Ling 435/ ENGL 434 **American English** (Fall 2014)

Instructor: Allison Burkette
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burkette@olemiss.edu   office hours: MWF 2:00-3:00
Class time: MWF 11-11:50

Objectives

The purpose of LING 435/ENGL 434 is to provide the student with basic knowledge about the terms and skills used in the field of linguistics and to apply those skills to the study of American English. LING 435 is a service-learning course; part of your grade for this class will be based on your participation in a community-based research project. This course surveys the wide range of information available about the different dialects found in American English. We will talk about what a dialect is (and is not), how dialects are formed, and where today's American English dialects are going. In addition to the 'what' and 'who,' we will also explore the 'why' of dialects – the relationship between language and social factors (such as age, sex, ethnicity, social class, and region), as well as the way that speech is connected to identity. We will also talk about the fact that, as linguists, we gather data from people who are thinking, reacting, social beings that can be impacted by their interactions with us. We will talk about "linguistic gratuity" and the quest to make our interactions with any group of speakers a positive (and potentially helpful) experience.

Outcomes

At the end of the course, students will be able to:
-discuss appropriately the social factors affecting language use;
-explain the origin and maintenance of regional language varieties;
-understand the importance of and process for obtaining Internal Review Board approval for human subjects research;
-understand and apply different methods to collect and analyze speech samples;
-prepare for and conduct a sociolinguistic interview;
-extract, analyze, and write about pertinent linguistic data collected via interview;
-discuss the implications of variation for 'real world' situations (such as education, linguistic profiling, etc.);
-contribute to a larger, ongoing linguistic research project (the Mississippi Speech and Society Project); and
-demonstrate linguistic gratuity by giving back to a specific Mississippi community in a manner to be determined by the class.

Requirements

Students are expected to attend class religiously and are expected to come to class prepared to discuss assigned readings. Students will be expected to conduct sociolinguistic research in Grenada, MS, which will entail taking time outside of class for travel and for the conducting of hour-long interviews. Grades for this class will be determined by a point system. Of a total 500 points: there will be 2 tests worth 100 points each, four written "field reflections" worth 25 points each, four follow-up reports on data transcription and analysis worth 25 points each, and a final paper resulting from the course project worth 100 points.

This course uses the +/- grading system. As such, grades will be determined by the following scale:

A	> 450	C	300-324
A-	425-449	C-	275-299
B+	400-424	D+	250-274
B	375-399	D	225-249
B-	350-374	F	<224
C+	325-349		

LING 435 Policy

Come to class. Be on time for class. If you do miss class, don't email me to ask what you missed. Turn off cell phones. Be respectful of others. No late work will be accepted.

Service Learning Policy

Respect. Reciprocity. Relevance. Reflection.

Modern Languages Departmental Policy

Please read the "Academic Discipline Policy" in the *M Book*. Any occurrence of academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure for the course and possible suspension from school.

It is the responsibility of any student with a disability to contact the Office of Student Disability Services (915-7128). I will be happy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities who bring me an 'Instructor Notification of Classroom Accommodation' form.

If any student feels unable to participate in the off-campus community research, please come talk to me as soon as possible so that we can discuss alternatives.

A minimum grade of C must be earned in order for a class to count toward a major in linguistics.

Course texts

Mallinson, Childs & Van Herk. 2013. Data Collection in Sociolinguistics. Routledge Press.

Wolfram & Schilling-Estes. 2006. *American English*. 2nd edition. Blackwell Publishing.

Heath, Shirley Brice. 1996. *Ways with Words*. Cambridge UP.

Additional reading

Allen, Harold B. 1973. "Preface." In *The Linguistic Atlas of the Upper Midwest*. Vol 1. University of Minnesota Press.

Hudley, Anne Charity. 2013. "Sociolinguistics and Social Activism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Sociolinguistics*. Bailey, Cameron, Lucas (Eds.) Oxford University Press.

Kurath, Hans. 1939. "Instructions for Field Work." In *The Handbook of the Linguistic Atlas of New England*. Providence, RI: Brown University Press.

McDavid, Raven. 1958. "The Dialects of American English." In Nelson Francis *The Structure of American English*. NY: Ronald Press Co. pp. 480-542.

Milroy, Lesley. 1987. "Speakers: Some issues in data collection." In *Observing and Analysing Natural Language*.

Preston, Dennis. 2007. "The South: The Touchstone." *Language Variety in the South Revisited*. In Brenstein, Nunally, Sabino (Eds.) University of Alabama Press.

Wolfram, Walt. 2012. "Field Methods in Language Variation." *SAGE Handbook of Sociolinguistics*. Wodak, Johnstone, Kreswill (Eds.).

Wolfram, Walt. 2013. "Language Awareness in Community Perspective: Obligation and Opportunity." In *The Oxford Handbook of Sociolinguistics*. Bailey, Cameron, Lucas (Eds.) Oxford University Press.

Wolfram, Reaser, and Vaughn. 2008. "Operationalizing Linguistic Gratuity: From Principle to Practice." *Language and Linguistics Compass*. Volume 2.

Course Schedule

Week 1 Introduction to Course

Introductions to: descriptive versus prescriptive views of language and to community-based research. This week we'll also 'refresh' knowledge of phonology and morphology.

Read: Mallinson, Childs & Van Herk pp. 1-58; Allen 1973.

