

## **Linguistics 120: Language and Discrimination**

Lawrence University, Spring 2012

MWF 11:10-12:20 pm

211 Main Hall

**Instructor:** Christopher Odato

**Office:** 411 Main Hall

**Office Phone:**

**E-mail:**

**Office Hours:** MF 1:45-2:45, and by appointment

**Course Web Site:** <http://moodle.lawrence.edu>

### **Course Description:**

This course examines the ways language serves as a potential site of social statement and, sometimes, social conflict, particularly with respect to questions of “race” and ethnicity. We will explore issues concerning language-based discrimination in various public and private contexts, multilingualism, regional and ethnically-linked dialects, and ideologies about language and language variation. The class will also examine ways in which language is used to construct and reflect social identities and social group boundaries, and discuss how different aspects of social identity relate to language practice. Although we will discuss concepts specific to the field of linguistics, it will not be assumed that students are already familiar with these concepts.

### **Objectives:**

In this course, you will:

1. Critically analyze your own and others’ beliefs about language.
2. Interpret findings of published research examining the relationship between language and social perception.
3. Conduct original research by applying concepts discussed in the course to the analysis of novel data.
4. Develop knowledge that you can use to make informed contributions to public discourse about language.

### **Required Readings:**

There is one required textbook for this course; additional required readings are listed on page 6 and are available in electronic form through Moodle.

*Textbook:* Lippi-Green, Rosina. 2012. *English with an accent*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. New York: Routledge.

### **Course Requirements:**

The assignments for this course are designed to provide you with opportunities to (1) develop your analysis skills by applying concepts and theories discussed in the course and in the readings to novel data, (2) think critically about the assigned readings and practice interpreting the results of published research, (3) think critically and contribute to productive discussions about the nature of language and its role in public life.

*Data collection activities.* Over the course of the term you will complete three data collection activities in which you conduct small bits of research, such as interviewing or surveying friends and acquaintances about a particular issue or documenting the use of a particular linguistic phenomenon. We will analyze the data that you collect in activities in class. You will submit a copy of the data you collect on Moodle and bring a hard copy to class on the day that it is due. The electronic copy must be submitted by the beginning of class on the due date (i.e., no later than 11:10). I will provide more details about each of the assignments approximately two weeks prior to the due date.

*Tiny reading quizzes.* The tiny reading quizzes are an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the assigned readings. Each will consist of 2-4 questions. Quizzes will be administered online through Moodle and are to be completed before the beginning of class on the day they are due (see schedule). Quizzes will be available approximately one week prior to the due date. You will have only one opportunity to take each quiz. Quizzes are open book/notes, so you are free to consult any materials you find helpful. You may also work with other people on the quizzes, provided you give the names of the people who worked together and how you each contributed to taking the quiz (there will be a question on the quiz where you can indicate this). However, even if you work together, each of you must complete and submit your own quiz. Each quiz should take no more than a few minutes to complete if you have done the reading and prepared beforehand. There will be 18 tiny reading quizzes, each worth two points toward your final grade; the lowest 3 quiz grades will be dropped.

*Exams.* There will be a midterm and a final exam in this course. The midterm exam will be given in class on Wednesday, May 2. The final exam will be held during the scheduled final exam period: Monday, June 4 11:30-2:00. Exams will consist primarily of short answers and essay questions. The final exam will be cumulative in the sense that you will have the opportunity to demonstrate your ability to synthesize and evaluate the issues we have discussed throughout the term. I will provide more information about the exams closer to the exam dates.

*Weekly online discussion forums.* Each week during the term I will post a question in a discussion forum on the Moodle site that will give you an opportunity to review and synthesize the information covered that week. You will be responsible for posting a response to the discussion question each week. These responses do not need to be long—one paragraph is sufficient—but should demonstrate thoughtful consideration of the question and should clearly demonstrate that you have thought about the material discussed in class. For grading purposes I will rate the posts as ‘complete’ if they are satisfactory or ‘incomplete’ if they are lacking in some way; a rating of ‘incomplete’ will receive half credit. Responses must be posted by midnight each Friday to receive credit. You should also read other students’ questions before coming to class the following week so that you are prepared to participate fully in discussions.

**Grading:**

Grades for this course will be based on a 100-point scale; points will be allocated to the various graded activities as follows:

Tiny Reading Quizzes	30 points
Data Collection Activities	15 points
Midterm Exam	20 points
Final Exam	25 points
Forum Participation	10 points
<hr/> TOTAL	<hr/> 100 points

Final grades will be based on the sum of points earned for all graded assignments. At the end of the term, cumulative points totals will translate to letter grades as follows:

94-100 pts	A	74-76 pts	C
90-93 pts	A-	70-73 pts	C-
87-89 pts	B+	67-69 pts	D+
84-86 pts	B	64-66 pts	D
80-83 pts	B-	60-63 pts	D-
77-79 pts	C+	< 60 pts	F

**Course Policies:**

*Attendance.* Regular, on-time attendance is in every way expected, and is the only way to fully participate in the course. Although attendance will not factor directly into your grade, I will take daily attendance. I will not instruct students in office hours on material missed due absence.

*Late Work.* Assignments will be turned in online through Moodle unless otherwise noted. Late assignments will not be accepted without an outstanding reason unless you have made a prior arrangement with me. If there is a reason that you feel might affect your ability to complete the assignment on time, I am happy to discuss the situation with you ahead of the due date and arrange for an extension if that is appropriate.

*Test Policy.* My policy is that students remain in the classroom while exams, except as required by any academic accommodations.

