

Language in Society
Class Time: M,W 4:30-5:50
Class Location: Cobb Hall 119
Section: 12:30-1:20 Cobb Hall 219
Instructor: Professor/Dr. Sharese King; sharesek@uchicago.edu, Office Hours: T 11-1
Teaching Assistant: Tran Truong; elixir@uchicago.edu, Office Hours: Th 2-3

Course Description

How can we infer a person's background based on their voice alone? What distinguishes dialects? Why are certain language varieties stigmatized, while others are not? In this introduction to sociolinguistics, or the study of language in its social context, we will answer these questions and more. Observing how language varies across various social categories including region, age, class, gender, and race, you will learn the approaches sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists have used to study linguistic variation. Together, we examine how different power relations shape language attitudes and ideologies around particular language varieties, as well as some of the educational, political, and social repercussions of language variation and standardization. To engage in these discussions, we consult studies in the field, as well as empirical data from a range of sources including students' linguistic intuitions, social media data, and/or speech samples from interviews or other recordings.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify the language ideologies attached to specific varieties and discuss them with respect to power dynamics at play in the society
- Understand what a linguistic variable is and recognize sociolinguists' quantitative approaches to studying them
- Read a scholarly text and provide sound critiques
- Develop your own research question couched in the field's literature

Required Texts:

Readings provided through *Canvas*.

Requirements & Grading:

Participation (20%) 20 points

Class Attendance (15%): Students are expected to attend all classes insofar as learning the material relies on in-class discussions. Students are allowed 2 unexcused absences, but more

than 2 unexcused absences results in half of a letter grade deduction from your total participation grade (ex. B+ → B).

Workshop Attendance (5%): Students are expected to attend one linguistic talk which could either be a departmental workshop or colloquium talk.

Linguistic Discrimination (5%) 5 points

Students will identify examples of linguistic discrimination employed across a range of sources like television shows, movies, skits, memes, song lyrics, etc. You will be asked to do a write-up on your example of choice. More information will be provided in class.

Quiz & Reading Responses (35%, 1 quiz 5% & 3 papers each worth 10%) 35 points

The Syllabus Quiz will be administered in the section the first week of class.

Response papers will require you to follow the outline I have prepared for you in the document on Canvas labeled *Response Paper Breakdown*. You will be graded on your ability to summarize, critique, and ask poignant follow-up questions.

****Each response paper is due on Sunday before 7 pm****

We will do our best to return assignments to you by the following Wednesday night, but will let you know ahead of time if that changes.

Project (40%, 10% for project description, 10% for presentation, 20% for write-up) 40 points

You will be asked to construct your own project proposal that builds on some paper from the course readings. The paper needn't be a required text discussed in class. The goal of this assignment is to teach students how to synthesize original research questions into coherent proposals that they can use for future coursework or theses projects. Detailed project instructions will be included on *Canvas*.

No incompletes will be given for this course, unless a medical emergency arises and proper documentation has been provided.

Class Policies:

Email

Please allow up to 2 days to respond to emails. Questions regarding absences or grades should be directed to Professor King.

Late Assignments

Since I will be using students' responses to the readings in class, it is imperative that responses be submitted the Sunday before class by 7 pm. Assignments will be docked a letter grade each day it is late (A -> B). If you are unable to submit the assignment on time due to extenuating circumstances, please get in touch with the professor or the TA before the due date.

This excludes the final papers for which there are no extensions.

Academic Integrity

I do not anticipate any problems with academic integrity, but to avoid academic dishonesty, feel free to consult with me before completing assignments if you have concerns about the correct way to reference the work of others. More generally, please familiarize yourself with the [University's policy on academic honesty](#), which applies to this course. In the unlikely event that any concerns do arise regarding this matter, I will forward all related materials to the Office of the Provost for further review and action.

Documented Disabilities

Having an inclusive and accessible classroom environment for all students is a top priority in this classroom, so students who need disability accommodations should present the necessary paperwork to me at the beginning of the quarter, or as soon as such paperwork can be arranged. For further information, visit the University's [Student Disability Services Office](#) website.

Laptop Policy

Access to the Internet can be a valuable aid to the classroom learning environment, but please use with discretion. While you are encouraged to use a laptop, smart phone, or other device to explore topics related to the course content we are discussing, please avoid the temptation of social-media, texting, or other off-topic diversions.

<u>Week</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
1	4/1	Accents & language Ideologies	Lippi-Green (2012) <i>The standard language myth</i> Wolfram & Shilling (2016) <i>Dialects, Standards, & Vernaculars</i>	Syllabus Quiz
	4/3			
2	4/8	Language variation & social categories	Fischer (1958) <i>Social influences on the choice of a linguistic variant</i> Labov (1963) <i>The Social Motivations of Sound Change</i>	Linguistic Discrimination Due Wednesday (4/10) by 7 pm
	4/10			
3	4/15	Communities of practice	Eckert (1988) <i>Adolescent Social Structure</i> Rickford (1986) <i>The Need for New Approaches to Social Class</i> Bucholtz (2009) <i>'Why be Normal?'</i>	Response Paper Due Sunday (4/15) by 7 pm
	4/17			
4	4/22	Social meaning & style	Podesva (2007) <i>Phonation Type as a Stylistic Variable</i> Eckert (2012) <i>Three Waves of Variation</i> D'Onofrio (2015) <i>Persona-based information</i>	
	4/24			
5	4/29	Language & Regionality (Guest lecture)	Labov (1972) <i>The social stratification of /r/</i> Johnstone, Andrus, & Danielson (2006) <i>Mobility, Indexicality, and the Enregisterment of "Pittsburghese"</i> Reed (2015) <i>Rootedness</i>	Response Paper Due Sunday (4/28) by 7 pm
	5/1			
6	5/6			

	5/8	Language Change & Age	<p>Bailey (2002) <i>Real & Apparent Time</i></p> <p>Harrington (2006) <i>An acoustic analysis of 'happy-tensing' in the Queen's Christmas broadcasts</i></p> <p>Krecji & Hilton (2017) <i>There's three variants</i></p>	Project Proposal Description Due Wednesday (5/8)
7	5/13	Language & Race (Authenticity, Crossing, style-shifting)	<p>Chun (2001) <i>The construction of white, black and Korean American identities</i></p>	Response Paper Due Sunday (5/12) by 7 pm
	5/15		<p>Alim & Smitherman (2012) <i>Nah we Straight</i></p> <p>Rickford & King (2016) <i>Linguistics on Trial</i></p>	
8	5/20	Language and Gender	<p>Butler (1988) <i>Performative acts and gender constitution</i></p>	
	5/22		<p>Hall (1992) <i>Women's language for sale</i></p> <p>Calder (2018) <i>The fierceness of fronted /s/</i></p>	
9	5/27	***No Class Monday	<p>Pratt & D'Onofrio (2017) <i>Jaw Setting and the CVS</i></p>	
	5/29	Language and The Body (Semiotic Resources)	<p>Mendoza-Denton (1996) <i>Muy Macha</i></p>	
10	6/3	Presentations		Final Project write-ups Due by June 10
	6/5			