

University of Southern California

Department of Linguistics

Course number: Ling 115g
Title: Language, Society and Culture
Units: 4
Classroom: GFS 101
Semester: Spring 2013
Lecture: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30 – 10:50 a.m.
Discussion sections: Mondays, 9 – 9:50 am (GFS 220) **or** 11 – 11:50 am (GFS 229)
Professor: Sandra Ferrari Disner
Office: GFS 301n
Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11 am – noon, and by appointment
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Teaching Assistant: Mythili Menon mythilim@usc.edu

Course description:

This course will introduce you to the study of language as a cultural and social phenomenon. We will examine the various ways that language, society, and culture interact with, and influence, each other. We will consider why people speak in different ways, and how the language we make use of has important consequences for the projection of identity and self-image in society. It is our hope that, at the very least, you will develop a greater appreciation of the worldwide importance of language, and of your own innate and acquired language skills. Specific topics covered in this course, in order of presentation, are:

- Language, dialects, and varieties
- Diglossia, code-switching, and code-mixing
- Language maintenance and shift
- National languages and language planning
- English as a global language
- Pidgins and creoles
- Language(s) in the USA and California
- Bilingualism
- Accents and dialects of English
- The Ebonics debate: African American Vernacular English and language in education
- Language and gender
- Language change

Course Reading:

A. Most of the readings for this course are contained in the *Ling 115 Course Reader*, which will soon be available from the USC Bookstore. Until such time as this volume appears on the shelves (and also when additional readings may be assigned), the required articles will be posted in the 'Content' section of Blackboard.

B. A set of *Ling 115 Lecture Notes* will also be available from the USC Bookstore shortly. (Until such time, notes will be posted on Blackboard.)

C. Further readings will be posted as .pdf files on Blackboard, and identified accordingly as required or optional readings.

Course Requirements:

In addition to the readings, the requirements for this course include:

- 2 midterm exams (*each* 22% of the final grade)
- 3 Assignments:
 - Brief essay on “The way a person speaks...” (1%)
 - Profile of an ethno-linguistic group in Los Angeles (10%)
 - Dialect survey (10%)
- Commentary on three films (*each* 2%)
- Final exam (22%)
- Unscheduled, in-class pop quizzes – see below (7%)

Late Submission and Make-up Work:

For the midterm exams (not the final, which obeys strict University rules), if a *documented* emergency occurs, a student will be allowed to make up the exam within five days. This will only be permitted once per semester, per student, and carries with it a 10% deduction of the exam grade.

All assignments are expected to be submitted on time. A 10% deduction will be applied automatically to any late submissions of assignments (including film commentaries); here ‘late’ is defined as ‘submitted *after the end of the lecture* on the due date’. Assignments submitted after the following class session will no longer be accepted at all.

Seven percent of the final grade will reflect your score on the pop quizzes given in class. There will be more than seven quizzes given (at 1% for each passed quiz) but the total will not exceed 7%. (So you are allowed to miss a few; do not stress out about this.) Pop quizzes are ‘open book’, insofar as you may use your lecture notes, but you may not use your computers or smart phones. Pop quizzes must be taken in class and submitted at the end of class; late submissions will not be accepted. Regular attendance will, of course, improve your chances of receiving full credit for these quizzes.

It is not possible to offer extra credit opportunities for this course. Please do not expect, or even ask for, extra credit assignments.

Academic integrity:

Students are expected to uphold the USC Student Conduct Code (<http://web-app.usc.edu/scampus/university-student-conduct-code/>). Violations of the code, notably including plagiarism (see <http://web-app.usc.edu/scampus/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>), harm every student in the class. Any student who is found cheating on an exam or homework, or who facilitates

cheating by another student, will receive no credit for that work. Further action will also be taken if necessary.

Students with disabilities:

Students needing special accommodations (e.g., longer exam time) due to a physical or learning disability should contact the instructor as early in the semester as possible, and should also contact Disability Services and Programs (DSP). Consult the DSP webpage at http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html.

Course Schedule:

January 15: Introduction

January 17 (assignment): Brief (1-2 pp.) essay on “What can we tell about a person by the way s/he speaks?” Due in class on January 22.

January 17 & 22: Languages, Dialects, and Varieties.

January 24 & 29: Diglossia, Code-switching, and Code-mixing

January 31 & February 5: Language Maintenance and Shift

February 7: Film: “The Linguists”. Commentary on film due on February 14

February 12 & 14: National Languages and Language Planning

February 19: English as a Global Language (Part I)

February 21: First midterm exam

February 26 English as a Global Language (Part II)

Excerpt from film, “Many Tongues Called English” (No commentary required)

February 28 (assignment): Profile of an ethno-linguistic group in Los Angeles, due 3/14.

February 28 & March 5 Pidgins and Creoles: The development of new languages in contact situations.

March 7 & 12, : Language(s) in the USA and California

March 14: Ethno-linguistic survey due

March 14: Film: “American Tongues” Commentary on film due on March 28

March 26 & 28: The Ebonics debate: African American Vernacular English and language in education

April 2: Second midterm exam

April 4 & 9: Accents of English.

April 11 (assignment): Regional accent survey, due May 2

April 11 & 16: Bilingualism: Social, cognitive, and educational issues relating to the acquisition of two or more languages

April 18 & 23: Language and Gender

April 25: Film: “War of the Sexes: Language” Commentary on film due on May 2

April 30 & May 2: Language Change

May 2: Regional accent survey due

May 14 (8-10 am): Final exam