

LIN 225
Language and Gender
online asynchronous

Summer I 2023

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About this course

Course description

This asynchronous online course introduces you to the ways in which people use language to construct, perform and/or reflect their gender identity/identities and gender expression. We will also consider how the linguistic construction of gender interacts with other social characteristics such as race, social class and age. The course is designed to enhance your social science literacy, while also engaging you from a humanities perspective with issues such as personal agency and societal change. No prior familiarity with linguistics or gender studies is required or expected.

Course goals

The course is designed to help you:

- feel comfortable discussing the relationship between gender and relevant aspects of linguistic structure, such as pronunciation, word choice, conversational turn-taking etc.
- engage with a range of studies on language use in relation to gender and sexuality in Western and non-Western societies, at home and in the workplace, and during childhood and adolescence, among other topics.
- place the study of language and gender within its historical context (1970s to today).
- be able to describe different theoretical approaches to examining gendered language use.
- be able to apply approaches and analytical methods you have learned to contemporary public discourse about language and gender, e.g. in the media.

Although there will be some discussion of social theory, the class will be focused on the scientific study of language, taking gender as our central variable. However, students are welcome to discuss other theories and methods studied in other topic-related fields.

Required materials

- All readings will be posted (PDF or link) on the course D2L site.
- Additional, optional background readings are also available on D2L.
- For office hours and any optional synchronous events, a device with a microphone and webcam. It must also be compatible with Zoom.

Course requirements and evaluation

The course will be graded out of 100 percentage points. Final grades will be converted to a 4.0 scale.

Course components		Grading scale			
Reading response	10 %				
Quizzes	20 %	4.0	90-100%	2.0	70-74%
Discussion posts	20 %	3.5	85-89%	1.5	65-69%
Midterm exam	25 %	3.0	80-84%	1.0	60-64%
Final exam	25 %	2.5	75-79%		

Evaluation

Reading response: You will sign up for one of the starred readings on the course schedule. You will write a written response using the rubric on D2L. **These will always be due the Sunday of the week of that reading.** Your written response will be placed on D2L and will serve as a study guide for the entire class. You can supplement the discussion of the article with extra materials if you choose (video, audio, images, etc.). The rubrics are on D2L.

Reading quizzes: There will be a brief (3-5 question) multiple-choice quiz on the readings for each week. The quizzes are meant to assess whether or not you are reading and understanding the material. The quizzes will not all be immediately available. Each week's material will unlock once you have completed the previous week's quiz. **To unlock the next week's material, you will need to get a perfect score on the quiz you are taking;** because of this, you are allowed to take the quiz an unlimited number of times. However, there is a 10 minute time limit for each attempt. Remember that quizzes and discussion posts are due weekly, and you cannot catch up on the entire course right before the exam.

PackBack discussion: The Packback Questions platform will be used for online discussion about class topics. Packback Questions is an online community where you can ask open-ended questions to build on course material and relate topics to real-world applications. PackBack discussion is worth 20% of your overall grade. The deadline for each week is 11:59pm on the Sunday of each week (see schedule below). To receive your points, you should submit the following in each deadline period:

- 1 open-ended Question per week with a minimum Curiosity Score of 45
 - Your open-ended question should be about that week's material.
- 2 Responses per week with a minimum Curiosity Score of 45
 - Your responses can be to questions asked that week or from any previous weeks.
 - "Supporting Point" and "Counter Point" responses count as responses.

Half credit will be provided for questions and responses that do not meet the minimum Curiosity Score. Questions and responses are equally weighted, i.e. each is worth a third of your points for the week.

A good sociolinguistic analysis considers all the possible interpretations of the data. For that, you need knowledge of a wide range of social experiences, structures and attitudes. You need to read, but you also need to talk to people. You can't do sociolinguistics in a social vacuum! This is our attempt to create social space in an asynchronous course.

Scheduled Zoom Sessions: At least two non-mandatory Zoom sessions will be held for students to meet the instructor and each other, and for addressing questions from students. The dates and times for these will be confirmed later.

Course policies and procedures

Tech help: Regardless of how much we prepare, or how good we are with technology, problems will arise. The University offers assistance with technical questions or any problems that may come up. The Technology Support Center has a help line that is available from 7 a.m. to midnight any day the University is open: (517) 432-6200 or (844) 678-6200. The Technology Support Center also has an online chat service that you can access at their website: <https://tech.msu.edu/support/help/>. Additionally, there is a D2L Help website that you can access at: <https://help.d2l.msu.edu/>.

Communication: I will answer questions as quickly as I can, and usually within 24 hours, Monday to Friday. You can either ask your question directly or set up an appointment, and we'll figure out the best media (chat, Zoom, phone, etc.) for our conversation. If you have websites, videos, news articles etc that are relevant to the course and that you'd like to share with classmates, you can post them as part of your PackBack discussion posts.

