LNGT 102- Introduction to Sociolinguistics (Fall 2017)

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Class Description
In this course, we will explore the ways that language creates and reflects social identities. We will look at the contextual factors—social, cultural, geographical, political, etc.—that impact language use and variation. In essence, we will learn how language shapes our world, and how we shape language itself.

1. What are the key features of a linguistic community, and how do communities evolve over time?
2. What distinguishes a language from a dialect, creole, register, or style?
3. How are culture, identity, and power connected to the linguistic behaviors of groups and individuals?
4. What sorts of methods and questions have been central to sociolinguistics research over time?
5. What role has language played in public debates about politics, education, social justice, etc.?
6. What issues are emerging in current research in sociolinguistics?

Students will develop skills in the following:
- Applying theoretical concepts to linguistic artifacts (speech, text, multi-media, etc.)
- Explaining the relevance of sociolinguistics to the world around us
- Evaluating and responding to various perspectives on complex questions about language
- Designing projects that investigate linguistic communities and practices
- Gathering and analyzing linguistic data
- Writing about sociolinguistics concepts from both personal and critical/analytical perspectives

Required Reading List

1. Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert, and Leap (2009). *Introducing Sociolinguistics* (2nd Ed) John Benjamins. (Also available as e-book, including through Midd Libraries).

2. Orwell, G. *1984* (novel).

These two books are available in the Middlebury bookstore. Please purchase them as soon as possible.

3. Other readings, films, and supplementary materials will be available via Canvas (go/coursehub), or via Davis Library Reserves (via Circulation Desk)

Expectations

Academic community is an important aspect of this course; cultivating that community requires the active presence and participation (which includes both speaking and <u>listening</u>!) of each member. You are expected to attend all classes on time, prepared to engage actively in course activities and discussion. Late papers, unexcused absences, and missed assignments will be penalized. In the event of illness, please notify me (via email or phone) *before* the class that you will be missing. Multiple absences could have an adverse effect on your final course grade. While I do not have a specific policy about use of technology in the classroom, I expect you to be <u>mindful</u> about using devices in a way that allows you and your peers to remain present and engaged. Several films are assigned as part of course preparation. It is your responsibility to arrange to watch those films—ideally with some of your classmates!

I also expect that you will organize yourself so that you are prepared for class and can submit assignments on time. This includes
- Making time to do the readings before class, focusing in particular on terminology
- Having a folder/notebook in which to keep course handouts and other materials
- Using multiple strategies (e.g., Google Drive, OneDrive, Dropbox) to back up your work
    Note: A computer crash is NOT an excuse for late work!

Formatting for Written Work

Unless specified otherwise, written assignments should be double-spaced, 12-point font (Times New Roman), with 1-inch margins. APA citation style is preferred, but other formats may be accepted upon student request. All work should include an honor code statement: ***I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment.***

Communication and Support

Communication and respect are very important to our course. I attempt to return all phone calls and emails within 24 hours, and expect the same of my students. Your feedback is essential to the success of this course. I will give you opportunities to reflect on the course, both in-class and anonymously, but I appreciate hearing from you at any point about your needs and experiences. If you encounter difficulties with any course material or assignments, <u>please contact me **early** and **often**</u>, so that I can help support you. I may be able to match you with a tutor, if you are struggling with written work, or with oral presentations for this class.

If you have a disability or learning issue of any kind that might impact your studies, please communicate with me as soon as possible. For formal accommodations, please be sure to contact Student Accessibility Services (formerly "ADA"), directed by Jodi Litchfield-(<u>litchfie@middlebury.edu</u>) See <u>http://www.middlebury.edu/campuslife/diversity/ada/</u> for more information.

Grading Breakdown

(Due dates for all items below are on the course calendar. Shorter homework assignments may be given from time to time, to help you engage more fully with readings or film)

   I.   Preparation for class and Participation/Discussion [in-class and online] = 20%

  II.   Quiz, on essential terms and concepts from class = 10%

 III.   Critique Paper on Orwell/*1984* (3-4 pp.) = 10%

        Key questions:
        1. In what ways does Orwell's work echo concepts and research findings in Sociolinguistics?

        2. What is one (or more) critique that linguists might make of Orwell's ideas about language? (In other words…In what ways might his views of language seem outdated or inaccurate, from the perspective of Sociolinguistics researchers?)

