

Linguistics 154

Language and Social Identity

Wendell Kimper, Fall 2011

Syllabus

1 Contact

Email: wkimper@ucsc.edu

Office Hours: M 1:00–3:00pm

Office Location: Stevenson 271

Note: Please do not wear heavy scents (perfume, cologne, etc) to class or to my office hours, as I am allergic.

Teaching Assistant

Katia Kravtchenko

Email: ekravtch@ucsc.edu

Office Hours: Fri 9:30–10:30am, Stevenson Cafe

Course Website

This course will have an eCommons site, where you can download readings and assignments and track your grades. You should check this frequently for announcements; any changes to the course schedule will be posted there.

2 Course Goals

This course explores the intersection of linguistic knowledge and social interaction. We will be examining this topic from both the perspective of the speaker and the perspective of the listener. That is, we will look both at how variables like group membership, racial and sexual identity, power asymmetries, and other social dynamics affect a speaker's linguistic behavior, and also how listeners use their linguistic knowledge to categorize their interlocutors and interpret their interactions. We will also take a look at how language affects and is affected by politics and policy on the national and international levels.

The topics covered in class are areas of active research in the field of sociolinguistics, and in many cases there is no general consensus about the answers to the questions we will ask.

A primary focus of the course will be the methods involved in gathering data, forming and testing hypotheses, and analyzing evidence from a variety of sources. We'll be engaging with the primary literature in the field as well as doing some hands-on data collection.

3 Course Requirements

There is no required textbook for this course; scanned copies of the readings will be made available on the eCommons site.

Your grade for this course will be based on short responses to assigned readings, regular homework assignments, and a final paper.

Readings

The readings for this course are drawn primarily from published articles; you'll be assigned approximately one per week (listed on the schedule on the day they're due), and I'll ask you to write a brief response to each. These should be typed, and will be collected at the end of class, but should also be used to guide your participation in class discussions. Full credit will be given to responses that demonstrate that you've read and engaged with the material. Some of these papers will be difficult, and it's okay if your response has more questions than answers.

Homework Assignments

There will be 6 homework assignments; all of these should be written up as brief papers, and some will involve collecting data. Assignments will be assessed for writing as well as for content.

Final Paper

There will be a final paper, due at the end of the quarter, which will be based on collecting and analyzing original data. Choice of topics will be fairly open, so keep an eye out for things that particularly interest you (approximate scope: 10ish double-spaced pages). More on this later.

Participation

This course relies on your participation! You should come to class prepared to discuss the readings and to actively engage with the material covered in class.

This course deals with a number of sensitive topics, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, and disability. We all approach these topics with different experiences and different biases, but in order to effectively examine the intersections of language and society we must strive to distance ourselves from our biases and remain objective.

It is important that class discussions on sensitive topics remain respectful, and I expect you to do your part to foster a class environment conducive to productive discourse. If you are uncomfortable with the way something is discussed in class, or have other concerns about the topics we'll be covering, please let either me or your TA know.

Grading

Assignments will be graded on a standard 100-point scale, and percentage grades convert to letter grades in the usual way.

Your final grade will be a weighted average of homework assignments, reading responses, and your final paper, in the following proportions:

Homework: 50%

Readings: 20%

Final paper: 30%

4 Course Policies

Attendance

Attendance in lecture extremely important, since this class is centered around discussion and since the readings won't cover all the information we go over in class. If you have to miss class for some reason, please make arrangements to get notes from someone else in the class; it's your responsibility to get caught up (though we are of course here to answer any questions you might subsequently have).

Collaboration

You are encouraged to collaborate on homework assignments, but you must each write up your own assignment separately, and you must clearly indicate who you worked with. Each

person must do their own data collection, but you are welcome to pool your data afterwards.

If you want to collaborate on your final paper, you should see me ahead of time. Multiple-author papers are increasingly common in published linguistic research, and collaborative endeavors often provide an opportunity to tackle a more ambitious project than individual researchers would otherwise take on. A collaborative final project will need to be appropriately ambitious in scope, and the topic should be one suited to a joint effort with equal contribution from both authors.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will **not** be accepted. You have one no-questions-asked pass on this policy. To use it, you must email your TA *before* the deadline, and turn in the assignment by the following class meeting.

Extenuating Circumstances

If unforeseen circumstances like illness, injury, or family emergencies interfere with your performance in this course, please contact either me or your TA as soon as possible so that we can work something out.

Extra Credit

You are encouraged to participate in one of the experiments being run in the linguistics department's labs. If you do so, your lowest homework grade will be dropped (note: this only counts for assignments that were turned in and graded, not missing assignments).

To participate in an experiment, please go to <http://ucsc-ling.sona-systems.com/>. If you haven't used this system before, you will need to request an account, which should be approved within 48 hours. Once you log in you can see the experiments that are available for credit. Find one with a timeslot that works for you and then sign up. Please arrive at least 5 minutes early for the experiment.

Accommodations for Disabilities

Please let me know within the first week of class if you are registered with the Disability Resource Center and have any physical impairments or learning needs that I should be aware of in order to assist you in meeting the requirements of this class. Students who feel that they might benefit from services offered by this office but have not yet been assessed should contact them as soon as possible (drc@ucsc.edu, 146 Hahn Student Services).

5 Schedule

Week Of	MONDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY
Sept. 19	<i>no class</i>	<i>no class</i>	Linguistic Variation
Sept. 26	Speech Communities	Observer’s Paradox	National Identity Reading TBA
Oct. 3	Language Contact HW 1 Due	Regional Variation	Regional Identity Reading TBA
Oct. 10	What’s Standard? HW 2 Due	Linguistic Profiling Reading TBA	Politeness & Solidarity Reading TBA
Oct. 17	Class & Prestige, UK HW 3 Due	Class & Prestige, US Reading TBA	Social Circles Reading TBA
Oct. 24	Ethnic Identity HW 4 Due	AAVE Reading TBA	AAVE
Oct. 31	Sex & Gender HW 5 Due	Sex & Gender Reading TBA	Sex & Gender
Nov. 7	Sexual Orientation HW 6 Due	Codes & Secret Languages Paper Proposal Due	<i>no class</i>
Nov. 14	Dis-/ability Reading TBA	Education Reading TBA	Extermination/Preservation
Nov. 21	Official Languages Reading TBA	Politics	<i>no class</i>
Nov. 28	Student Presentations	Student Presentations	Student Presentations
Dec. 5th	<i>no class</i>	<i>no class</i>	<i>no class</i> Final Paper Due