

LIN 4930/6930
Social Categories & Linguistic Knowledge

Fall 2023

Matherly 16 MWF

01:55-2:45 PM

Course website: elearning.ufl.edu



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Office hours: Wed 4:05-4:55pm
email for additional availability:
either in office or on Zoom

Course description

In this course, we will explore the following question: “How can we as linguists understand the linguistic significance of social variation?” The course will 1) provide a broad overview of linguistic methodologies, approaches to characterizing social variation and their theoretical motivations 2) demonstrate how social contexts pervasively impact the measurements and analysis of human language phenomena and 3) encourage students to think creatively about assessments of linguistic and social knowledge.

Learning Objectives

1. Develop understanding of how different linguistic subfields position the significance of social category information relative to the definition of linguistic knowledge
2. Become familiar with linguistic methodologies and empirical findings that have revealed an impact of social perception on language processing
3. Contextualize common linguistic constructs within historical discourses which assign relational significance to socio-political, linguistic and biological categories
4. Identify how beliefs about the significance of social variation have shaped the interpretation of linguistic data and development of linguistic theory
5. Critically review modern best practices in collecting demographic data, identifying rationales and limitations

Grade breakdown

Your grades will be based on: paper presentations (20 %), active participation in class, class activities, and timely postings of discussion questions (10 %); two critical summaries (30 %), and a final written assignment (40 %).

Paper Presentations

Approximately 15 minutes; depending on enrollment, you may be asked to present a paper together with somebody or present more than one paper over the entire course. Presentations will summarize the assigned reading and conclude with points for discussion, including questions submitted by classmates (see below). A copy of the slides should be mailed to atripp@ufl.edu before the start of class.

Discussion Board Participation

Students are required to submit at least one post to the Canvas discussion board each week. Ideally, this should be done by 8:00 PM the day before our class discussion. Substantive comments in reply to your fellow classmates count towards this requirement. Effective discussion board posts will clearly index relevant sources and effectively engage with prior comments where appropriate. The discussion board posts can be used as an opportunity to ask and answer clarifying questions about the material, express opinions and propose potential discussion questions.

Critical Summaries

Students will write two critical summaries. Each of these assignments will require the student to read a peer-reviewed journal article that reports an original study related to class topics, and that extends upon our class discussions. Summaries should contain: (1) an introduction to the theoretical background, clearly indicating how the present study fits in and contributes to understanding of the issue; (2) a brief description of the goals, methods, results, and authors' interpretation of the data; (3) a critical assessment of the design and interpretation, including commentary on the wider implications of the study. More detailed instructions will be available on the course website. Summaries should be about 2-3 double-spaced pages long, excluding references.

Final Written Assignment

Students will create an experimental design which probes the role of social perception on a language task. This design may extend literature which is discussed in class, or explore a novel question. The experimental proposals must explore the potential impact of social variation in manipulating linguistic experimental outcomes. The final paper should be 3-5 pages long and include a literature review, methodology section and a discussion section detailing how the experiments' possible outcomes may distinguish between theories of how social knowledge impact the acquisition, encoding, access or deployment of language knowledge.

The fine print

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY. On all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies behaviors that are in violation of this code. Furthermore, students are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct. The unauthorized and unattributed use of A.I. composition software (e.g. ChatGPT) shall be considered violations of this pledge. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult me.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT. Students and faculty both have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. I pledge to treat each of you with dignity, respect, and professional courtesy; I expect you to do the same for me and for each other.

ACCOMMODATION POLICIES. If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from the Disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>) to me in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. .

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES A student should inform me if the religious observances of their faith will conflict with class attendance, tests or examinations, or other class activities, prior to the class or occurrence of that test or activity. I am obligated (and happy) to accommodate that particular student’s religious observances.

COURSE EVALUATIONS. Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback by completing course evaluations. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens.

INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT. Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint or belief. Students are encouraged to share their viewpoints, data, and sources in class and to speak with me or classmates, in class or privately, about any perceived violation of this policy.

RECORDING LECTURE CONTENT. Students are allowed to record class lectures. However, the only allowable purposes of these recordings are (1) personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. Specifically, students may not publish, share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to recorded lectures or their transcripts without the written consent of the instructor, regardless of format or medium. Access includes but is not limited to another student within the same class section. A recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil action and/or discipline under the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

A	94-100%	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D+	67-69%	F	0-59%
A-	90-93%	B	83-86%	C	73-76%	D	63-66%		
		B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%	D-	60-62%		

GRADING SCHEME. This course follows UF grades and grading policy:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>