

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
English Department
Syllabus & Course Description and Grading Policies • ENGL 235 • Spring 2016
Politics of Language • Fisk 339 • T/R 11:00-12:15 • CRN 21992

Professor: Dr. A. Michael Vermy
E-mail: av03@aub.edu.lb

Office: Fisk 235
AUB Phone: 4100

Office hours: Tues and Thurs 12:30 – 1:00 pm; Wed. 1:00 – 1:30 pm; and by appointment

Catalog Description: An analysis of the forces that govern and shape language. Topics covered include the determinants of language use such as communicative context, power dynamics, social correctness, taboos, gender biases and censorship.

Prerequisite Courses: n/a
Enrollment Restrictions: n/a

Course Overview:

Language and power are intimately related. This course will explore the relationship between language and the indexing, creation and maintenance of power relationships. We will start with the essential notions of language, language variation, language ideologies, language socialization and (symbolic) power. We will then examine the many dimensions of power in society and the role language plays in this diagram of power. This course will give you an opportunity to engage in critical thinking and the role of language in society and leave you with important analytical tools as you move into the world beyond college.

Text:

Required: Mooney, A., Peccei, J. S., Labelle, S., Henrikson, B. E., Eppler, E., Irwin, A., Preece, S. and Soden, S. (Eds.) *Language, Society & Power*. (2011). Oxford: Routledge. (4th ed.)

Recommended Supplemental Materials: In addition to the required textbook, it is highly recommended that students obtain a copy of Mooney, A., Peccei, J. S., Labelle, S., Henrikson, B. E., Eppler, E., Irwin, A., Preece, S. and Soden, S. (Eds.) *Language, Society & Power Reader* (2011). Oxford: Routledge. A copy will be placed on reserve in the library and a *select few* will be made available via email. Additionally, activities from other textbooks, as well as current articles, 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. explain the concepts of language and power
2. explicate the ways that language varies (i.e. prestigious variety, stigmatized variety, register)
3. understand how language ideologies are formed and explain their importance in shaping how we view language
4. explain language socialization and the role it plays in the formation of linguistic attitudes
5. explicate the indexing, creation and maintenance of power relationships
6. critically examine the role of power in society and the role language plays in this diagram of power
7. present a critical analysis of how power manifests itself in the areas of advertising, age, education, ethnicity, gender, humor, identity, law, media, medicine, politics, religion and/or social class

Course Content

The following is a brief and very tentative course outline for this semester. The professor 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 and/or on Moodle.

- I. What do we mean by language and power?
 - A. Defining language
 - B. Defining power
 - C. Language variation
- II. Are some languages more powerful than others?
 - A. Language ideologies
 - B. Language socialization
 - C. Language myths
 - D. Linguistic diversity
- III. Language and “politics”
 - A. Different definitions of “politics”
 - B. English-Only movement
 - C. Racism vs. Prejudice
- IV. Language and the media
 - A. News coverage
 - B. Accents, dialects and register
 - C. Public participation in the media
- V. Language and gender
 - A. Views of gender
 - B. Sexism in the language system
 - C. How is English used in sexist ways?
- VI. Language and ethnicity
 - A. Discussion on “ethnicity”
 - B. Ethnicity and racism
 - C. Language as a marker of ethnicity
- VII. Language and age
 - A. Age as a factor in language variation
 - B. Youth/Adolescence
 - C. Elderly
- VIII. Language and social class
 - A. Defining social class
 - B. Social and regional variation
 - C. Variationist sociolinguistics
- IX. Cultural Appropriation

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 instructor 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, job-related responsibilities, working on class assignments, activities sponsored by other departments or classes (including exams), 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. Instructors may remove students who they determine are disrupting the educational process.

Grievances: Students should be aware of the appropriate processes for complaints, grievances, and appeals. University policy is outlined in the AUB Student Handbook.

Food and Drink: In general, students should not expect to snack during this course. 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.** *Texting and use of headphones is prohibited.* Use of computers and other digital devices unrelated to course material is prohibited.

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. 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: Holistic Rubric Evaluation *	20 Points
Journal/Response Papers	25 Points
Cumulative Exam (appx. Week 13)	30 Points
Final project & Presentation (topic revealed at a later date):	25 Points

*See Appendix A

Participation (20 pts) and Journal/Response Papers (25 pts):

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 journal designated specifically for ENGL 235.** 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 check 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.

