LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY
Department of Anthropology
Spring 2025
Monday 10:20 AM - 11:40 AM
Room LOR-020

Instructor- Dr. Dana Conzo (She/Her)
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Office Hours- By Appointment (virtual meetings available)

Course Description:

This course serves as an introduction to Linguistic Anthropology. The use of language to communicate with other members of our society is universal to all human beings—perhaps it is even what makes us human? Linguistic Anthropology, one of the four sub-fields of Anthropology, is the study of language as a social practice. We are interested in how people communicate, which virtually never really aligns with the "proper" pronunciation or perfect grammar you might learn in a textbook or language class, and which can tell us SO much more than the literal meaning of what is said. In this course, we will examine questions such as: Does the language we speak shape the way we think? How are different manners of speaking tied to aspects of social identity, such as gender, race, class, or even generation? How are ideas about different languages, dialects, or linguistic practices interwoven with structures of power? Can political movements shift linguistic practices? Through weekly assigned readings, lectures, and discussion, students will become familiar with key concepts, theories, and methods in Linguistic Anthropology, and will learn how to analyze linguistic practices within the social and cultural context in which they take place.

Course Goals and Objectives:

Students can expect to achieve the following outcomes if they honor all course policies, attend and participate in class, and complete all assigned work in good faith and on time:

Core Curriculum Learning Goal: Arts and the Humanities

- AHq: Understand the nature of human languages and their speakers.

Additional Course Learning Goals

- Students will be able to define and apply key terms and concepts used in the anthropological analysis of language as a social practice.
- Students will be able to identify and explain foundational theories about the nature of human language and about the relationships among language, thought, culture, and social stratification and identity.
- Students will be able to read, understand, summarize, synthesize, and assess the arguments put forth in scholarship by linguistic anthropologists.
- Students will be able to apply concepts in linguistic anthropology to analyze and discuss the interaction of linguistic practices & ideologies with structures of power such as: race, gender, and class.
- Students will be able to apply foundational methods of data collection and analysis in linguistic anthropology, including transcription and discourse analysis.

Lectures and Recitations:
General Weekly Lecture: Monday 10:20 AM - 11:40 AM
Sections:
Tuesdays 10:20 AM - 11:40 AM RAB 109B
Wednesday 10:20 AM - 11:40 AM HICK-115
Wednesday 2:00 PM - 3:20 PM RAB 209B
Wednesday 3:50 PM - 5:10 PM RAB 209B
Thursday10:20 AM - 11:40 AM BIO 302

Your final grade will be divided among the following requirements:

1. Class participation and attendance (25%) – You will be required to show up AND participate in class discussion.

2. Reading Response Posts- (25%): Students are required to keep up with readings, to come to discussion prepared for discussion and in-class exercises, and weekly responses.

   For the weekly response papers, you are required to write 1-2 paragraphs discussing the readings. Please do not write summaries. Instead, answer the following questions.

   a. What is the main argument or thesis of the reading, and how is it supported by evidence or examples?
   b. What are the key concepts or ideas introduced in the reading, and how do they relate to the broader themes of the course?
   c. Can you identify any strengths or weaknesses in the author's argument or reasoning? Are there alternative perspectives to consider?
   d. How does this reading connect to other readings or concepts discussed in the course, and what new insights or questions does it raise?
   e. In your opinion, what are the practical implications or real-world applications of the ideas presented in the reading?
   f. What specific concepts, arguments, or passages in the reading did you find most challenging or unclear, and why? How do you think these points could be better explained or clarified?
   g. What aspects of the assigned reading do you find most contentious or with which you disagree? Can you provide specific reasons or evidence to support your perspective, and how might this disagreement contribute to a deeper understanding of the topic?

   These will be due SUNDAY 11:59pm THE NIGHT BEFORE CLASS.

3. A midterm exam (20%) Exam may include identifications, fill-in, and short essay questions. This will be proctored during Recitation
4. A research paper (30%) due at the end of the semester. Further instructions will be distributed in class early in the semester.