Late work: This course is online and largely self-directed. Because of this, when you do assignments is somewhat up to you. However, because of the tight schedule we have for this 7-week course, there are some limitations. In order to have an informed discussion, everyone must do the readings and their discussion posts in the same week (discussion responses can be to questions asked that week or from any previous weeks). Quizzes are also due weekly to help ensure that everyone is on the same page at a given time. This class is divided into two halves, the first half (the first 4 weeks) must be completed by the midterm's deadline. ALL material (quizzes, discussion posts, final exam) must be submitted before the deadline for the final exam.

Academic honesty: You are encouraged to discuss class material with your fellow students. All written work must be written up on your own in your own words. If you make use of anybody else's ideas, cite your source – whether that source is a print publication, a web site, or a comment made by a classmate. You are responsible for knowing what constitutes plagiarism and for avoiding it. See the University policy at <https://msu.edu/unit/ombud/academic-integrity/plagiarism-policy.html> and the Spartan Code of Honor at <https://honorcode.msu.edu/>.

Accommodation for disability: Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services, and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (“VISA”) form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

Basic needs: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the University's division of Student Affairs and Services (<http://studentaffairs.msu.edu/>) for support. Furthermore, please notify me or the Faculty of Record, Dr. Suzanne Evans Wagner (wagnersu@msu.edu) if you are comfortable in doing so.

Classroom respect: In this class we discuss social and linguistic issues, some of which may be controversial. To create an environment that is supportive, inclusive, and intellectually stimulating, individual students must feel that their voices are heard and respected. Every person is responsible for their language and interactions, and should show regard for others while valuing free speech. Disruptive behavior that impedes the teaching/learning process will not be tolerated and is grounds for withdrawing a student from the course if it is persistent. Respect diversity. Sexism, racism, or language that is offensive to others is unacceptable. In general, when you're talking to others about their opinion, or their support for a claim in a course text, make it clear that you're composing a constructive criticism, not a personal attack. Where possible, back up your arguments with evidence.

Concerns: The Chair of the Department of Linguistics and Languages is always available to hear any concerns you might have about this course. See <https://lilac.msu.edu/contact> for contact details. The Office of the University Ombudsperson is also available to assist students with any conflict or problem that has to do with being a student at Michigan State University. You may visit the Ombudsperson in 129 North Kedzie, call (517) 353-8830 or e-mail ombud@msu.edu. The Office of the University Ombudsperson is an independent, neutral, informal and confidential resource and does not accept formal complaints, nor does it provide notice to the University.

Limits to confidentiality: Materials submitted for this class are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University's student record policies. However, students should be aware that University employees, including instructors, may not be able to maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues based on external legal obligations or that relate to the health and safety of MSU community members and others. As the instructor, I must report the following information to other University offices if you share it with me: (i) Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child, (ii) Allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment when they involve MSU students, faculty, or staff, and (iii) Credible threats of harm to oneself or to others. These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In almost all cases, it will be your decision whether you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting you are encouraged to make an appointment with the MSU Counseling Center.

Schedule

Readings must be completed during the week in which they are listed * = available for reading response.
 (** = both articles constitute a single reading response)

Wk	Date	Topic	Required reading
Introduction and lexicon			
1	5/15 – 5/21	Gender in everyday language	<i>What the F*ck is Gender?</i> and <i>What is linguistics?</i>
			<i>Female Architect;</i> and <i>Default: male</i>
2	5/22 – 5/28	(Self-)labeling	<i>Pronouns have always been political</i> ** and <i>Intermediate pronoun studies: multiple pronounces</i> **
Morphology and language policy			
3	5/29 – 6/4	Grammatical gender	<i>Debate over gender neutral language divides Germany</i> ** and <i>Germany debates how to form gender-neutral words</i> **
		Gendered morphology	<i>ette-ymology</i> *
Discourse			
4	6/5 – 6/11	What is discourse analysis?	<i>Discourse analysis</i>
		Difference Theory	Tannen 1990*
		Dominance Theory	Swann 1989*
		Midterm exam	

Politeness and power			
5	6/12 – 6/18	Compliments	<i>Sugar and spice</i>
		New media	<i>Emojis*</i> and <i>Conversational floor online</i>
		‘Verbal hygiene’	<i>Female email*</i> and <i>Uptalk</i>
Phonology			
6	6/19- 6/25	What is phonology? Binomial pairs.	<i>Gentlemen before ladies?***</i> and <i>Which way round?***</i>
		Sociolinguistic variables and (ing)	Trudgill 1988*
Phonetics			
7	6/26- 6/29	Perceiving gender and sexuality	<i>Do I sound gay?</i> documentary (1h 17m) and <i>What it means to ‘sound gay’ *</i>
			<i>Sounding gay in California *</i>
		Final exam	

Final exam: Available on D2L from 6/27, 9:00am – 6/29, 5:00pm