Due: Human Subjects research online training module: http://www.research.olemiss.edu/irb/CITI

Week 2 Generating New Data

In order for the sort of interviewing we are concerned with to be as successful and useful as possible, there is a basic concept you should keep in mind: You are not holding a *dia*logue but always a *tria*logue, with the tape-recorder itself as the third party. (Ives 1995: 39)

Read: Mallinson, Childs & Van Herk pp. 53-130; Kurath 1939; Milroy 1987

Due: IRB application for Human Subjects research

Week 3 Sharing Data and Findings

Informants seldom talk the way you want them to. (Pederson 1983)

Read: Mallinson, Childs & Van Herk pp. 251-292; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes Chapter 1

Due: Field reflection from underlined practice interview by Friday

Week 4 American Dialects – Sociohistorical Explanations

By assembling in enclaves that reflected their geographic origins, the four main waves of immigrants thus managed to preserve distinctive regional identities. That is why, for instance, horses in New England (as in east Anglia) *neigh*, while those in the middle states of America (and the Midlands of England) *whinny*. (Bryson 1994:37)

Read: Wolfram and Schilling-Estes Chapters 2 and 3;
         McDavid 1958
Due: Sociohistorical background of Grenada, MS

Week 5 Regional Dialects and the Linguistic Atlas

These methods … are not methods by which one can arrive at a complete description of the structure of American English, or even a complete description of variation within the language. Instead, these answers to questions may be taken as a sample of American speech at the time of the interviews. (Kretzschmar et al 1994:2)

Read: Wolfram and Schilling-Estes Chapters 4 and 5;
         Preston 2007
Note: Meet in computer lab Wed and Fri
Due: Field reflection from underline interview one by Friday

Week 6 Linguistic gratuity

Read: Wolfram et al 2008; Wolfram 2012; Wolfram 2013
Due: Field reflection from interview two by Friday
Due: Class "gratuity" recommendations

Week 7 Social and Ethnic Dialects; AAVE

Read: Wolfram and Schilling-Estes Chapters 6 and 7
Due: Field reflection from interview three by Friday
         All interview data must be labeled and posted
         and uploaded to dropbox by Friday 5pm

Week 8 Language and Gender

Read: Wolfram and Schilling-Estes Chapter 8
Due: Follow-up report one

Week 9 Language and Education

Read: Wolfram and Schilling-Estes Chapter 10;
         Heath Chapters 1 and 2
Due: Test One this Friday

Week 10 Putting theory into practice

Read: Heath Chapters 3 and 4
Due: Follow-up report two

Week 11 Oral Traditions

Read: Heath Chapters 5 and 6
Due: Follow-up report three

Week 12 Literacy

Read: Heath Chapters 6 and 7
Due: Follow-up report four

Week 13 Teachers, Learners, Ethnographers

Read: Heath Chapters 8 and 9
Due: Final papers are due Friday

Week 14 Thanksgiving Break

Week 15

Service learning is about disrupting the unacknowledged binaries that guide much of our day-to-day thinking and acting to open up the possibility that how we originally viewed the world may be too simplistic … (Butin 2010)

Read: Heath "Epilogue;" Hudley 2013
Due: Presentation of class gratuity

Test Two will be taken during the class' scheduled exam time.

Interviews

Students will conduct ~~four~~ three interviews, including one practice interview. The format of these interviews will be either Atlas-style or traditional sociolinguistic, or a combination of these. Please note that all interview data will be added to our class dropbox; the data collected by the entire class will be available for use in your course project.

Field reflections

As soon as possible after each interview, take a few minutes to jot down notes about how the interview went. These notes will be the basis of the typed-up, but still informal, field reflection that you will turn in by the dates specified in the course schedule. Field reflections should be 2-3 pages long.

As the name suggests, these assignments are a combination of traditional sociolinguistic field notes and reflection, and as such should contain the 'usual' contents of sociolinguistic field notes: impressions of how the interview went, the physical surroundings, length of interview, rapport between interviewer and interviewee, the ease with which the interviewee talked, etc.

In addition, address the following issues: could I have done a better job as an interviewer? Did I listen? Did I share? How can I improve my part of the interview conversation? What can I give back? How can I acknowledge the idea of *recursivity* in my discussion of this interview? Be sure to also include initial impressions/ideas about appropriate linguistic gratuity for this community.

Follow-up reports

The series of follow-up reports, which will begin after your final interview is completed, will take you through the steps of data analysis, presentation, and discussion.

Report one

In this report, you will present your initial survey of the data that you collected. What kind(s) of interviews did you conduct? What kind(s) of linguistic analysis does your data favor? What community themes arose from your interview conversations?

The purpose of this report is to share basic points about the data that you gathered. This report will be circulated among your classmates and used as the basis by which *all of you* decide what kind of larger course project to pursue.

Report two

This report will outline your plan of action for your individual course project. What kind of data are you going to analyze (sociolinguistic, Atlas, phonological, grammatical, lexical)? Be as specific as possible in your report. How can the specific type(s) of data that you are interested in contribute to the completion of the class gratuity? Which interviews are you going to use? How much transcribing will be necessary? What tools will you use for analysis (IPA transcription, Praat software, concordancing program, etc.)? What kinds of background information do you need to collect in order to write a brief lit review for your final project?

This report will also be used to determine which students can pool their information. Our goal is to be efficient in terms of how much time we spend transcribing and counting!

Report three

Report three will be a synopsis of the skills, talents, or resources that you have that will help make our class gratuity something worthwhile and professional. What is your vision for the final product? How will the community benefit from the gratuity? Where do you envision this project being displayed?

Report four

Consider this the most personal of your reports. For this assignment, you are asked to think carefully about your experience as a researcher. What did you learn about your interviewee as a person? What did you learn about the community in which you worked? What did you learn about yourself? What kinds of avenues do you think this experience has opened up for you (not just in sociolinguistics, but in dealing with different kinds of people more generally)? What kinds of service can you do for/in communities like Grenada as part of your future career (in or out of linguistics)?