**** NOTE THAT LATE HOMEWORK OR RESEARCH PAPERS **WILL NOT** BE ACCEPTED****

Required Texts:
The assigned readings will be available on Canvas or the university library website. I understand that textbooks can be costly, I have created this course using digitized and free material. Articles will be posted as PDFs and the textbook is available to read or download through the library website (link below). If you have any trouble accessing the material, please don't hesitate to email me.

Ahearn, Laura
Living Language: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology
https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/lib/rutgers-ebooks/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=693771

Workload and Commitment:
According to the U.S. Dept. of Education, 1 "credit hour" is defined as: "one hour [i.e., 50 min.] of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours [i.e., 100 min.] of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester." Since this is a 3-credit course, that translates to three hours per week in the classroom, and 300 minutes per week of out-of-class student work. That's about 2-2.5 hours of homework for each class period.

Course Policies:

1. ***Arrive on time.*** When we're all in the classroom on time, we all stay on the same page and the flow of class discussion is vastly improved. Coming late disrupts other students, breaks the flow of discussion, and disturbs me. For that reason, I will lower your participation grade if you are habitually late.

2. Treat ***one another respectfully.*** In this class, we will often deal with controversial issues and have spirited debates and discussions. **It is okay—and even encouraged—for you to disagree with each other and with me, as long as it is done respectfully**.

3. ***Attendance: Attendance*** in this course is required and will be recorded daily. While attendance is crucial to this class, extenuating circumstances may require you to miss a class meeting.

4. Participation: Don't be afraid to talk, especially if your ideas seem incomplete (you might cause an avalanche of productive thought). This class will thrive on a call and response style of teaching. You are an essential part of it! Also, Participation is part of your grade =)

Communication:
Students are responsible for timely attention to email and Canvas postings for this course and therefore should check the Canvas site and their Rutgers email accounts regularly. Dates and assignments may change; all changes will be announced in class or posted on Canvas or both.

Ethics/Academic Integrity: Read the Rutgers academic integrity policy at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu. Violations include cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.

You are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is. For tips about how to consult sources without plagiarizing, and how to take notes so that you don't plagiarize by accident, see http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism.

In addition, the Rutgers Copyright Policy assigns ownership of pedagogical materials developed by instructors to those instructors (https://policies.rutgers.edu/view-policies/governance-legal-matters-–-section50#3).

Students do not have the legal right to post course materials on websites without the written authorization of the instructor. Doing so without authorization could violate the University Academic Integrity Policy and subject the student to disciplinary action.

Course Structure

The course structure includes weekly lectures and recitations. Students must attend Professor Conzo's lectures, participate in the weekly recitations, and fulfill all class requirements outlined below.

Lectures: Each week delves into a primary module from the course as outlined on the Canvas website. The lecture offers an overview of the topic, acquainting students with the essential frameworks and concepts tied to the week's themes and readings. Students could engage directly with the course leader for questions and clarifications.

Recitations: Each recitation is guided by a designated TA, serving as an extension of your weekly readings to deepen your grasp of the module and engage with ethnographic writings in the field. The recitations address queries, provide a collaborative space for peer interaction, and foster dialogue with co-instructors. Treat your TA with the same level of respect you give the professor.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Course Website

A Canvas website (https://tlt.rutgers.edu/canvas) accompanies this course; there you will find announcements, chapter review materials, quizzes, discussion boards, and other resources. If you have trouble accessing the site, please reach out to one of your instructors.

All students are responsible for timely attention to email and Canvas postings for this course and therefore should check the Canvas site and their Rutgers email accounts regularly. Dates and assignments may change; all changes will be announced in class or posted on Canvas or both. [Please use the Rutgers absence report online system rather than emailing the instructors directly about absences.]

**If you miss more than two recitation sections, you are required to see a Dean of Students for assistance in verifying any special circumstances, and to submit documentation of those unusual circumstances to the professor and your TA. The only excused absences are for unusual circumstances—such as medical reasons or a death in the family—and these circumstances must be documented by a physician and/or academic Dean.

