Syllabus Draft

English 404: Language, Power, & Identity
Fall 2015
W 4:30-7:10 CRT 118

Patricia Mayes
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Required Readings

The required course materials are listed below.

- Articles on the English 404 D2L site
- Course handouts and assignment sheets handed out in class and posted later on D2L

Course Description: This course is designed to provide students with a broad understanding of the relationship between language and society. In investigating this relationship, we will consider how language is involved in the construction of social identities and power structures. Our investigation of social identity will include not only examining how individuals construct their identities but also how language is implicated in the formation of social groupings such as class, ethnicity, gender, and regional affiliations. The approach taken in this course is both descriptive and critical in that we will examine how language is implicated in creating and maintaining power for certain groups through such constructs as standard dialects and more broadly through public policies. Although the course contains linguistic content, students do not need a background in linguistics.

Course Requirements

1. Reading and Participation: Please follow the procedure below when doing the readings:
   a. Read each selection carefully and completely.
   b. I will usually post some questions concerning the week’s readings on the D2L site for you to respond as you read the material. You will also have the opportunity to post questions of your own.
   c. We’ll use the D2L posts as the basis of class discussion each week.

2. Homework Assignments: There will be four homework assignments during the semester. Assignment sheets for each one will be handed out in class the week before the assignment is due.
3. **Vowel Quiz**: There will be one in-class quiz primarily concerning the phonetic symbols for the vowels of American English.

4. **Examinations**: There will be two in-class exams. The first concerns the materials covered in the first half of the course and the second the materials in the second half.

5. **Response Paper**: You will need to write one short paper (750-word minimum) responding to an essay by Vershawn Young.

6. **Final Papers (Graduate Students Only)**: In order to receive graduate credit for this course, you must write a paper. There are two options for this paper, which should be about 15-20 pages, double-spaced:
   a. a literature review in which you come up with a question that you will try to answer by discussing relevant literature on the topic
   b. a research paper in which you try to answer a question concerning some aspect of the relationship between language and society. For this option, you will need to collect linguistic data (or use data already available to you), analyze it, and present your findings in a research paper format.

I will provide a more detailed assignment sheet before the paper proposal is due. You will also need to make an appointment with me to discuss your topic prior to turning in your paper proposal.

**Grading**

**Undergraduates**

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<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
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<td>Vowel Quiz</td>
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<td>Homework Assignments</td>
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<td>Response Paper</td>
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<td>Exams</td>
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**Graduates**

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**Course Policies**

1. **Attendance**: Your participation grade will be adversely affected if you do not attend class. If you have more than three unexcused absences, your grade will be dropped by
one letter grade for each additional class missed. In addition, you are responsible for obtaining materials distributed during any missed class and for submitting assignments on time.

2. **Assignments**: I do not accept emailed assignments. Electronic copies are acceptable, but they must be submitted in the dropbox on D2L, not sent by email. Electronic submissions should be in Word or PDF format. (RTF is also acceptable.) You can also hand in hard (paper) copies in class. Copies of course documents will be posted on the D2L site in the Content folder after class has met. Please be sure to put your name on all of your assignments, even if it is in the dropbox as a file saved under your name. I will not grade assignments without names on them! Also, note that it is your responsibility to make sure that I have received your work, either by handing it to me or by checking to make sure that it **actually appears in the dropbox** after you have submitted it.

3. **Late assignments, incompletes, etc**: The policies stated below (in italics) have been determined by UWM. I will simply follow them:

   The principle of equal treatment of all students shall be a fundamental guide in responding to requests for special consideration. No student should be given an opportunity to improve a grade that is not made available to all members of the class. This policy is not intended to exclude reasonable accommodation of verified student disability, or the completion of work missed as the result of religious observance, verified illness, or justified absence due to circumstances beyond the student's control. … Examples of unacceptable opportunities for an individual student include extra work, retaking an examination, taking an extra examination, or an extension of time on an assignment or examination.

   If you will be unable to complete an assignment on time as the result of one of the acceptable causes listed above, I will expect you to contact me as soon as the problem becomes apparent. This means that, except in extraordinary circumstances (like being in an emergency room somewhere, or stranded on a roadside), you should notify me before you actually miss the due date. If you follow the procedures for notifying me, and if the reason for the absence meets the criteria outlined above, I will arrange for you to make up the exam or turn in the assignment late. Otherwise, you will not receive any credit for the exam or assignment.

