

LING 432/532: SOCIOLINGUISTICS (SPRING 2011)

TTH 4:40-6:30PM CLY 102

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Course description and objectives

This course provides an overview of the field of sociolinguistics – studying language in its social context and looking at how linguistic choices are associated with social and situational characteristics. The course is designed to

1. increase your awareness of the ways that language and social contexts interact and develop your ability to explain some of these interactions to other people – both other linguists and the general public
2. increase your understanding of concepts, terminology, and research paradigms which are important in understanding sociolinguistic work
3. strengthen your ability to apply sociolinguistic principles and research in teaching, workplace, and everyday situations
4. give you practice with some analytical techniques in sociolinguistic work
5. allow you to focus more detailed attention on a single sociolinguistic topic that is currently an important political/social issue

The approaches that we will use in considering the interaction of language and society will be drawn from related disciplines, including anthropology (the ethnography of speaking) and social psychology. Although most of the language data we will consider will be drawn from the English language and American culture, we will also examine the sociolinguistics of other languages and cultures.

This course requires very little previous knowledge of linguistics, although students must have taken an introductory linguistics course (Ling 232 or 390) before the start of the course. Evaluation will be based on individual and group quizzes, applications, 1 small research project, and possibly a take-home final exam. Graduate students are expected to also complete 2 article reviews of research of their own interest.

Required Text

Wardhaugh, Ronald. 2010. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (6th ed.). Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Selected readings from articles available through your own research abilities and the PSU library.

Responsibilities

This is an upper-level/graduate-level course, and I expect you to behave in ways that maximize your and others' learning, including:

- take responsibility and initiative in doing all the work and doing it on time.
- be prepared for each class (including doing the readings before class).
- turn off your cell phone during class.
- actively and cooperatively participate in class activities.
- ask questions when you have them, but don't monopolize class time with personal issues.
- seek help when you need it.
- don't miss class – or if you have an emergency, talk with me about work to make up, and get notes from other students.
- keep up-to-date with any schedule changes that are announced, even if you are late or miss a class.

Plagiarism

Often this class will require group work, and I encourage you to discuss work with your classmates. However, anything with your name on it should reflect your active participation, your words, and your understanding. If you feel uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism in American universities, talk with me about it so that you do not unintentionally commit it. Students are expected to follow PSU's Code of Student Conduct and Responsibility, particularly §577-031-0135 and §577-031-0136, which can be found at <http://www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct#code>. Violations of the code will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Student Life.

Academic Accommodations

To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the Portland State University Disability Resource Center, (503) 725-4150; (503) 725-6504 (TTY); drc@pdx.edu, <http://drc.pdx.edu/>. If you have a letter from the DRC indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodation, please present it to me ASAP so we can discuss the accommodations you might need in class.

Late assignments are strongly discouraged, although I will give extensions provided that you contact me **before** the assignment is due and your lateness is due to matters beyond your control (sickness, death in the family, etc.). Other late assignments will be accepted but knocked down a full grade, e.g., "A" to "B" and will also receive low priority for grading.

Evaluation. Grades will be decided on the following basis: (*Group learning experiences)

20	Individual Quiz scores (4 quizzes throughout term)*
40	Group Quiz scores (4 quizzes throughout term)*
30	Applications (3 X 10 each)*
10	Evaluation of self and group*
5	Proof of retrieved articles
40	Language Attitudes project
40	Final Exam
40	Grad student article critiques (2 X 20 points each)

Undergrads	Total = 185	Grads	Total = 205
A	170-185	A	190-205
A-	165-169	A-	185-189
B+	160-164	B+	180-184
B	150-159	B	170-179
B-	145-149	B-	165-169
C+	140-144	C+	160-164
C	135-139	C	150-159
C-	130-134	C-	145-149
D/F	Below 130	D/F	Below 145

Remember, B or better is passing for the MA TESOL program, and C or better is passing for the TESL Certificate/BA in Applied Linguistics.

Class participation is an important component of this course. Regular attendance, therefore, is crucial. Not only should you come to class prepared in terms of the reading or other assignment, but you should come ready to contribute actively to class discussion. You should also willingly contribute to class discussion and, perhaps more important, attentively listen to the contributions of others. Be conscious of letting everyone having a chance to say something and accord them the same attention and respect that you expect to receive. Only two unexcused absences will not be counted against this part of your grade. Each absence after that will affect your participation grade. I will excuse absences if you let me know AHEAD of time that you will not be there (email, phone message, etc.).

Group learning experience – We will be using a group learning experience method for understanding some of the material. On the first class, groups will be formed. These groups will be the ones that you take group quizzes with, do applications with, and evaluate. There will be 4 quizzes throughout the term. First, each student will take each quiz individually. Right after those quizzes are handed in, each group will meet and take the quiz again as a group. This provides a venue for discussion. In order to establish equality in the groups, if any student's individual quiz score for the 4 quizzes is LOWER than 50% of the total 4 group quiz scores, that student will have ALL of their quiz points based on **only** their individual quiz scores (they will not get the benefit of the group scores as this indicates they did not contribute well to the group to begin with). There will also be 3 in-class applications during the term where groups meet and discuss a topic provided by the instructor, as well as answer some questions that will be turned in (OK to email me the day after, but do not spend time outside of class working on these). Finally, each group member will fill out an evaluation form for their group as well as themselves. The form will be provided at the class webpage at a later date.

Proof of retrieved articles – The article list will be given on Thursday 3/31. Students are required to bring proof that they have located and accessed these articles by Thursday 4/7 (you can show me the articles on your laptop or print the first page of each article and bring it to class).

Language Attitudes Projects. We will be examining different aspects in which language and society interact. There will be 4 social differences that you can pick from to conduct your

research. The 4 areas are: Regional differences [Region]; Language Change/Slang/Style differences [Age]; Ethnic/Racial differences [Ethnicity]; and Gender differences [Gender]. These projects should be done in a group of 3-5. They will be developed as we go along, but include the following.

- **A survey question** – This question, based on the readings, should be something like: “Do you think men and women talk differently? How so?” or “Do you think people in Portland talk correctly? Is it pleasant?”
- **Sample** – You need to ask this question to at least 40 people per group. It is best if you just ask random people on or off campus, but you can use friends or family members living in Portland for a maximum of half of your sample. We will talk about techniques to do this. Try to balance your sample equally between men and women. You should also guess/provide other social info like age and ethnicity. If you can ask or find out what their occupations are too, that may provide some social class information. Also, where is the person from (where did they go to elementary and high school).
- **Written Presentation** – You and/or your group should gather all of the responses together (make a table with what people answered what) and turn in a written paper. This should include your question, and who you asked this question to (how many people and include all the social info you have – again a table format is best). Also, you should show your results and then include a short analysis. This includes if your results show any social relationships (e.g., men think one thing but women another). Also, how do your results compare to the readings.
- **Oral Reporting** – Groups will be expected to provide a quick oral report of their findings for each project in an informal class discussion.

Final Exam – These will be discussed in more detail during the term, however both undergraduates and graduates should participate in a final exam. This will be a take-home exam distributed near the end of the term and will be due by Wednesday, June 8, by 12 noon in my box in the Linguistics office (East Hall 224).

Grad article review – Due to the immense amount of research in the field, graduate students are required to locate 2 articles based on their interests and write a 2-3 page article critique per article. You can use a chapter in an edited book. Please discuss with me your interests so I can point you in the right direction (interest topics due by Thursday, April 14). Journals that will be useful are *Language Variation and Change*, *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *Language in Society*, *American Speech*.