

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

English Department

Syllabus & Course Description and Grading Policies • ENGL 230 • Spring 2016
Language in Society • Bliss 206 • T/R 9:30-10:45 • CRN 21992

Professor: Dr. A. Michael Vermy
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Office hours: Tues and Thurs 12:30 – 1:00 pm; Wed. 1:00 – 1:30 pm; and by appointment

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

An examination of language variations in English as they relate to geographic and social factors. This course covers such topics as dialect, accent, Standard English, lingua franca, pidgin, Creole, and jargon. Additionally, the course analyzes social discourse, socio-linguistic theories, diversity and uniformity, multilingualism, speech communities, and language planning.

Prerequisite Courses: n/a

Enrollment Restrictions: n/a

Course Overview:

Language is the main medium through which human beings communicate with each other. By putting language to use, we accomplish things and we achieve social and intellectual satisfaction. Forms of language used reflect social identity, mirror the situation in which communication happens, and may even influence social structures. Thus, sociolinguistics is, in the broadest sense, the study of the role of language in human society. Formal study began in the late 50s with the hypothesis that language variation is not random, but structured and emblematic, and that all language change is preceded by a period of variation, short or very long. Since those early days, theory, methods and focus have evolved greatly. The possible relationships between language and society form the object of study in this course. The purpose of this course is to investigate how language is used in ordinary social interactions, to gain a better understanding of the structure of language and how it relates to language functions in communication.

Text:

Required: *Introducing Sociolinguistics* (2nd edition), Meyerhoff, M. 2011. New York: Routledge.

Recommended Supplemental Materials: In addition to the required textbook, materials and activities from other textbooks listed under “references” will be used for reinforcement or for presentation of topics not covered adequately in the required textbook.

Professional Materials and/or Fees for This Course: n/a

Learning Outcomes for this Course: On completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. describe the scope of sociolinguistics and its relationship to other linguistic sub-disciplines and other academic fields.
2. discuss traditional sociolinguistic theory and methods.
3. evaluate a variety of major case studies which underlie our understanding of how language functions in the community.
4. explain field methods, data gathering, and analysis.
5. discuss how language attitudes and ideologies shape language use.

Course Content

The following is a *tentative/very broad* course outline for this semester. The instructor may adjust content, assignments, and due dates to accommodate changing needs during the semester. Please note: homework exercises and discussion questions will be announced in class, via email, and/or on Moodle.

- I. Introduction: what do we mean by language and society?
 - a. What is sociolinguistics?
 - b. How is society structured?
 - c. How do we categorize communication/language?
 - d. What are the levels of variation?
 - e. How do attitudes influence language and how are the values toward language manifested?
- II. Key concepts in sociolinguistics
- III. Variation and style
 - a. What are the factors that influence variation?
 - b. Standards and norms
 - c. Regional varieties
 - d. Overt prestige
 - e. Observer's paradox
- IV. Language attitudes
 - a. Perceptual dialectology
 - b. Covert prestige (i.e. reclaiming derogatory terms)
 - c. Social identity theory
 - d. Accommodation theory
 - e. Theories of politeness
- V. Multilingualism and language choice
 - a. Language planning/policy
 - b. Ethnolinguistic vitality
 - c. Diglossia
 - d. Code-switching
- VI. Language across time
 - a. Real time studies of change
 - b. Apparent time studies of change
- VII. Social class
- VIII. Social networks
- IX. Gender and sexuality
- X. Language contact
 - a. Dialect leveling
 - b. Global English?

Professional Expectations

Participation: By enrolling in this course, each student makes the tacit commitment to participate. Class participation involves more than merely coming to class. Students are expected to be actively involved in the class discussions. Students are encouraged to ask relevant questions and contribute to the over-all learning environment of this course.

Attendance: Regular attendance is expected for every class, since classes will be devoted to the discussion of the readings. In general, attendance policies do not reward class attendance but rather they may penalize non-attendance. Students are expected to come to every class meeting *on time* and *prepared to* participate. Working on an assignment for this or any other course is no excuse for missing class or arriving late. Official AUB Faculty of Arts and Sciences policy mandates that you be withdrawn from the course if you are absent more than 1/5 of the class meetings in the first 10 weeks of class.

Missed Assignments: If students miss class for any reason, they are responsible for obtaining notes and announcements from another student (**NOT** from the professor). The instructor will provide handouts if the student requests.

Penalty for Non-Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. If you are not in class (or arrive 10 minutes or more after class has started), you cannot participate and you cannot, thus, receive points for participation. If you miss more than two classes, your grade will be severely affected. You are responsible for all notes, announcements, assignments and quizzes given in class.

