

FRES 1020 / Language in Society / Fall 2009
38-275 / Tuesday / 9:30 – 10:45 / Park Hall / Room 0251

Professor: Professor Chad Howe
Office: 370J Gilbert
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 to 2:00, or by appointment
Office Telephone: (706) 583-0792
Email: Use *eLearning Commons* (or, if necessary, chowe@uga.edu)
URL for the course: *eLearning Commons*: <http://elc.uga.edu/>
URL for the Professor: <http://chadhowe.wordpress.com/>

Course Description:

When asked to describe language, we typically want to know what words “mean”. In this course, we will explore what words “do” and how people use words to shape and make sense of the world around them. We will engage in an exploration of how language ties us together as members of a speech community and what the rules are that govern this complex interaction. As part of the course, we will be conducting language “fieldwork”, gathering language surveys in the local community and discussing current trends in (socio)linguistic research.

Required Reading:

- McWhorter, John. 2003. *The Power of Babel*. New York: Holt. (PoB) [Available at the UGA bookstore]
- Other materials will be distributed via *eLearning Commons*.

Evaluation:

The final grade will be based on class participation, two individual projects, and a group project (all with short presentations). There are no exams.

Attendance/Participation	20%
Linguistic “Show-and-Tell”(x3)	30%
1 st Project.....	10%
2 nd Project.....	20%
Group Project	20%

Course Conduct:

Being new to college, you will quickly learn that not all courses have the same atmosphere in terms of how you (i.e. the student) are to engage with the professor/instructor and your fellow students. For this course, you are encouraged/required to participate in all in-class and out-of-class discussions. Everyone in class speaks at least one language and at least a few dialects/registers; everyone will have something interesting to contribute. Your behavior concerning all classroom participants should be **respectful at all times**. Doing so will require that you (a) attend class, (b) listen in class (**instead of using your computer or cell phone**), and (c) be considerate of other people’s observations and opinions. Offensive and/or intolerant behavior is not acceptable and will result in an immediate exit from class. We will on occasion discuss some rather ‘taboo’ topics (e.g. swearing). Keep in mind that the point of these discussions is to create a constructive dialogue about issues of language use.

Attendance:

Attendance is required to all sessions. There are no “excused” absences. The “Attendance/Participation” portion of your grade (20%) will be reduced by 10% after the first absence; in other words, the grade will

go from a potential *A* to an *A-*. For the second absence, the score is reduced another 10%. I reserve the right to withdraw students with more than two absences.

Academic Honesty:

The University of Georgia has rules regarding what constitutes a lack of academic honesty, and it is the responsibility of each student to read and become familiar with said rules. In this class each student's work should be the product of his/her own individual efforts unless the assignment requires group work. Please consult the section "Policy and Documents" at <http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/ahpd.htm> for more information.

Students with disabilities:

Access will be provided for people with disabilities. Please call Diane Shimkets at the Disability Resource Center (706-542-8719, dshimket@uga.edu) for specific requests. The University of Georgia and the Department of Romance Languages are committed to providing access for all people with disabilities and will provide accommodations if notified.

"Extra" Credit:

... is not available.

Withdrawals:

The deadline for Withdrawals is Thursday, October 22nd.

Some useful language/linguistics resources for class:

A Way with Words: <http://www.waywordradio.org>

The Language Log: <http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/>

Fry's English Delight: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00lv1k1>

Wordnik, A Dictionary of sorts: <http://www.wordnik.com/>

Urban Dictionary: <http://www.urbandictionary.com/>

The Visual Thesaurus: <http://www.visualthesaurus.com/>

The Eggcorn Database: <http://eggcorns.lascribe.net/>

Time Corpus: <http://corpus.byu.edu/time/>

Corpus of Contemporary American English: <http://www.americancorpus.org/>

Linguistic Atlas Projects: <http://us.english.uga.edu/>

Dawg Speak: <http://www.english.uga.edu/nhilton/DawgSpeak.html>

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Weekly Schedule*(subject to change)*

