In this course we will engage with the relationship between human language and society, focusing on how language patterns both reflect and reshape social structure and cultural institutions. We will consider this nexus from a variety of perspectives, engaging with primary literature drawn from sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and the sociology of language. As we progress through the course, we will take into examination different facets of the social context that affect and are affected by speakers’ linguistic behavior, including: demographic categories; solidarity and politeness; social stereotypes; political institutions; migration. As we grapple with these issues, we will introduce and key theoretical concept to the scientific study of language-in-context such as: linguistic variation, interaction, social meaning, style, language ideologies, standardization.

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Andrea Beltrama  
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H132  
Office hours: Wednesday 11:30h-12:30h

TUTOR: Alena Heinermann  
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Tutorium time and place: TBA

PREREQUISITES: Ling101 (Introduction to Linguistics)

READINGS (Ilias)
The class is designed as a seminar. As such, it is primarily meant to foster discussion and problematize issues, as opposed to search for definitive answers. There will be a *substantial* amount of reading (3 to 5 articles, 100 pages per week), drawn from primary research in sociolinguistics and cognate disciplines. Because of this, *active* class participation, willingness to engage with (at times) challenging readings and openness to different perspectives are constantly required throughout the course. Students are expected to do the readings before the class in which they are due, as well as to actively participate in class discussion. There is also a textbook, which I will make available on Ilias. Most of the time, lectures and discussion will not be following the textbook closely; however, you can use the textbook as a resource to review the main topics of the course, and to search for further materials for the final project.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE

- Attendance and participation in lecture: 20%
You are expected to come to class and participate in discussion. To get a full participation grade, you can miss at most two classes.

- 3 response papers: 30%
3 short (max. 500 words) essays that provide a critical discussion of at least two articles: one article must be old, that is, among those that have already been discussed in class; one article must be new; that is, among those that are assigned for a given week and have not been discussed yet. Each paper is due via email at 17:00h on the Monday before the class on which the new reading is assigned. You can pick whatever readings you like, but you cannot discuss the same article in more than one paper.

  Note: There are essentially two ways of approaching this essay. One is to compare and contrast one aspect of the two papers, showing how the perspective of the authors differ on this point; the other one is to individuate a common theme across the papers, and discuss how such a theme is approached in each article. Either way, this paper cannot be a mere plot summary of the two articles. You will receive a full grade as long as you show that you have read the articles, and that you have made a reasonable effort to engage with their argumentation.

- Final project: 50%
A 2000-word paper on a topic of your choosing. As for the content of the paper, you have two options: you could either design and carry out a small study collecting novel data; or engage in a critical review of the current literature on the topic. Whatever you prefer, you will have to come meet with me by January 15 to discuss the topic that you chose, and how you intend to carry out your project. If you choose to do a literature review, you will also have to get my approval on the papers that you will read (and of course, I can help you choose them as well!).

The grade on the project is determined as follows:
- 25%: Presentation of the project to the class in the final two lectures (Feb 6 or 13)
- 75%: Paper. The paper is due April 1, 2018. No April Fools’! You are of course welcome to submit it earlier.

Tentative schedule (Subject to change! Papers to be assigned on a week by week basis)

Oct 24: Language, the social, the cultural. Introduction.

Oct 31: No class!

Part 1: Variation and Demographics

Nov 7: Place.

Nov 14: **Social Hierarchies.**

Labov, W. 1972. The Social Stratification of (r) in New York City Department Stores. p. 168-178

Trudgill, P. 1972. Sex, Covert Prestige and Linguistic Change in the Urban British English of Norwich. p. 179-195

Nov 21: **Re-thinking place, re-thinking class. When correlations aren’t enough.**


Jonhstone, B. 100% Authentic Pittsburgh”: Sociolinguistic authenticity and the linguistics of particularity

**Part 2: Variation and Indexicality.**

Nov 28: **Embracing social meaning.**


Dec 5: Reading week! No class!

Dec 12: **Social types**


Dec 19: **Sociolinguistic cognition, experiments**


**Part 3: Ideologies, languages, nations.**

Jan 9: **Language ideologies, part 1: prescriptivism and correctness**


Boland, Julie and Robin Queen. If You’re House Is Still Available, Send Me an Email: Personality Influences Reactions to Written Errors in Email Messages. PLoS ONE 11(3)

Jan 16: **Language ideologies, part 2: dialects and standards.**


Jan 23: **Migration: Alena Heinemann’s guest lecture. Readings TBA**

Jan 30: **Identity, nations, movies.**


Feb 6-13: Student presentations