Penalty for Arriving Late or Leaving Early: Tardiness will be recorded (up to 10 minutes). Each student is allowed two late arrivals; five points will be deducted from your participation grade for each subsequent lack of punctuality. If a student must leave class early, if it is less than 10 minutes before the termination of class, it will be considered a tardy, if it is more than 10 minutes, it will count as an unexcused absence.

Excusable Absences: Excused absences are those related to personal illness or medical emergency and/or death or critical illness in the immediate family. Students should notify instructors prior to missing class for excusable absences or within 24 hours after the class meeting.

Non-Excusable Absences: The following are not excusable reasons for missing class: vacation, weddings, job-related responsibilities, working on class assignments, activities sponsored by other departments or classes, oversleeping, or extended personal leave. Students should schedule activities that do not justify excusable absences - such as job or internship interviews, or non-emergency medical appointments - outside of class times.

Preponderance of Absences: Even when specific absences may be excused, there may come a point at which too many absences make it impossible for students to meet the course requirements. The instructor thus may advise students with many absences (regardless of the reason) to withdraw from the course - not as penalty for having missed class but simply as recognition that the student is unable to complete class assignments.

Mutual Respect: Students can expect to be treated with respect by the instructor and other students. Likewise, anyone enrolled in this course is expected to treat the instructor and fellow students with respect and to act in a dignified manner at all times. Class discussions are to be conducted in an environment of respect and tolerance for both people and their ideas.

Classroom Behavior: The instructor will not tolerate student behavior that is disruptive of the educational environment. Improper classroom behavior includes arriving late and/or leaving early; ***using cell phones*** and computers in activities unrelated to class work; any type of harassing, intimidating, belligerent, or abusive language or action; or any behavior that is distracting to the instructor or other students. The American University of Beirut strives to provide all the members of the university community with a work and academic environment in which its members treat one another with respect, and one which is free from discrimination and harassment of all kinds. Instructors may remove students who they determine are disrupting the educational process.

Food and Drink: general, students should not expect to snack during this course. Any beverages brought into class should be in containers. Under no circumstances may food or drink be used around computers or other equipment.

Technology: Students should silence cell phones during class and **they must be left at the front of the class when entering the room.** Use of computers and other digital devices unrelated to course material is prohibited.

Security: On-campus security is handled through the Office of Protection, located at the Main Gate on Bliss Street. The office is open 24 hours a day at ext. 2400 and may be called for any emergency such as personal security, theft, burglary, or assault.

Academic Expectations

Workload: Each student begins every class with the presumption that s/he is an average student capable of working at this level. Students will determine their grade from this basis according to their academic performance. For students to be academically successful, the standard of two hours out of class for every hour in class is recommended. Students should expect to spend adequate time in reading, researching, writing, working on projects, preparing homework, studying for exams, and so on. This is known as *independent learning*, a hallmark of an educated person.

Academic Integrity: The Faculty of Arts and Sciences at AUB expects the highest level of integrity from every student. Each student enrolled in this course is expected to make an honest effort in this class and to be scrupulous in maintaining academic honor and integrity; all work must be original and properly cited. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated whatsoever and university guidelines on academic misconduct will be enforced. Submitting writing that is not your own will result in a grade of zero for that assignment and a Dean's warning entered into your student record. For more detailed information, see the student code of conduct at <http://www.aub.edu.lb/pnp/generaluniversitypolicies/Documents/StudentCodeConduct/StudentCodeConduct.pdf>

Special Needs: If you have documented special needs and anticipate difficulties with the content or format of the course due to a physical or learning disability, please contact me and/or your academic advisor, as well as the Counseling Center in the Office of Student Affairs (Ext. 3196), as soon as possible to discuss options for accommodations. Those seeking accommodations must submit the Special Needs Support Request Form along with the required documentation.

Academic Assistance: Students needing assistance with writing, reading and/or study skills may contact the Writing Center. The Writing Center is a free resource for AUB students that I encourage you to explore. It offers one-hour consultations with tutors trained to listen and to ask questions about your writing. The center is currently in West Hall Room 336. To make an appointment, call 3157 or email writing@aub.edu.lb

Late Assignments: Dates for coursework are posted and/or announced prior to their due date. As such, late assignments are not accepted under any circumstances, period. If you fail to complete an assignment, you will receive a zero (no credit).

Make-Up Work: Make-up work is not offered.