Week 1, August 18th:	Introduction and welcome
Week 2, August 25th:	<i>Prescription vs. Description</i> Assignment: <i>PoB</i> , Introduction; S&T ₁
Week 3, September 1st:	What is a language? Assignment: <i>PoB</i> , Chapter 1; S&T ₂ Project #1 Due
Week 4, September 8th:	How do languages change? Assignment: <i>PoB</i> , Chapter 2; S&T ₃
Week 5, September 15th:	Movie = <i>The Linguists</i>
Week 6, September 22nd:	Dialect mixing Assignment: <i>PoB</i> , Chapter 3; S&T ₁
Week 7, September 29th:	Languages are born and languages die Assignment: <i>PoB</i> , Chapter 4; S&T ₂
Week 8, October 6th:	‘Quirky’ language stuff Assignment: <i>PoB</i> , Chapter 5; S&T ₃
Week 9, October 13th:	Presentations of Project #2
Week 10, October 20th:	Linguistic Atlas Projects (Guest Speaker?) Assignment: Labov (1972)
Week 11, October 27th:	Genetically altered languages Assignment: <i>PoB</i> , Chapter 6; S&T ₃
Week 12, November 3rd:	Language Extinction Assignment: <i>PoB</i> , Chapter 7; S&T ₂
Week 13, November 10th:	Group Presentations (or The ‘Original’ Human Language) Assignment: <i>PoB</i> , Epilogue; S&T ₃
Week 14, November 17th:	Group Presentations
Week 15, November 24th:	NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Holidays)
Week 16, December 1st:	Group Presentations Project #3 Due

Comments on the Evaluation:

The assignments in this course are designed to offer a low-impact introduction to the types of issues that are of interest to linguists, especially those who work on the interaction between grammar and society. I encourage you to use these tasks as an opportunity to be creative and to explore your interests in these topics.

Attendance/Participation	20%
Linguistic “Show-and-Tell”(x3)	30%
1 st Project.....	10%
2 nd Project.....	20%
Group Project.....	20%

1. Linguistic “Show-and-Tell” (x3)

For this assignment, you will be divided alphabetically into three groups (i.e. S&T₁, S&T₂, and S&T₃). Each week (more or less) the individual members of a particular group will offer brief comments on an “example” of some linguistic interest that he or she has uncovered during the course of the week. For example, a recent episode of NBC’s 30 Rock featured the following exchange between Brian, a recently hired ex-Wall Street intern, and Tracy Jordan (played by Tracy Morgan):

Brian: *Hey, look, we’re all going out after work and I know you like to party. We’d be honored if you’d come **with**.*

Tracy: *You shouldn’t end a sentence with a preposition **at**, but, yeah, I’m in.*

You can use almost any source of spoken or written language as a resource. I’ve provided a few links to language resources that should help you find something of interest. Remember, *speech happens; capture it.*

2. 1st Project (individual)

For this first project, you will conduct a brief survey with one of your other professors or instructors here at UGA concerning grammatical ‘likes’ and ‘dislikes’ when it comes to both written and oral assignments. You will ask your professors/instructors to give you a list of (i) 3 to 5 egregious errors that students make when writing (e.g. using “ain’t”), (ii) 3 to 5 ‘minor’ offenses that the professor or instructor simply prefers not to see, and (iii) 3 to 5 mistakes that students make when speaking. You will compile these comments into a brief, one-page synopsis in which you present the results in prose (i.e. not as lists). These projects are due on **Tuesday, September 1st**.

3. 2nd Project (individual)

The second project will cover the topic of power and solidarity as expressed through the use of personal references—e.g. “Dr. Howe” vs. “Mr. Howe” vs. “Dr. H.” vs. “Dr. Chad” vs. “Hey you”. You will use a questionnaire designed by Prof. Dennis Preston (<https://www.msu.edu/~preston/>) to elicit responses from different people (i.e. friends, family, professors, etc.) concerning the use of forms of address. You will report your findings in a brief (2-3 page) report due on **Tuesday, October 13th**. You are also expected to give a brief summary of your results in class.

4. Group Project: Rapid and Anonymous Surveys

The final project will be done in groups (size and members to be decided). Each member is expected to contribute equally to the research and the presentation. We will first read William Labov’s seminal 1972 study of post-vocalic (r) (as in *fourth floor*) in different department stores in New York. In your groups, you will choose a topic/variable of interest and design a Rapid and Anonymous survey to elicit instances of your variable. Your group will then conduct the surveys and prepare both a presentation and a written report of the results (3 to 5 page, double-space, 1-inch margins). The final written reports will be due on the last day of class, **Tuesday, December 1st**.