 IV.   Projects (3 total) = 60%

      1. Profile of a Linguistic Community = 15% (5% group presentation and abstract/bibliography; 10% Response Paper)

      2. Sociolinguistics Scrapbook = 15%

      3. Independent Research Project = 30% (20% final paper, 5% presentation, 5% scaffolding assignments- e.g., proposal)

Overview of Major Projects:
(NOTE: More details for each assignment will be provided in class)

Profile of a Linguistic Community (Project 1)

For this project, you and your group members will research the characteristics of a specific linguistic community, focusing on the ways language is used to create/define identity and to build group solidarity. You may draw on a combination of sources for this project, including scholarly publications, general audience resources, popular media, and possibly interviews/surveys with members of this community.

The three components for this assignment will be a short (5-8 min) group presentation, an abstract and bibliography (1 per group), and a 2-3 page Response Paper (one from each group member) answering these two questions:
- What are some of the most interesting features of this linguistic community? (discuss general trends as well as specific examples).

- How has studying this community enriched (and even complicated!) your understanding of Sociolinguistics? (reference particular course theories/concepts)

Sociolinguistics Scrapbook (Project 2)

This is a project that you will work on throughout the semester, in which you collect and reflect on "artifacts" that are connected to our class. An artifact could be a news article (print or online), media clip, literary text, or live event. Artifacts can be drawn from your other classes as well. For each artifact, you will write a short (less than one page) reflection that explains why you chose this artifact, and how it relates to sociolinguistics. At least <u>one</u> of your items should be from an out-of-class lecture, such as those offered at the Faculty Forum on Fri Oct 13th. (We'll talk more in class about how to create an artifact from lectures and presentations). Ideally, you will not have to look too hard to find relevant artifacts—I hope that they will begin to "pop out" at you, as you engage with course material and connect it to your daily life.

Independent Research Project (Project 3)

The purpose of this project is to give you the opportunity to engage firsthand in sociolinguistics research. You will develop a narrow and relevant research question that ties in to our course material. To answer your question, you may analyze existing linguistic data, such as texts or transcripts. Or, you may design a survey or interview protocol, to study attitudes about language variation and/or use.

Your final paper (10-15 pp.) will include an Introduction and Rationale for the project (3-4 pp, citing course readings and/or outside sources), a description of Methods (1-2 pp.), and a Summary and Discussion of findings (6-8 pp.). You will complete this project in stages, receiving feedback from your professor and classmates along the way. With the final draft of the paper, you will submit a separate Researcher's Memo (1-2 pp) that describes what you learned from the process and how it contributed to your learning of Sociolinguistics.

<u>Sample research questions from past students:</u>

1. What are the attitudes of Japanese students and professors toward Ryukyuan (endangered) languages in Southern Japan? (interviews)

2. What are the beliefs and practices of Vermont parents about correcting grammar/pronunciation errors in their children's speech? (interviews)

3. How do female students at Middlebury feel about the greetings "man," "dude" and "guys"? (survey)

4. How does the Simpsons character Cletus both reinforce and resist stereotypes about Appalachian English? (corpus analysis)

5. What are the types and functions of code-switching used by German players in online communities for English language videogames? (corpus analysis)

Tentative Course Schedule for LNGT 102- Fall 2017

Sept 12 (T)- Course introduction and Overview. Introduction to Whorfian Hypothesis
Sept 14 (Th)- Mesthrie Ch 1. Review key terms (see handout, also on Canvas). Continue discussing Whorfian Hypothesis and other key concepts. Discuss Project 1. Preview Boroditsky and Whorf.

[Over weekend: Post ideas for Project 1 and/or respond to ideas from others].

Sept 19 (T)- Whorf "The Relation of Habitual Thought" and Boroditsky "How Language Shapes Thought" (both on Canvas). Guest lecture from Prof. John Spackman (Philosophy).
Sept 21 (Th)- Pinker "Mentalese" and Casasanto "Big Bad Whorf" (both on Canvas).
                    Class role-play/debate.   Discuss groups for Project 1.