   An incomplete may be given to a student who has carried a subject successfully until near the end of the semester but, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond that student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. An incomplete is not given unless the student proves to the instructor that s/he was prevented from completing course requirements for just cause as indicated above.

   If you need special accommodation due to a disability, religious observance, or military duty, contact me as soon as possible. Note the link to UWM’s general policies is
http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/SyllabusLinks.pdf See the PDF print outs of relevant UWM policies in the ‘Course Document’ folder in D2L.

Tentative Schedule

Note: The abbreviation for the textbook is L-G. This abbreviation is used below with the relevant chapter. The articles on D2L are listed by the author’s last name, the year of publication, and the title of the article. Reading assignments and homework should be done before class on the date they are listed.

Week 1 (9/2): The relationship between language and social structure

• L-G, Preface, Introduction, Ch. 1

Week 2 (9/9): Basic concepts – Language change and language attitudes

• Finegan, (1985), “Unconscious attitudes toward linguistic variation”

Week 3 (9/16): The role of language in the construction of social identity

• Bucholtz & Hall (2005), “Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach”
• Mishoe (1998), “Styleswitching in southern English”

Due: Homework Assignment #1

Week 4 (9/23): The role of language in the creation and maintenance of power

• L-G, Ch. 4
• L-G, Ch. 7
• Lakoff (1990), Chapter 15: “Language Bosses”

Additional Readings (Optional): Excerpt from van Dijk (1986) “Structures of discourse and structures of power”; L-G, Ch. 8

Vowel Quiz

Week 5 (9/30): The linguistic construction of social groups: Regional dialects

• L-G, Ch. 2
• L-G, Ch. 3
• L-G, Ch. 11

Additional Reading (Optional): Wolfram, Walt & Schilling-Estes, Natalie (2006) “Regional dialects” (Ch. 5)

Due: Homework Assignment #2
Week 6 (10/7): The linguistic construction of social class

- L-G, Ch. 5

Additional Reading (Optional): Bernstein (1971) “Genesis, maintenance, and change of linguistic codes,” pp. 472-497

Week 7 (10/14): The linguistic construction of ethnicity

- Molesky (1988), Excerpt from “Understanding the American linguistic mosaic: A historical overview of language maintenance and language shift”
- Scollon & Scollon (1990) “Athabaskan-English interethnic communication”
- L-G, Ch. 14

Due: Homework Assignment #3 & Paper Proposal (graduate students only)

Week 8 (10/21)

Exam 1 (in class)

Week 9 (10/28): The linguistic construction of ethnicity (AAVE)

- L-G, Ch. 10
- Morgan, Ch. 3

Week 10 (11/4): Language and public policy in the U.S.

- Schmid, Ch. 3
- L-G, Ch. 9
- L-G, Ch. 17 (Case Study 2)

Week 11 (11/11): Language and public policy in the U.S. (Education)

- L-G, Ch. 6
- Menken (2009), “No child left behind and its effects on language policy”
- L-G, Ch. 16 (Case Study 1)
- The Original Oakland Resolution (http://linguistlist.org/topics/ebonics/ebonics-res1.html)


Due: Homework Assignment #4
Week 12 (11/18): The linguistic construction of gender

• Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003), “Introduction”
• Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003), Chapter 1: “Constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing gender”

Thanksgiving holiday: No class on 11/25!

Week 13 (12/2): Revisiting the ideology of language use as a conscious choice/Review

• Hill (2008), Ch. 1 “The persistence of White racism” (from The Everyday Language of White Racism)
• Hill (2008), Ch. 4 “Gaffes: Racist talk without racists” (from The Everyday Language of White Racism)
• Young (2010), “Should writers use they own English?”

Due: Response paper (Young’s essay)

Week 14 (12/9)

Exam 2

Final (Grad) Papers Due: Mon (12/14) by midnight

Citations for D2L Articles


15. The Original Oakland Resolution http://www.linguistlist.org/topics/ebonics/ebonics-res1.html


