LNGT 102- Introduction to Sociolinguistics (Fall 2021)

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Class meets: T/Th 1:30-2:45pm in AXN 100

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 Office Hours (Carr Hall 201): Mon 11am-12:30pm; Tues 3-4:30pm; or by appt.

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 people's linguistic behaviors?
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 issues about language
- Designing projects that investigate linguistic communities and practices
- Gathering and analyzing linguistic data
- Writing about sociolinguistics concepts from both personal and analytical perspectives

Required Reading List
Please purchase or borrow these as soon as possible from the Midd Bookstore or another retailer.

1. Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert, and Leap (2009). *Introducing Sociolinguistics (2nd Edition).* John Benjamins. (Print or e-book version is fine. Both are available through Davis Library- print on reserve and e-book online).

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

3. Other readings, films, and supplementary materials will be available via Canvas (go/hub).

Expectations

Your presence and engagement are an important part of your learning, of your peers' learning as well! I expect you to attend classes on time, complete all assigned readings, and turn in your work on time. **Communication is key!** There may be penalties for late papers, multiple absences, or lack of preparation for class, unless we have made arrangements in advance. If you do need to miss class, please notify me (email or text message) before class that you will be absent. Extended absences may require approval from a Dean. I often send reminders and notes via email, so <u>please check your email at least once every 24 hours.</u>

What does it mean to "participate" in this course? Course participation includes discussion (both speaking and active listening), as well as engagement in individual, pair, and small group activities. This means that **doing the readings for course is crucial to your ability to participate** (see more info at Grading Breakdown, below).

Being an **active participant** in class also requires you to be organized. This includes:
- Making time to do the readings before class, focusing in particular on terminology (see terms list on Canvas)
- Having a folder/notebook in which to keep course handouts and other materials
- Keeping track of your schedule, so that you meet deadlines
- Using multiple strategies (e.g., Google Drive, OneDrive, Dropbox) to back up your work (Note: Expect and prepare for a computer crash at some point this semester!)

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 promotes learning rather than distraction. A few films or other media are assigned as part of course preparation, and it is your responsibility to arrange to watch those films—ideally with some of your classmates!

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 (NOTE: No cover page or abstract is necessary).   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 (weekdays), and I 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 the Disability Resource Center (formerly "ADA Office"): https://www.middlebury.edu/office/disability-resource-center

Although I will be available to support your learning, I hope you will also make use of support from:

- **The Center for Teaching, Learning, and Research (go/CTLR)** offers peer tutoring for nearly every academic subject, including drop-in writing tutors, prescheduled study groups, and professional staff.

- The **Writing Center (go/WC)** offers both peer and professional writing tutoring, online and in-person. They also offer conversation partners for students for whom English is an Additional Language, as well as other events and resources.

- **Oratory Now (go/oratorynow)** is a group of peer coaches for oral presentations and other forms of public speaking.

- The **Office of Digital Learning and Inquiry—go/DLINQ**) offers support with all sorts of technologies and digital tools.

- **Counseling Services (go/counseling):** Can help with emotional and social challenges, including stress, anxiety, and adjustment to Middlebury. There are often same-day in-person appointments available, in addition to 24/7 support via MiddTelehealth.

- **Anderson Freeman Center** (**go/afc**): Intercultural Center in Carr Hall, designed to provide a 'home' for students who have been historically underrepresented or marginalized in higher education. Great place to relax, make new friends, cook, etc. My office is there as well ☺

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 other media)

I.   **Class Preparation and Participation** [in-class and occasionally online] = 20%

II.   **Quiz 1, on essential terms and concepts from class** = 10%
We will have a review session in class prior to the quiz, and students will also be given a study guide. But the best way to prepare for this quiz is to take time to do course readings

III. **Quiz 2, take-home** = 10%
For this quiz, you will choose 3 of 4 questions to respond to in writing. Your response should be 1-2 pages (double-spaced) for each question. There will be one question on each of the following themes: *language and gender, Orwell's views on language (e.g. euphemism/jargon), language and politics (e.g., propaganda, obfuscation), and inclusive/PC language.*

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% mini-presentation, 5% scaffolding assignments- e.g., proposal, check-ins, etc.)

