

## **Language & Prejudice**

Linguistics 221

Northwestern University

Spring 2019

Tuesday & Thursday, 3:30-4:50

Tech LR2

### **Instructor Information**

Instructor: Erin Leddon, Ph.D.

Office: 2016 Sheridan Road, Room 201

Phone: (847) 467-7092 (but I am best reached by email)

Email: e-mcmahon@northwestern.edu

Office hours: Tuesdays 1-3pm, or by appointment

### **TA Information**

TA: Jordan Hosier

Office: Swift M101

Email: JordanHosier2020@u.northwestern.edu

Office hours: Fridays, 12-2pm, or by appointment

TA: Adam Goodkind

Office: Swift M101

Email: a.goodkind@u.northwestern.edu

Office hours: Wednesdays, 10am-12pm, or by appointment

TA: Dan Turner

Office: Swift 309

Email: DanielTurner2020@u.northwestern.edu

Office hours: Mondays, 12-2pm, or by appointment

### **Course Web Page**

On Canvas ([canvas.northwestern.edu](https://canvas.northwestern.edu))

### **Readings**

Posted for each day on Canvas

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Define linguistics, and describe the research areas targeted by the major subfields in linguistics. Define basic terminology relevant to the study of language and prejudice.

2. Broadly describe the ways languages, dialects, and accents vary, and the relationship between linguistic variation and social identity.
3. Describe how the scientific method is used in linguistic research, and describe specific methods used to examine the influence of language on perception, judgment, or behavior. Propose a research question addressing language and prejudice, and propose an experiment to investigate it.
4. Identify cases where people are the target of prejudice or discrimination based on their name, language, dialect, accent, or use of particular linguistic features. Discuss how specific language may reveal or reinforce prejudice. Bring linguistic evidence and argumentation to bear on questions of language-related policy.

### **Course Description**

In this class, we will examine the ways in which people may be the target of prejudice due to various linguistic factors: the language or dialect they speak, their accent, their use of specific linguistic features, or even their name. In doing so, we will discuss linguistic variation, and the relationship between language and social identity. We will detail the research methods used to examine these phenomena, and discuss introductory concepts in linguistics (including some fundamentals of sociology and social psychology as they pertain to language-related issues). We will look at the language used to express the prejudices found in our society, from ethnic slurs and other taboo words to gender-biased language, and consider the relationship between language and thought (or perception). Toward the end of the course, we will consider what linguistic research can contribute to public policy questions related to language.

### **Student Responsibilities**

*You are responsible for making sure that you get the most out of your classes.*

- **Attend class** regularly. You are responsible for material covered in lecture and class discussion. If you must miss class for any reason, make sure that you get the missed notes from a classmate. Please sit as close to the front and to the instructor as possible. The classroom is larger than what the class requires, and the class will work best if we sit close to each other.
- **Communicate!** If you have any trouble with the course, if you have an emergency where you need to miss class (especially more than one class), etc., make sure that you contact me *as soon as possible* to let me know.
- **Come to office hours.** Office hours are designed for students to come and get extra help, to talk in greater detail about interesting ideas, or to give feedback to the instructors. Please make use of them! If you cannot attend a scheduled office hour but need help, contact me or the TA to set up an appointment.
- **Participate** in class discussions. Participating in class is valuable because it helps you to be an active listener and increases the likelihood that you will understand and retain the material. Please ask questions in class if there is something that does not make sense. Asking

questions is a way for you to give feedback to the professor and usually makes the class more interesting for everyone.

- **Be respectful** your classmates. At times this quarter we will discuss sensitive subjects related to prejudice and discrimination, and we will also consider offensive and derogatory language. It is important that we work to be respectful of one another during sensitive discussions. Know that I am always available to discuss your reactions to course material (before or after we cover it in class), and I welcome such discussions as part of our coursework.
- **No laptops/phones/tablets.** Research shows that students who do not use electronic devices during class learn more and perform better in their courses. Please leave your laptops/tablets/phones and other electronic devices in your bag during class. I will post lecture slides online, so you are free to access them before or after class, and print them out to bring with you if you wish. Please see me if you have extenuating circumstances that require the use of a device during class.

## Assessment

Assessments in this course will ask you to synthesize readings, apply concepts discussed in class to new topics, describe and locate relevant research studies, and describe the concepts, questions, research methods, experimental evidence, and public policy debates that we will cover this term. The emphasis will be on bringing insights from *linguistics* to bear on questions related to language and prejudice (which are often debated outside the linguistic arena).

Reaction thoughts, Canvas quizzes, homework assignments, and research briefs will all be submitted on Canvas. These must be submitted before class on the day they are due. Late submissions will not be accepted (you will be assigned a grade of “0”). *Exceptions will be made only in the case of serious, documented emergencies.*

## In-Class Assessments

- **Reaction Thoughts.** Reaction thoughts should be very brief (*3-4 sentences*), and should include an observation, brief analysis, or question(s) (clarification, or discussion-oriented) about the reading assigned for that day. The goal of these thoughts is for you to have formalized some ideas in advance of class that you could contribute in group work and/or class discussion. They are also an opportunity for you to demonstrate progress toward mastery of the course’s learning objectives (Course Objectives 1-4).