Due by Fri 9/22: Group lists for Project 1 (1 member post names and topic on Canvas).
Due by Sun 9/24: Group Proposal for Project 1:
    1. Which linguistic community do you intend to study?
    2. What aspects of this community will you examine most closely?
    3. What sources will you draw on?
    4. Which concepts from class (thus far) do you expect to be most relevant?

[Over weekend: Watch *American Tongues* (film on reserve or streaming via Davis library).
Post to Canvas online discussion by Mon 9/25]

Sept 26 (T)- Mesthrie Ch 2 (Regional Dialectology). Also read Roberts OR Eckert-(both on Canvas)
                    and prepare to share reactions in class. Continue discussing *American Tongues*.
Sept 28 (Th)- **Online class**- discussion and HW related to Mesthrie Ch 3. (Social Dialectology).
                    Possible additional reading on Canvas.

[Over the weekend: Prepare for group presentations.]

 Oct 3 (T)- **Assignment in lieu of class (individual or small group- submit on Canvas-)**:
                    Watch *El Norte* or *Slumdog Millionaire* (both on reserve at Davis Library) and connect to
                    Mesthrie Ch 5 (Language Choice and Code-switching).
 Oct 5 (Th)-. Mesthrie Ch 6 (Language in interaction). Begin mini-presentations for Project 1.
                    Due by Fri Oct 6: Group abstract and bibliography for Project (on Canvas).

Oct 10 (T)- Mesthrie Ch 4 (Language Variation and Change). Continue mini-presentations
Oct 12 (Th)- Review for quiz. Finish mini-presentations.

Fri 10/13: Fall Faculty Forum (scrapbook opportunity!)

Oct 17 (T)- **Quiz.** Begin discussing Mesthrie Ch 7 (Gender and Language Use).
Oct 19 (Th)**-** Read Tannen "Power of Talk," and Cameron "What Language" OR Freed "We
Understand. (Gender and Language, cont'd). EC opp: online discussion. Also discuss Final Project.

[Over break, post ideas for final project to Canvas. Also start reading *1984,* for Thurs 10/26]

Oct 24 (T)- MIDTERM BREAK- NO CLASS

Oct 26 (Th)- Orwell "Politics" (on Canvas) and first half of *1984*. Form groups for Thurs 11/2.

Due Oct 29 (Sun): Post proposal(s) for final project:
1. What question would you like to answer, and why is this a relevant question?
2. What data will you analyze? (and How will you collect it, if necessary?)
3. What do you expect to find (i.e., your hypothesis)?
4. What do you need (from Prof S. or other sources) to be successful in this project?

Oct 31 (T)- Second half of *1984*.
Nov 2 (Th)- Mesthrie Ch 10 (Language and Power). Panel/debate re: *1984*.

Due Nov 5 (Sun)- Sociolinguistic Critique of Orwell/*1984* (3-4 pp., on Canvas)

Nov 7 (T)- Finish discussing *1984*. Also preview topic/readings for Thurs.
     Discuss Sociolinguistics Scrapbook.
Nov 9 (Th)- Visit from Prof. Per Urlaub (Language Schools, Linguistics) related to
     language and power.

Nov 14 (Th)- Mesthrie Ch 8 (Language Maintenance, Shift, and Death) **OR**
     Mesthrie Ch 9 (Pidgins, Creoles, and "New Englishes"). Jigsaw teaching in class.
Nov 16 (Th)- Mesthrie Ch 12 (Language Planning and Policy). Visit from Prof. Aloni (Hebrew).

Nov 21 (T)- Mesthrie Ch 11 (Sociolinguistics and Education) and Delpit (on Canvas)
Nov 23 (Th)- **THANKSGIVING**- no class.

Due Nov 27 (Mon, midnight)- Sociolinguistics Scrapbook (on Canvas, post to discussion forum)

Nov 28 (T) –Media Analysis (readings TBD).
     [If time: Share 1 item from Sociolinguistics Scrapbook in class.]
Nov 30 (Th)- Mesthrie Ch 13 (Sociolinguistics and Sign Language.)

Due Dec 3 (Sun)- (Optional, but recommended!)- Submit draft or outline of research paper for feedback (on Canvas).

Dec 5 (T)- Research presentations I. Course evaluations.
Dec 7 (Th)- Research presentations II. Course wrap-up.

Due Dec 12 (T)- Final Paper for Research Project, plus Researcher's Memo (both on Canvas).