LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL DIVERSITY
Department of Anthropology
Spring 2025
Mondays/ Wednesdays 2:00 PM - 3:20 PM
Room RAB 208

Instructor- Dr. Dana Conzo (She/Her)
Email: d.conzo@rutgers.edu
Office- BIO 206
Office Hours- By Appointment (virtual meetings available)

Course Description:
Language and communication in social life. Class, ethnic, and sex-role differences in language use. Bilingualism and linguistic diversity studied cross-culturally. Humans use a wide variety of semiotic resources (gestures, speech, writing, multisensual signs…) to construct our diverse sociocultural worlds. Some of these modes we acquire early (to smile and cry, to dance and dress …) while others we learn later in life (oratory, filmmaking, website management…). But very few are universal; most are developed in personally and socially diverse ways. While some communicative media are heavily constrained by political and economic structures over which we have no control (and may be unaware of), others are open to negotiation and transformation by individuals. Some discursive forms are used to dominate (in racist, classist, and heterosexist ways) while others allow us to play with or resist hegemonic control (although the distinction between these two is not always clear-cut). In this course, we explore how humans develop the communicative means to semiotically read and pragmatically alter our social landscapes, ideally for the better.

Course Goals and Objectives:
1. To expand your knowledge about linguistic and sociocultural diversity
2. To increase your understanding of some key anthropological theories about how language and social diversity are intertwined
3. To put into practice some of the research methods used by linguistic anthropologists to collect and analyze ethnographic and linguistic data
4. To improve your abilities to read, write, think, and speak effectively about some of the important issues of our day, in this case to do with language and social justice

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 textbooks (listed below) are available to read or download through the library website.** If you have any trouble accessing the material, please don't hesitate to email me.

1. Berman, Elise. 2019. Talking Like Children: Language and the Production of Age in the Marshall Islands. Oxford University Press.
2. Boellstorff, Tom. 2005. The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia. Princeton University Press.
3. Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2006. From the Kitchen to the Parlor: Language and Becoming in African American Women's Hair Care. New York: Oxford University Press.
4. Perley, Bernard C. 2011. Defying Maliseet Language Death Emergent Vitalities of Language, Culture, and Identity in Eastern Canada. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
5. Blommaert, Jan (2013) Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscapes: Chronicles of Complexity. Bristol: Multilingual Matters
6. Piller, Ingrid. 2016. Linguistic Diversity and Social Justice: An Introduction to Applied Sociolinguistics. New York: Oxford University Press

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.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Course Website

A Canvas website (https://tlt.rutgers.edu/canvas) accompanies this course. 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 me directly about absences.]

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

In the subject line of your email message, begin with "312"—e.g., a subject line might read: "312/reading question" or "312/exam question." (Specifying "312" 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).

Please email me 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, diversity, and social justice intro
Front matter of Berman, Jacobs-Huey, Perley, and Boellstorff

Week 2 Discourse analysis of linguistic landscapes in late capitalism
Blommaert (Chaps 1-2), Cavanaugh, Riley

Week 3 Language on the Move
Blommaert (Chaps 3-7)

Week 4 Ideologies and constructed identity
Berman Chaps Intro +1-3

Week 5 Embodied practice
Piller Chaps. 1-2
Berman Chaps 4-6 + conclusion

Week 6 Ideologies and intersectional identities: gender and race
Piller Chaps. 3-4
Jacobs-Huey Intro + Chaps. 1-3

Week 7 Multimodal practices: gender and race
Piller Chaps. 5-6
Jacobs-Huey Chaps. 4-7

Week 8
Piller Chaps. 7-8

Week 9 Ideologies, identity, and mulfimodal expression
Hellar and McElhinny Chap. 1
Perley Chaps. 1-4

Week 10 Semiotic structure, agency, and sovereignty
Hellar and McElhinny Chaps. 2-3
Perley Chaps. 5-8

Week 11 Semiotics and global flow: sexuality, class, and nationality
Hellar and McElhinny Chaps. 4-5
Boellstorff Chaps. 1-4

Week 12 Ideologies and identity: sexuality, class, and nationality
Hellar and McElhinny Chaps 6-7
Boellstorff Chaps. 5-8

Week 13 Semiotic capital and loss: sexuality, class, and nationality
Hellar and McElhinny Chap. 8

Week 14 Work on paper in class

Week 15 Work on final paper at home

Final paper due: TBA