Language Status Case Study (Final Paper)

For your final paper, you will write a detailed case study of a language group involved in either an unequal status relationship or a social conflict in which language plays a part. Your own background and interests can drive the choice of cases. Some of the kinds of topics you might think about include ethnic conflicts in which language is a prominent concern, conflicts over the status of a particular language or language variety, attempts to enact or resist change within a language or language group, struggles to maintain or gain social power that rely strategically on rhetoric or narrative, instances of development of specialized language features by dominant or dominated social groups, proposals of or protests to some language policy, the history of discrimination against a particular social group based significantly on linguistic matters, etc. I will provide topics or you can come up with one on your own; the possibilities are extensive, and there is room to pursue divergent interests. You will select your topic and outline your approach to the case study in consultation with the instructor—in other words, you must discuss your topic with me and I must approve it before you continue.

Deadlines for completion:

- February 25—conference with instructor to select topic and propose case study method
- March 10—annotated bibliography of sources (list of sources that includes a brief abstract of each resource and summarizes its usefulness to your project)
- April 7—detailed outline of paper
- April 28 (8:59 am)—final paper due

Format for the final paper:

- Include a title page (your name, the course number, semester and a title of your paper)
- Minimum six pages (not including title page or bibliography)
- Maximum eight pages (not including title page or bibliography)
- Double-spaced
- Cambria or Times New Roman font
- 1” margins (top and bottom)
- 1.25” margins (left and right)
- *Do Not Plagiarize!* Include a references cited/bibliography page (APA format) at the end of your paper. Do not include the annotations (from the annotated bibliography).
- Submit an electronic copy (Word document) to me by 8:59 am, Tuesday, April 28; bring a hard copy to class at 11:00 am, April 28). Late assignments will not be accepted, period (if you email me at 9:00 am, you will receive a 20 point deduction from the final grade of your paper!) and if you are not in class at 11:00 am on April 28, you will receive a 20 point deduction from the final grade of your paper as well.
- Include any questionnaires or additional information/materials you may have used in your paper in an appendix at the end of the assignment.
- Save the file as “Last nameFirst initial_Engl 235 Spring16” Here is an example: VermyA_Engl 235 Spring16
- Paper should have an introduction, body and conclusion. Pay special attention to spelling and other standard writing conventions.

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 from your student email accounts 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.

REFERENCES

- Asante, M.K., & Gudykunst, W.B. (Eds.). (1989). *Handbook of international and intercultural communication*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Duranti, A. (1997). *Linguistic anthropology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Duranti, A. (Ed.). (2004). *A companion to linguistic anthropology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Edwards, J. (2009). *Language and identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Finegan, E. & Rickford, J.R. (Eds.). (2004). *Language in the USA: Themes for the twenty-first century*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Fought, C. (2006). *Language and ethnicity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kramarae, C., Schulz, M. & O'Barr, W. M. (Eds.). (1984). *Language and power*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lippi-Green, R. (2012). *English with an accent: Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States*. New York: Routledge.
- Mayr, A. (2008). *Language and power: an introduction to institutional discourse*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Mooney, A., Peccei, J. S., Labelle, S. et al. (Eds.). (2011). *Language, society and power reader: an introduction*. New York: Routledge. (3rd ed.)

Ng, S. H. & Bradac, J. J. (1993). *Power in language: Verbal communication and social influence*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Simpson, P. & Mayr, A. (2010) *Language and power: a resource book for students*. New York: Routledge.

Talbot, M. Atkinson, K. & Atkinson, D. (2003). *Language and power in the modern world*. Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press.

Wodak, R. (Ed.). (1989). *Language, power and ideology: Studies in political discourse*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

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

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 235.

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

Student Name (print) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Student contact information:

Phone _____ E-mail _____

APPENDIX

ENGL 235 Holistic Participation Rubrics (20 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 Moodle and/or email communication. • High degree of breadth and depth of interaction with classmates. • If they were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be significantly diminished. 	<p>Far exceeds standard: 18-20</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-prepared for class assignments, tasks and progress conferences most of the time. • 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 Moodle and/or email communication. • Fairly high degree of breadth and depth of interaction with classmates. • If they were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished. 	<p>Above standard: 16-17.5</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-prepared for class assignments, tasks and progress conferences much of the 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' on Moodle and/or email communication. • Near-adequate breadth and or depth of interaction with classmates. • If they were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished somewhat. 	<p>Near/Meets: 15.5-14</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often not well prepared for class assignments, tasks and progress conferences. 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 Moodle-related and/or email communication. • If they were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would not be affected. 	<p>Approaches: 12-13.5</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: 0-11.5</p>