Overview of Major Projects
(NOTE: More details and samples of student work for each 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:

1. What are some of the most interesting features of this linguistic community?
(Discuss general trends as well as specific examples).

2. 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 **8-10 electronic "artifacts"** that are connected to our class. An artifact could be a news article (print or online), media clip, literary text, live event, or even an account of a conversation. Artifacts can be drawn from your other classes as well. For each artifact, you will write a paragraph (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 [Clifford Symposium](#), by the [Linguistics Program](#), or via the [Fall Faculty Forum](#)** (We'll talk more in class about how to create an artifact from a lecture/presentation). Ideally, you will not have to look too hard to find relevant artifacts—they will begin to "pop out" at you, as you engage with course material and connect it to your daily life. You'll also be asked to share one of your favorite artifacts during class.

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 **examine attitudes** about language variation and/or use. Whichever option you choose, you need to have a systematic method for analysis, so you're not "cherry-picking" from the data.

Your final paper (10-15 pp. total) will include an Introduction and Rationale for the project (2-3 pp, citing course readings and/or outside sources), a description of Hypothesis and Methods (1-2 pp.), and a section containing Findings, Discussion, (5-8 pp.) Limitations, and Possibilities for future research (1-2pp.) You will complete this project in stages, receiving feedback from me, and possibly from your 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.

A few sample research questions from past students:

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

2. What identities does the use of three slang terms ("ODE", "fam", and "grind") index among Middlebury College students? (survey)

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

4. How do female students at Middlebury feel about being greeted as "man," "dude" and/or "guys"? (survey)

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

Course Schedule for LNGT 102- Fall 2021

Sept 14 (T)- Course introduction and overview. Introduction to Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis.

Sept 16 (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.

Due by Sun Sept 19 on Canvas: **Post ideas for Project 1** and/or respond to ideas from others.

Sept 21 (T)- Whorf "The Relation of Habitual Thought" and Boroditsky "How Language Shapes Thought" (both on Canvas).

Sept 23 (Th)- Pinker "Mentalese" and Casasanto "Big Bad Whorf" (both on Canvas).
             In-class role-play/debate.   Also discuss groups for Project 1.

Due by Fri 9/24 (midnight): Group lists for Project 1 (1 member post names and topic on Canvas).

*Sept 23-25**:** Clifford Symposium (Scrapbook opportunity!)

Due by Sun 9/26 (midnight): Group Proposal for Project 1 (post on Canvas):
    1. Which linguistic community do you intend to study?
    2. What aspects of this community will you examine most closely? *
    3. What are some of the sources you will draw on?
    4. Which concepts from class (thus far) do you expect to be most relevant?

Over weekend: Watch *American Tongues* via Kanopy streaming:
https://middlebury.kanopy.com/video/american-tongues
Due: by Mon 9/27: Contribute to Canvas online discussion.

Sept 28 (T)- Mesthrie Ch 2 (Regional Dialectology). Continue discussing *American Tongues*.

*Sept 29 (Wed)- "Black Language in Public Spaces"- virtual panel at 4:30pm via Zoom (Linguistics
             Club connections—also Scrapbook opportunity!)

Sept 30 (Th)- Mesthrie Ch 3. (Social Dialectology).   Also listen to Codeswitch podcast episode,
             "Talk American"

[Over the weekend: Start preparing for group presentations.]

 Oct 5 (T)- ONLINE CLASS. Mesthrie Ch 5 (Language Choice/Code-switching). Watch *Slumdog
          Millionaire* (on reserve at Davis Library, or via streaming - find a film buddy! 😊).

 Oct 7 (Th)- Mesthrie Ch 6 (Language in interaction). Begin mini-presentations for Project 1.