Extra-Credit Work: There will be no extra-credit work offered in this course.

Grading Criteria for This Course:

Participation (Notebook & Class Discussions)	30 Points
Homework Assignments	20 Points
Cumulative Examination (Week 13/14)	25 Points
Final Paper (Independent Research Project) and Presentation:	25 Points

Participation (Notebook & Class Discussions):

Effective participation requires preparation. It is crucial to come to class having carefully read and thought about the day's reading(s). Study questions, or exercises from the chapters will be assigned in class (or sometimes be posted on Moodle and/or emailed) to help guide you to think about the general ideas that I find particularly important about the readings. Irrespective of these questions, **students are required to write down thoughts, ideas and questions they have for each reading and keep them in a notebook designated specifically for ENGL 230.** These notes will be a starting point for discussion—thus you should have thought and written about the readings (and/or questions) *before* class. I will periodically collect your notebooks and/or answers to focus questions to ensure all students are completing assignments. Failure to have notebook (with daily observations written down!) present in the class will result in deductions from this category. See Appendix for further commentary on class discussion evaluation.

Homework Assignments:

Throughout the semester, the student will receive occasional assignments that require in-depth thought and analysis. For example, the first homework assignment is meant to engage the student to become aware how human language can vary and what that variation might mean for human interaction. Additional assignments will involve multilingualism, gender, identity and/or ethnicity. Moreover, study questions and/or exercises from the readings will sporadically be collected and graded.

Independent Research Project:

To encourage your own individual exploration of a question that personally interests you, you will do an independent research project. It should build on what we've done in class (showing comprehension and ability to apply it effectively) while also pursuing the subject or issue in more detail beyond the general coverage in class.

An **interview or experiment** with one or more speakers. This can be a dialect interview (using a questionnaire you design) of the type that will be explained in the course, or an experiment similar to the methodology reported in other research we read about. Please discuss your proposal with the instructor, who will be glad to advise on material and procedures; but it is up to you to design the project, carry it out, and report the results in your paper.

Your final paper (8-10 pages) will include a rationale for the project, a description of methods, a summary and discussion of findings, and an annotated bibliography of scholarly publications that informs your project (in lieu of a formal literature review). You will complete this project in stages, receiving feedback from your professor and classmates along the way. All students must complete a human subjects training in the first few weeks of the semester (**due date forthcoming**). This is done on an online course at <https://www.citiprogram.org/default.asp>. You will be given out with more specific instructions on how to choose participants and conduct the study, a consent form, and a language background form. The write-up will require you to describe and reflect on your own experiences and relate your findings and the overall class findings to the readings and the discussions in class.

General requirements for written work:

1. All work should be typed and double-spaced. You should turn in a hard copy, and **you must turn in each paper as a Word attachment to an email, with your last name as the first part of the file name.** Papers should be emailed to me before the class period that they are due. Failure to do so will result in a 5% deduction of the final grade of the assignment
2. Use APA format (you can use a paper published in any major applied linguistics journal as an example to follow and/or find [resources on the web](#)), including non-sexist language. If you need more information about what constitutes sexist language and how to avoid it, you can consult the APA manual or talk to me.
3. Any material taken from a source needs to be identified as such, even if you have changed the wording. Failure to attribute material to its original author will be considered plagiarism and will result in a zero grade (See above). Make sure you understand the appropriate use of sources in your work; if you still have questions after reading the policy, be sure to ask!
4. Assignments will be graded on *depth of coverage* (comprehensive/ thorough treatment of the topic reflecting a clear understanding of the subject), *presentation* (clear, concise, readable prose), and *argument* (strength of evidence, and attention to counter arguments where necessary). See Appendix.
5. In case of an emergency that interferes with your work in this class, talk to me as soon as you can. I normally do not accept late assignments; when I do, I may take off points for each day late.

Grading System:

Grading Scale for This Course: The final grade will be reported using the system accepted by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Please see the Student Handbook for particulars regarding cumulative average and/or GPA.

Note: While effort and hard work are encouraged, they do not guarantee high grades. Rather, for most students, they are the means to achieving grades. In this course, students are evaluated on the basis of their academic output, not the effort they put into the course.

All earned grades are final. There is no negotiation, period.

REFERENCES

Our textbook contains a comprehensive bibliography. The following recommendations are not exhaustive, but are based on ease of accessibility to help you in your assignments.

