

## **Linguistics 325: Introduction to Sociolinguistics**

Lawrence University, Fall 2011

TR 9:00-10:50 am

306 Main Hall

**Instructor:** Christopher Odato

**Office:** 411 Main Hall

**Phone:**

**E-mail:**

**Office Hours:** TR 11 am - noon and by appointment

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

### **Course Description:**

This course presents an introduction to sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics is a discipline within the field of linguistics concerned with the systematic investigation of human language in relation to the social world. Sociolinguists are broadly concerned with examining how our understanding of language can be informed through a consideration of the social contexts in which language is produced and interpreted. In this course we will discuss several of the topics that sociolinguists have studied, including language variation and change, the relationships between social identity and language use, linguistic diversity, language contact, and the connections of these issues to ideologies about language. We will also examine and practice some of the methods for collecting and analyzing data that researchers have used. Throughout, we will also consider how the knowledge gained through this research can inform other academic disciplines, professional life, and public discourse more generally.

### **Objectives:**

In this course, you will:

1. Identify research questions appropriate to the discipline of sociolinguistics and explain why they are important, i.e., how answering them could contribute to an understanding of the nature of human language.
2. Practice some of the methods that sociolinguists use to collect and analyze data.
3. Critically read and evaluate published research in sociolinguistics.
4. Synthesize results from prior research in sociolinguistics and use this knowledge to propose an original research project.

### **Required Readings:**

There are two required books for this course:

*Textbook:* Meyerhoff, Miriam. 2011. *Introducing Sociolinguistics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. London/New York: Routledge.

*Reader:* Meyerhoff, Miriam & Erik Schlee. 2010. *The Routledge Sociolinguistics Reader*. London/New York: Routledge.

Occasional supplemental readings will be announced in class and distributed in class and/or through Moodle.

**Course requirements:**

Broadly speaking, the requirements for this course are attendance, engagement with the material (in readings and in activities that we do in class), participation, and several assignments. The assignments for this course are designed to provide you with opportunities to (1) develop and demonstrate your ability to engage with published research, (2) practice methods of data collection and analysis and apply them to answering research questions, and (3) contribute to productive discussions about the nature of language and its role in public life. The specific requirements are:

*Reading & Participation.* Active participation in class is the way in which you and your fellow students will receive the greatest benefit from this course. Thus the most basic, and important expectation is that you be in class and be prepared to discuss the assigned readings. This means that you will have read all the material before you come to class and that you will have thought about it with respect to the basic concerns of the course. I do not intend to spend much time lecturing; rather, I expect that we will engage together to understand the work that we read, the author's goals, and its consequences for our understanding of language and its relationship to the social world. Other specific expectations related to participation include:

- Contribute to discussions about the readings
- Complete ungraded in- and out-of-class tasks (exercises, etc.)
- Meet with me during office hours (or by appointment) at least once during the term

We will create a rubric for assessing participation and, at the end of the term, each student will complete a self-assessment of their participation in the class; the final grade for the participation will be the average of the instructor's assessment and the student's self-assessment.

*Weekly discussion questions.* Each week, before class, I will ask that you submit discussion questions about that week's textbook reading to a discussion forum on the Moodle site; you should also read other students' questions before coming to class. This will assist in your preparation for our in-class discussions and will help me to be sure that we focus on topics that are most interesting and/or challenging to understand. You can forget to submit questions once during the term without penalty to your grade.

*In-class presentation of article.* Each student will give an in-class presentation of a published article once during the term. The presentation will take the form of a presentation that you might give at an academic conference. We will create a rubric for assessing these presentations and each student will complete a self-assessment of their presentation; the final grade for the presentation will be the average of the instructor's assessment and the student's self-assessment.

*Methods-related writing assignments.* Over the course of the semester you will complete three written assignments:

- Sociolinguistic interview (due Friday, September 30 @ midnight)
- Quantitative analysis (data due Mon., Oct. 10 @ midnight; write-up due Wed., Oct. 19 @ midnight)
- Qualitative analysis (due Friday, November 4 @ midnight)

Each of these will involve practicing some aspect of the research process, usually interacting with and analyzing data. They will sometimes build on in-class data exploration activities. The

grade for each assignment will be partly based on completion of the necessary data collection and/or analysis.