 Due by **Sun Oct 6**: Group abstract and bibliography for Project (post to Canvas).

Oct 12 (T)- Mesthrie Ch 4 (Language Variation and Change). Continue mini-presentations.

Oct 14 (Th)- Finish mini-presentations. Review for quiz.

Due by **Sun 10/17**: Response paper from project 1 (Canvas)

Oct 19 (T)- NO CLASS- FALL BREAK

Oct 21 (Th)- Quiz 1. Begin discussing Mesthrie Ch 7 (Gender and Language Use).

[**Due** over weekend, **post 1 scrapbook entry** to Canvas. Also start reading Orwell's *1984*]

Oct 26 (T)- Read Tannen "Power of Talk," and McBee, 2018- NYTimes. Cont. discussing Ch7.

Oct 28 (Th)- Orwell "Politics and the English Language" (on Canvas). Also in class: Share orally
          from Sociolinguistics Scrapbooks.

*Oct 29 (Fri)- Fall Faculty Forum (Scrapbook opportunity!)

Due Nov 1st (Mon): Initial ideas/plans for research project (post to online discussion. Optional
short mtgs available w/ Prof S.)

Nov 2 (T)- Begin discussing *1984,* focusing in particular on "Newspeak" (Appendix).

Nov 4 (Th)- Mesthrie Ch 10 (Language and Power). Continue discussion of *1984*.
          Discuss Quiz 2 (take-home).

Due Nov 7 (Sun) on Canvas: Take-home quiz (answer 3 of 4 ques, 1-2 pp. each, double spaced.)

Nov 9 (T)- Topic: Linguistic profiling. **ALL** read: Santos & Hauser (2015, *NYTimes* (on Canvas).
          Also watch Ruiz's talk at Midd **OR** read Baird et al (2018) study with highlights.
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Nov 11 (Th)- Readings/media TBD—related to language and privilege. Possible guest lecture from
          Per Urlaub (Language Schools/Linguistics).

Due Nov 14 (Sun) on Canvas: 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 the data, 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?

Nov 16 (T)- Mesthrie Ch 8 (Language Maintenance, Shift, and Death) **OR** Mesthrie Ch 9 (Pidgins,
          Creoles, and "New Englishes"). Discuss final projects.

Nov 18 (Th)- Mesthrie Ch 12 (Language Planning and Policy).
          Possible guest lecture with professor at MIIS.

Due Nov 21 (optional but highly recommended): Draft of intro/rationale for research paper.

Nov 23 (T)- ONLINE CLASS: topic: Sociolinguistics in Digital Spaces. (Canvas discussion)

Nov 25th (Th)- NO CLASS-THANKSGIVING

Due **Nov 29 (Mon)-** Sociolinguistics Scrapbook (on Canvas, post to discussion forum)

Nov 30 (T)- Mesthrie Ch 11 (Sociolinguistics and Education) and Delpit (on Canvas).

Dec 2 (Th)- Topic tentative: Mesthrie Ch 13 (Sociolinguistics and Sign Language.)
        Possible guest speaker.

Due **Dec 6 (Sun)-** Optional, but **highly recommended**!: Submit outline or full draft of research paper for feedback (on Canvas).

Dec 7 (T)- Research presentations I. Course evaluations.

Dec 9 (Th)- Research presentations II. Course wrap-up.

Due **Dec 14th (T), extensions by request:** Final Paper for Research Project, plus Researcher's Memo (both on Canvas).

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TERMS TO FOCUS ON FOR: **Mesthrie et al Ch 1:**

Language vs. dialect vs. variety, linguistic relativism, Whorfian (or Sapir-Whorf)

hypothesis, denotational vs. indexical functions of language,

prescriptive vs. descriptive approaches, prestige dialect, standardization, speech

community (linguistic community), H vs. L varieties, register,

Observer's Paradox (p. 90)

Note: Terms for other readings will be provided on Canvas.