Akmajian, A., Demers, R.A. and Hamish, R.M. 1984. *Linguistics: An Introduction to Language and Communication*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Coulmas, Florian. *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Duranti, Alessandro. 1997. *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Finegan, E. 1994. *Language: Its Structure and Use*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Levinson, Stephen. 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

O'Grady, W., Dobrovolsky, M. and Katamba, F. 1996. *Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction*. London: Longman. (3rd edition)

Pinker, S. 1994. *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Romaine, Suzanne. 2000. *Language in Society: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stewart, T. W., and Vaillette, N., (Eds.). 2001. *Language Files: Materials for an Introduction to Language and Linguistics*. Department of Linguistics, Ohio State University. (8th edition)

Tannen, D. 1990. *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Trudgill, P. 1995. *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Wardhaugh, R. 2010. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (6th edition). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Student Acknowledgement

Each student should print this page, sign it and return it to the professor.

I have received and read a copy of this syllabus for ENGL 230.

I understand that I will be held accountable for following the procedures and meeting the standards outlined in this syllabus.

Student Name (printed) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Student contact information:

Phone _____ E-mail _____

APPENDIX

ENGL 230 Holistic Participation Rubrics (30 pts.)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently on time and well prepared for class assignments, tasks and/or activities. • Consistently makes articulate, insightful, connected and courteous contributions to class dialogue, including responses to classmates' discussions. • Contributions consistently indicate careful completion and consideration of assigned readings, as evidenced by an ability to maintain analytical control. • Clearly invested in their effort to translate course content into quotidian applicability, as well as collaborating with classmates to that end. They regularly demonstrate this through an active, intrinsic interest in and responsibility for all course tasks and an understanding of their relevance and/or importance as tools for reflection. • They put a great deal of effort into understanding and individualizing assignments. When a need for clarification or the need for feedback on an idea for one of the assignments arises, they immediately seek clarification with specific questions to be answered. Always 'in the loop' regarding in-class, Moodle and/or email communication. • High degree of breadth and depth of interaction with classmates. <p>• <u>If they were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be significantly diminished.</u></p>	<p>Far exceeds standard: 27-30</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On time and well prepared for class assignments, tasks and/or activities regularly, but not as consistently or often as the person described above. • Most of the time makes articulate, insightful, connected, courteous contributions to most class dialogue, including responses to classmates' discussions. • Contributions consistently indicate careful completion and consideration of assigned readings, with rare exceptions. • Often invested in translating course content into quotidian applicability, demonstrated through interest in and responsibility for course tasks, and understands their relevance and/or importance as tools for reflection. • They are fairly prompt in asking clarification. Almost always 'in the loop' regarding in class, Moodle and/or email communication. • Fairly high degree of breadth and depth of interaction with classmates. <p>• <u>If they were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished.</u></p>	<p>Above standard: 24-26.5</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well prepared for class assignments, tasks and/or activities much of the time and generally arrive on time. • Participates in nearly all required and several optional areas- just enough to get by. Contributions are occasionally articulated, insightful, connected, and courteous. • Contributions mainly indicate careful completion and consideration of assigned readings. • Student is somewhat invested in translating course content into quotidian applicability. Interest in and responsibility for class-related projects is variable, suggesting that they comply to get by, but an underlying recognition of their relevance and/or importance as tools for reflection is not internalized. • May temporarily be discouraged, but eventually takes initiative to solicit feedback from the instructor. Most of the time candidate is 'in the loop' regarding in class, Moodle and/or email communication. • Near-adequate breadth and or depth of interaction with classmates. <p>• <u>If they were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished somewhat.</u></p>	<p>Near/Meets: 21-23.5</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often not well prepared for class assignments, tasks and/or activities. Regularly late and unprepared. • Participation is noticeably sporadic, unfocused, mainly centered on required areas. • Contributions do not normally indicate careful completion and consideration of assigned readings, at times, does not respond to classmates' discussions. • Barely invested in their individual and collaborative work in translating course content into clinical questions. Interest in, responsibility for class-related projects lacking, suggesting little ownership of responsibilities. • Sometimes seeks ways to relegate responsibility for success to perceived powerful 'others'. • There are some questions regarding this person's commitment to success in the course. Student is frequently 'out of the loop' regarding in class, Moodle-related and/or email communication. <p>• <u>If they were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would not be affected.</u></p>	<p>Approaches: 18-20.5</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rarely participates in either required or optional areas, rarely prepared. • Interest in and responsibility for class-related projects is lacking, suggesting that there is very little ownership of learning responsibilities. Locus of control is externally situated. Student is often 'out of the loop'. • In need of (a lot) more breadth and depth of interaction with classmates. 	<p>Below: 17.5</p>