*Research proposal.* In place of a final exam or traditional term paper, the final project for this course will be a brief research proposal focused on a sociolinguistic topic of your choosing. In your proposal you will identify a research question appropriate to the field of sociolinguistics, explain why it is important, and propose a research project designed to answer that question, including the methods for collecting and analyzing data. We will begin working on this project early in the semester with in-class opportunities throughout the term for you to work together on the various pieces of the proposal (crafting your research questions, thinking about methods, etc.). You will earn part of your grade for the proposal by being prepared for the various steps in this process. A sample research proposal is available on Moodle; I recommend that you look at it relatively early in the term so that you have a sense of what is expected on this assignment.

### **Grading:**

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

Weekly discussion questions	5 points
In-class presentation of article	10 points
Methods-related assignments (3)	45 points (15 each)
Research proposal	25 points (20 points for the final proposal, 5 for process)
Participation	15 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:

98-100 pts	A+	74-76 pts	C
94-97 pts	A	70-73 pts	C-
90-93 pts	A-	67-69 pts	D+
87-89 pts	B+	64-66 pts	D
84-86 pts	B	60-63 pts	D-
80-83 pts	B-	< 60 pts	F
77-79 pts	C+		

### **Course Policies:**

*Attendance.* Regular, on-time attendance is expected and required, and it is impossible to participate in class if you are not present. However, I do recognize that situations sometimes arise that are out of your control and require attention. If you must miss class I ask that you let me know ahead of time that you will be absent. If you miss more than 1 or 2 class meetings (2 class meetings is more than 10% of the course), you should be sure to meet with me to discuss the situation and your progress in the course.

*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.

*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 325 Homework").

*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, be sure to consult with me. 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 in advance):

*Reading:* Students in jigsaw group A should read those article marked (A); those in group B should read the articles marked (B).

Readings not marked (A) or (B) are from the Meyerhoff textbook; everyone should do those.

*Discussion questions:* The weekly discussion questions are not listed in the ‘Assignments Due’ column, but they should be posted every Monday by 5pm (except for the first week).

*Presentations:* In-class presentations will take place after reading period; the schedule for those will be finalized once I know how many students are in the course.

*Writing assignments:* Writing assignments are due by midnight on the dates indicated.

<i><b>Date</b></i>	<i><b>Topic</b></i>	<i><b>Reading</b></i>	<i><b>Assignments Due</b></i>
Sep. 13	First day		
Sep. 15	Variation	Meyerhoff Ch. 2; Schlee & Meyerhoff (A & B)	
Sep. 20	Style	Meyerhoff Ch. 3	
Sep. 22		Bell (A); Hay et al. (B)	Th: Bring three possible research topics
Sep. 27*	Attitudes	Meyerhoff Ch. 4	
Sep. 29		Buchstaller (A); Preston (B)	F: Sociolinguistic Interview
Oct. 4	Politeness	Meyerhoff Ch. 5	
Oct. 6		Laver (A); Ide (B)	Th: Bring 3 references for proposal
Oct. 11	Time	Meyerhoff Ch. 7	M: Quantitative Analysis Data
Oct. 13		Labov (A); Sankoff & Blondeau (B)	Th: Bring research questions for proposal
Oct. 18	Social class	Meyerhoff Ch. 8	W: Quantitative Analysis Write-up
Oct. 20	<i>No Class – Mid-Term Reading Period</i>		
Oct. 25	Social Networks	Meyerhoff Ch. 9	
Oct. 27		Kerswill & Williams (A); Milroy & Milroy (B)	Th: Bring outline of methods for proposal
Nov. 1	Gender	Meyerhoff Ch. 10	
Nov. 3		Ochs (A); Kiesling (B)	F: Qualitative Analysis
Nov. 8	Multilingualism	Meyerhoff Ch. 6	
Nov. 10		Kulick & Stroud (A); Blom & Gumperz (B)	Th: Bring intro to proposal
Nov. 15	Language contact	Meyerhoff Ch. 11	
Nov. 17		Meyerhoff & Niedzielski (A); Britain (B)	
Nov. 21	Research Proposal Due @ noon		

\* On Tuesday, September 27, we will meet in the library for a research instruction session with one of the reference librarians