Religious holidays

Please notify the professor and your TA during the first two weeks of the semester if you observe a religious holiday that will prevent you from attending a lecture or recitation section meeting. You may arrange to make up the work missed only if you notify the professor and your TA during the first two weeks of the semester about any expected absence due to a religious holiday.

E-mail communication with TA and professor

In the subject line of your email message, begin with "108"—e.g., a subject line might read: "108/reading question" or "108/exam question." (Specifying "108" in your email subject line will help to ensure timely responses.) Start your emails with formal greetings and be polite and concise throughout.

Adress your professors as Dr. or Professor (Not Miss/Ms/Mrs/Mr). Address your Tas however they prefer.

Please email us with any questions you may have. Remember that emails are not text messages so do not expect immediate responses. If you do not receive a reply, you may send a polite follow-up email or speak to us in class, but please allow sufficient time for a response

Use of AI and ChatGPT in Class Assignments

In this course, students are permitted to use artificial intelligence tools, such as ChatGPT, for brainstorming, initial research, and clarification purposes. However, the final product of all assignments must reflect the student's original thought and understanding of the material. Reliance on AI-generated content without proper synthesis or attribution is discouraged and may be considered academic dishonesty. Students are encouraged to use AI responsibly, critically evaluate the information it provides, and integrate it appropriately into their academic work.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

(Any changes or amendments will be announced in class and on Canvas in advance)

Week 1 – Language and Being Human
Introductions, overview, expectations, how to read for this course.

Week 2 – Language as Representation
• Ahearn Chapter 1: "The Socially Charged Life of Language"

Week 3 – Multimodality and Multilingualism
• Ahearn Chapter 6: "Multilingualism and Globalizations"
• Flora Veit-Wild, "'Zimbolicious' -The Creative Potential of Linguistic Innovation"

Week 4 – Language as Performance
• Ahearn Chapter 8: "Performance, Performativity…"
• Susan D. Blum, Naming Practices and the Power of Words in China

Week 5 – Language Acquisition and Socialization
• Ahearn Chapter 3: "Language Acquisition and Socialization"
• Kathleen C. Riley, "Learning to Exchange Food and Talk in the Marquesas"

Week 6 – Linguistic Relativity
• Ahearn Chapter 4: "Language, Thought, and Culture"
• Benjamin Lee Whorf, The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language

Week 7 – Research in Linguistic Anthropology
• Ahearn, Chapter 2: "The Research Process in Linguistic Anthropology"

In Discussion: MIDTERM EXAM

Week 8 –Gendered Language and Ideologies
• Ahearn Chapter 9: "Language and Gender"
• Deborah Tannen, "The Power of Talk: Who Gets Heard and Why"
• Michael Silverstein, "Language and the Culture of Gender: At the Intersection of Structure, Usage, and Ideology"
• Tom Boellstor, "Why English Might Let Go of 'He' and 'She'"

Week 9 – Racialized and Racist Language
• Laura Ahearn Chapter 10: "Language, Race, and Ethnicity"
• H. Samy Alim and Geneva Smitherman, "Nah, We Straight": Black Language and America's First Black President

Week 10 – Indexing Class and Generation
• William Labov, The Social Stratification of (r) in New York City Department Stores
• Tadeusz Lewandowski, Uptalk, Vocal Fry and, Like, Totally Slang: Assessing Stylistic Trends in American Speech

Week 11 – Transcription
• Bucholtz, Mary, The Politics of Transcription
•Leveraging "Thick Transcription" to Promote Inclusion in Qualitative Research Through Transcript Alignment

Week 12 – Nationalist Ideologies
• Kathryn Woolard, "Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry"
• Catherine Rhodes. "Speak English or Else You'll be Put on Dish Duty!"

Week 13 – Linguistic Colonialism and Language Revitalization
• Ahearn Chapter 11: "Language Endangerment and Revitalization"

Week 14 – Work on Final paper in class

Week 15 – Work on Final paper at home

FINAL PAPER due: TBA