You will receive credit for having submitted reaction thoughts, but they will not be evaluated for a grade. In other words, as long as you submit reaction thoughts that pertain to that day’s reading, you will receive full credit. I may periodically offer comments, answer questions, or offer feedback on your thoughts. *Reaction must relate to the reading assigned for that day, and should demonstrate that you have completed the day’s reading. Reaction thoughts that do not clearly show that you completed the reading for that day will receive a “0”.*

- **Quizzes.** You will complete two short quizzes on Canvas. The quizzes are designed to give you experience with the types of questions you might encounter on an in-class assessment. Quizzes will assess your progress towards mastering the course’s learning objectives (Course Objectives 1-4).
- **Research Briefs.** You will be required to write two brief research papers of 3-4 pages each (typewritten, double-spaced). They will assess your progress towards mastering Course Objectives 3 and 4. You must work alone on these papers. More information about the requirements for each brief, including their grading rubrics, will be posted on Canvas.
- **Homework Assignments.** You will complete four homework assignments that will require you to react to a video or podcast relevant to our course. More information about the requirements for each assignment, including their grading rubrics, will be posted on Canvas.
- **In-Class Assessments.** In-class assessments will measure your progress towards mastering the course’s learning objectives (Course Objectives 1-4). *No early or late make-up assessments will be given.* If you miss an in-class assessment, you will receive a “0” on it. Exceptions will be made only in the case of serious, *documented* emergencies.
- **Experimental Requirement.** Like all 200-level Linguistics classes, this course has an experimental requirement. Failure to complete this requirement will result in your final grade being lowered by one-third (i.e., bringing an A to an A-). Please see the Experimental Requirement document for full details on how to complete this requirement.
- There will be no make-up or extra credit assignments.

Breakdown of final grade:

Reaction Thoughts .....	5%
Quizzes.....	5%
Homework Assignments.....	20%
Research Briefs .....	40%
In-Class Assessments.....	30%
Experimental Requirement	

Grading scale:

93-↑	A	77-79	C+
90-92	A-	73-76	C
87-89	B+	70-72	C-
83-86	B	60-69	D
80-82	B-	59-↓	F

**Academic integrity**

As with all courses at Northwestern University, registration in this course requires adherence to the University's principles regarding academic integrity (<http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/principles.html>). Suspected

violations of academic integrity in this course will be immediately referred to the Weinberg College Assistant Dean for Academic Integrity. For details on procedures for handling suspected violations of academic integrity: <http://www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/handbook/integrity/>

### **AccessibleNU**

Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with [AccessibleNU](#) (847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

### **Research opportunities**

Students interested in linguistics are encouraged to participate in departmental research projects either through paid research positions or by registering for Independent Study (Ling 399) with individual faculty members. By giving students the opportunity to work closely with faculty and graduate students, research experiences enable students to see how knowledge is generated by the scientific community. Research experiences also enhance students' analytical skills and help students develop the technical skills required to become independent contributors to the academic community. It is envisioned that research experiences will give students a sense of the excitement of discovery and an appreciation for the creativity associated with scientific inquiry.

Guidelines for independent study projects are given at <http://www.linguistics.northwestern.edu/programs/independent.html> For information on current research opportunities in linguistics, we recommend that you contact the faculty in your area of interest.

For more research opportunities and current news on undergraduate research at Northwestern: <http://undergradresearch.northwestern.edu/>

**Tentative Schedule:**

This schedule is to be used as a guide only and is subject to change. Please consult Canvas for any changes.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignments Due (on Canvas)</b>
<i>Unit 1: Introduction and Foundations</i>		
Apr. 2, Tu Day 1	<i>Linguistics; Listening to language</i>	
Apr. 4, Th Day 2	<i>Language as a behavior; Language as a structured system</i>	Reaction Thoughts Student Questionnaire
Apr. 9, Tu Day 3	<i>The nature of prejudice</i>	Reaction Thoughts
Apr. 11, Th Day 4	<i>Combatting prejudice; Language variation</i>	Canvas Quiz 1
<i>Unit 2: Language Variation and Social Identity</i>		
Apr. 16, Tu Day 5	<i>US regional dialects; Dialects and social identity</i>	Reaction Thoughts
Apr. 18, Th Day 6	<i>Linguistic variation within individuals; "Standard" language</i>	Homework 1: Vocal Fries Podcast reaction and analysis
Apr. 23, Tu Day 7	<i>Accent and prejudice; Matched-guise methodology</i>	Reaction Thoughts
Apr. 25, Th Day 8	<i>Designing linguistics experiments</i>	Homework 2: Research Brief 1 Proposal due Friday, April 26 at 5pm
	<b>In-Class Assessment</b>	
Apr. 30, Tu Day 9	<i>African American English</i>	Reaction Thoughts
May 2, Th Day 10	<i>Language and gender</i>	Homework 3: "Talking Black in America" reaction and analysis
<i>Unit 3: Language and Worldview</i>		
May 7, Tu Day 11	<i>Language and thought</i>	Research Brief 1
May 9, Th Day 12	<i>Political correctness; Euphemisms</i>	Reaction Thoughts
May 14, Tu Day 13	<i>The language of advertising; political speech</i>	Homework 4: Research Brief 2 Proposal

May 16, Th Day 14	<i>Taboo language; Swearing; Derogatory labels</i>	Canvas Quiz 2
<i>Unit 4: Language and Public Policy</i>		
May 21, Tu Day 15	<i>Official languages</i>	Reaction Thoughts
May 23, Th Day 16	<i>Language and education</i>	Research Brief 2
May 28, Tu Day 17	<i>Freedom of speech</i>	Reaction Thoughts
May 30, Th Day 18	<b>In-Class Assessment</b>	