*Classroom Environment.* Some of the topics that we will discuss in this course are challenging and potentially sensitive. It is important that we maintain an open and respectful environment during our discussions and that everyone should feel comfortable participating and that they and their opinions are respected, even if others disagree with them. If at any point you feel that this environment is in danger or that the classroom environment is presenting a barrier to your full participation in the course, please come see me as soon as possible so that we can work together to remedy the situation.

*Office Hours & Appointments.* I am available during my office hours to answer questions or discuss anything about this course, or linguistics in general. If your schedule makes it impossible for you to come to my scheduled office hours, please e-mail me to arrange an appointment at a

mutually convenient alternate time. Please include in your e-mail several potential meeting times when you will be available and keep in mind that it is unlikely that I will be able to make an appointment less than 48 hours in advance.

*E-mail.* E-mail is the best way to contact me with short questions, comments, or to make appointments. I cannot respond to longer or more complicated questions/issues by e-mail, but I am happy to discuss them with you in office hours or to make a separate appointment if you are unable to come to office hours. I will make an effort to respond to e-mail as soon as possible and during the week you can usually expect a response within 24 hours. Though I may sometimes be able to respond to e-mail received over the weekend, please do not expect to hear from me between Friday afternoon and Monday morning or during vacations. When sending e-mail, please include a descriptive subject (e.g., "Ling 120 Reading").

*Accommodations.* If you have any specific needs that must be met in order for you to participate fully in the course, including a documented need for accommodations due to physical, learning, or other disabilities, please let me know at the beginning of the term so that we can make arrangements for accommodations.

*Honor Code/Academic Integrity.* You are all aware of the Lawrence University Honor Code. Scholastic dishonesty documented on any work for this course will be referred to the honor council. If you have any question about what type(s) of collaboration, if any, may be permitted on any assignment for this course, it is your responsibility to consult with me ahead of time to confirm that you are within the assignment parameters. You should be particularly aware of plagiarism. Plagiarism is a form of cheating in which you use someone else's ideas and/or words (including those of your roommate, classmate, parent, significant other etc.) without proper citation of the source. It is plagiarism regardless of whether the material comes from a printed source, from the Internet or from a lecture or a friend: If you got the idea from someone else, you must cite the source properly—and this is true even if you aren't using the source's exact wording. If you are at all unsure about proper ways to cite the source(s) of information you are using, be sure to consult me or another resource; the writing tutors at the CTL can also assist you.

**Schedule:**

This schedule is subject to change as necessary; students will be made aware of any changes as far in advance as possible. Readings should be completed before class on the day they are listed. Discussion forums are not listed in this schedule, but forum posts should be submitted each Friday by midnight.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Assignments Due</i>
Mar. 26	First day		
Mar. 28	Linguistic “facts of life”	Lippi-Green Ch. 1	Quiz 1
Mar. 30	Language variation	Lippi-Green Ch. 2	
Apr. 2	Language variation	Wolfram & Schilling-Estes	Quiz 2
Apr. 4	Prescription & standardization	Lippi-Green Ch. 3	
Apr. 6		Lippi-Green Ch. 4	Quiz 3
Apr. 9	Prescription & standardization	Milroy & Milroy	Quiz 4
Apr. 11			Data Activity 1
Apr. 13	Language subordination	Lippi-Green Ch. 5	Quiz 5
Apr. 16	Language & education	Lippi-Green Ch. 6	Quiz 6
Apr. 18		Rubin	
Apr. 20	Language & media	Lippi-Green Ch. 7	Quiz 7
Apr. 23	Language & media	Lippi-Green Ch. 8	Quiz 8
Apr. 25	Language & the law	Lippi-Green Ch. 9	Quiz 9
Apr. 27	Political correctness / hate speech	Cameron pp. 116-148	Quiz 10
Apr. 30	Political correctness / hate speech		Data Activity 2
May 2	Midterm Exam (in class)		
May 4	<i>No Class – Midterm Reading Period</i>		
May 7	Language & race/class/ethnicity	Lippi-Green Ch. 10	Quiz 11
May 9		Alim	Quiz 12
May 11		Lippi-Green Ch. 16	Quiz 13
May 14	Language & race/class/ethnicity	Lippi-Green Ch. 11	Quiz 14
May 16		Lippi-Green Ch. 12	Quiz 15
May 18		Lippi-Green Ch. 13	
May 21	Language & race/class/ethnicity	Lippi-Green Ch. 14	Quiz 16
May 23			Data Activity 3
May 25	Linguistic profiling	Lippi-Green Ch. 17	Quiz 17
May 28	<i>No Class – Memorial Day</i>		
May 30	Linguistic profiling	Purnell et al.	Quiz 18
Jun. 1	Wrap-up		
Jun. 4	Final Exam 11:30-2:00		

**Additional Required Readings:**

- Alim, H. S. (2005). Hearing what's not said and missing what is: Black language in White public space. In S. F. Kiesling & C. B. Paulston (Eds.), *Intercultural discourse and communication: The essential readings* (pp. 180-197). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Cameron, D. (1995). Civility and Its discontents: Language and 'political correctness'. *Verbal Hygiene* (pp. 116-165). London: Routledge.
- Milroy, J., & Milroy, L. (1999). Prescription and Standardisation. *Authority in Language* (pp. 1-46). London: Routledge.
- Purnell, T., Idsardi, W., & Baugh, J. (1999). Perceptual and phonetic experiments on American English dialect identification. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 18, 10-30. doi: 10.1177/0261927X99018001002
- Rubin, D. L. (1992). Nonlanguage factors affecting undergraduates' judgments of nonnative English-speaking teaching assistants. *Research in Higher Education*, 33, 511-531.
- Wolfram, W., & Schilling-Estes, N. (1998). Social and ethnic dialects. *American English: Dialects and variation* (pp. 151-184). Malden, MA: Blackwell.