forces behind the evolution of regional and social dialects

REQUIREMENTS:

**Participation- (10%)** As a discussion-based course, participation and attendance are MANDATORY elements to successful completion of the semester. I will allow two unexcused absences per term. If you have an upcoming issue that will interfere with attending class, please arrange to meet with me to discuss the issue before you miss class.

**Quizzes- (10%)** The timely reading of course materials is absolutely essential to this course. If you haven’t read it, you don’t have any foundation to participate in class discussions. Therefore, to ensure text and article selections are read when they are assigned, I will be giving frequent quizzes. These quizzes are designed mainly to check whether you have read the materials and should provide easy good grades to those keeping up with the required readings.

**Group Leader- (10%)** When it is your turn as discussion group leader, you will be expected to synthesize the week’s readings and to prepare a series of 6 to 8 questions critically probing that week’s issues that you will subsequently ask and discuss with your fellow students. You should each incorporate into the discussion at least one (pre-approved) additional outside reading on the topic. A guide on how to prepare for your group leader role is posted on Webcampus.

**Mini-research projects (2)- (20%)** At different points in the semester, you will be asked to do mini-research projects (topics and procedures developed in class). These are not rigid assignments- I want you to use this as a chance to think about what’s going on around you and to develop sound and methodologically appropriate ways to collect and analyze data. We will discuss each assignment in class and additional handouts will be posted on Webcampus.

**Exams- (50%)** You will have a midterm and a final exam. These will be mainly short answer and essay format.

**Graduate student requirements:**
In addition to completing most undergraduate requirements, 613A students will be expected to complete an end of term research paper on a pre-approved sociolinguistic topic of their choice. Paper proposals including brief bibliography, introduction and methodology sections (1-2 pages) must be submitted to me for approval by the date listed on the schedule. Requested revisions must be addressed and re-submitted within two weeks. The mini-research projects should be particularly helpful in acquainting you with the methods and styles employed in sociolinguistic research. You will also be expected to present your research results to the rest of the class at the end of the semester.

**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 %
| Week 1: 1/22 | VH Ch. 1. | Introduction  
|             |          | Why are we so linguistically variable?? 
|             |          | What is sociolinguistics? |
| Week 2: 1/27-29 | W&S Ch. 1, VH Ch. 2 | Defining language, dialect and speech community  
|                 |          | **Group Leaders (GL) assigned** |
| Week 3: 2/3-5 | W&S Ch. 2, RR: Roberts, Paul. | What creates regional dialects?  
|                 |          | A Brief history of English- Why does language evolve over time?  
|                 |          | Discussion of 1st class research project assignment |
| Week 4: 2/10-12 | W&S Chs. 4 & 5 | A closer look at regional dialects in America.  
|                 |          | How we got to be talking like we do and why we differ (GL)  
|                 |          | **First Group leader presentations Wed** |
| Week 5: 2/17-19 | RR: Wald and Shopen | Research design and data collection: field methods and best practices (Mini-research project development) |
| Week 6: 2/24-26 | RR: Reed and Reed, RR: Bucholtz et al | More on regional dialects: the history and evolution of California/Nevada speech (GL)  
|                 |          | Projects due Wed. |
| Week 7: 3/3-5 | VH Ch. 4 & 5, W&S Ch. 6, p167-190 | Social dialects: how and why we develop class and prestige (GL)  
|                 |          | **GRADUATE PAPER PROPOSALS DUE** |
| Week 8: 3/10-12 | VH Ch. 5, RR: Tagliamonte | More on social dialects: The role of age and language change (GL)  
|                 |          | Why young people lead in linguistic change |
| Week 9: 3/17-19 | | SPRING BREAK |
| Week 10: 3/24-26 | W&S Ch. 4, p. 124-132 | EXAM 1  
|                 |          | Where are American dialects headed? Social and linguistic influences on contemporary speech  
|                 |          | 2nd Research project discussion |
| Week 11: 3/31-4/2 | RR: Labov (atlas paper) | Vowel changes across time and in contemporary speech: Shifting how we look at regional differences  
Dialects and style  (GL) |
| Week 12: 4/7-9 | W&S Ch. 9 (p276-end)  
VH Ch. 8 | The social returns: Dialects and linguistic style  (GL)  
How speech performs identity and the influence linguistic gatekeeping |
| Week 13: 4/14-16 | W&S Ch. 6, p. 190-210  
RR: Purnell, T., Isardi, W., & Baugh | The relationships between language and ethnicity (GL)  
and understanding language attitudes |
| Week 14: 4/21-23 | W&S Ch. 7  
VH Ch. 6 | The development of African-American dialects (GL)  
Understanding the linguistic facts  
**2nd Mini-research project due** |
| Week 15: 4/29-30 | W&S Ch. 8  
VH Ch. 7 | How gender and language intersect (GL)  
The gender order and potential linguistic outcomes |
| Week 16: 5/5 | | EXAM 2 |

**Finals Week: 5/12**  
Grad paper presentations.  
**10:15-12:15 pm.**  
**ATTENDANCE REQUIRED**

Academic dishonesty policy: Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in any form. Please see [http://www.unr.edu/stsv/acdispol.html](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.

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 have been given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.