University of Chicago

SOCIOLINGUISTICS
LING 26002/36002
Fall 2015
Room: SS-107
Date and Time: Tuesday/Thursday 1:30-2:50

Instructor: Dr. Laura Staum Casasanto
Office Hours: by appointment
E-mail: lcasasanto@uchicago.edu

TAs:
Jacob Phillips – jbphillips@uchicago.edu
Cherry Meyer – cherrym@uchicago.edu
TA office hours: by appointment

Course Description:
This course is an introduction to sociolinguistics, the study of language in its social context. We will look at variation at all levels of language and how this variation constructs and is constructed by identity and culture, including relationships between language and social class, language and gender, and language and ethnicity. We will also discuss language attitudes and ideologies, as well as some of the educational, political, and social repercussions of language variation and standardization.
Prerequisites: Introduction to Linguistics.

Readings:
Readings will be available on Chalk. These readings will be presented in class by students. Everyone should do all of the readings for each class meeting.

Grading:
Class Participation = 20%
In-Class Article Presentations = 30%
Article Response Paper = 30%
Final Project Presentation = 20%

Article Presentations and Response Papers:
• You will each do three 30-45 minute presentations on one of the articles on the syllabus, in pairs. Please choose a different partner for each of your three presentations.
• You should make a handout or a powerpoint presentation to support your oral presentation.
• You can assume that the class will have read the papers, so summarize the content only as necessary. Your presentation should include points of discussion for the class. Most importantly, try to help guide the group to discuss what this particular article/chapter teaches us that we didn’t know before, and whether its arguments are compelling.
• You will need to write a 5-7 page response to one of the articles you present, to be turned in a week after your last presentation. These will be done individually (each person in the presenting pair will turn in a separate response paper).
**Group Final Project:**
Final projects will be 15-minute presentations to the class of an idea for an original sociolinguistic study. It can use an existing corpus of data, or it can be a proposal to collect new data through ethnographic, experimental or other methods. Details will be discussed in class and more information will be posted on Chalk. Presentations will be made during the last two weeks of class. Projects can be done in groups of two or three students. Each group will turn in a 2-4 page summary of their proposed studies (one per group).

**Chalk:**
Readings will be made available on Chalk. Written assignments will also be submitted via Chalk. Students will be responsible for checking it regularly for course announcements/assignments.

**Feedback:**
Please feel free to email me at any time during the course with feedback on anything that could be improved. There will be a mid-quarter evaluation where you can provide feedback also if you prefer to give it anonymously.

**Course Schedule** (subject to change/revision):

**Week 1**
**September 29**
Intro (no reading)

**October 1 – The birth of sociolinguistics**
Fischer 1958 (everyone reads, TAs present)

**Week 2**

**October 6 – The Labovian Paradigm 1: Martha’s Vineyard**
Sociolinguistic Patterns Chapter 1: The Social Motivation of a Sound Change (Labov 1972)
The /ay/ diphthong in a Martha's Vineyard community: What can we say 40 years after Labov? (Blake & Josey 2003)

**October 8 – The Labovian Paradigm 2: New York City**
Sociolinguistic Patterns Chapter 2: The Social Stratification of (r) in New York City Department Stores (Labov 1972)
The linguistic consequences of being a lame (Labov 1972)

**Week 3**

**October 13 – Social Class**
The need for new approaches to social class analysis in sociolinguistics. (Rickford 1986). Chapters 2 and 5, Linguistic Variation as Social Practice (Eckert 2000)

**October 15 – Standardization**
The Logic of Nonstandard English (Labov)
Standard English: What it isn’t (Trudgill)
Week 4

October 20 - Style
Sociolinguistic Patterns Chapter 3 – The Isolation of Contextual Styles (Labov 1972)
Style as distinctiveness: the culture and ideology of linguistic differentiation (Irvine 2001)

October 22 - Language Change
Peasant men can’t get wives: Language change and sex roles in a bilingual community (Gal 1978)
Linguistic change, social network, and speaker innovation (Milroy & Milroy 1985)
Does the Queen speak the Queen’s English? (Harrington et al. 2000) (everyone read, nobody present)

Week 5

October 27 - Language and Gender 1
Language and woman’s place (Lakoff 1973)
Lakoff in context: The social and linguistic functions of tag questions (Cameron et al. 1988)

October 29 - Language and Gender 2
Sex, covert prestige and linguistic change in the urban British English of Norwich (Trudgill 1972)
The whole woman: Sex and gender differences in variation (Eckert 1990)

Week 6

November 3 - Language and Ethnicity
The Relationship of the Speech of American Negroes to the Speech of Whites (McDavid & McDavid, 1951)
The Relation between Black and White Speech in the South (Fasold 1981)

November 5 – Theories of Variation
Toward a theory of social dialect variation (Kroch 1978)
Three Waves of Variation Study: The Emergence of Meaning in the Study of Sociolinguistic Variation (Eckert 2012)

Week 7

November 10 - The Third Wave 1
Variation and the Indexical Field (Eckert 2008)
“Why be normal?”: Language and identity practices in a community of nerd girls (Bucholtz 2000)

November 12 – The Third Wave 2
Phonation type as a stylistic variable: The use of falsetto in constructing a persona (Podesva 2007)
A Chinese yuppie in Beijing: Phonological variation and the construction of a new professional identity (Zhang 2005)

Week 8

November 17 - Language Ideologies 1
Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation (Irvine & Gal 2000)

November 19 - Language Ideologies 2
Effects of accent, ethnicity and lecture topic on undergraduates’ perceptions of nonnative English-speaking teaching assistants (Rubin & Smith 1990)
Perceptual and phonetic experiments on American English dialect identification (Purnell et al. 1999)
Teaching children how to discriminate: What we learn from the Big Bad Wolf (Lippi-Green 1997)
(everybody read, nobody present)

**Week 9**
**November 24**
Final project presentations

**Week 10**
**December 1**
Final project presentations