

Language in Society

SL362.01 / EN122.01 / SC362.01
Tuesday & Thursday 10:30–11:45
Lyons Hall 207

Margaret Thomas
Lyons Hall 210i; Ext. 2-3697
Mon 2:15–2:45; Wed 1:00–2:30; Fri 12:00–1:00
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1. Course description

SL362 / EN122 / SC362 is an introduction to sociolinguistics, that is, to the study of language in its social context. We will examine a number of classic issues in sociolinguistics including varieties of language associated with social class, ethnicity, and locale; bilingualism; pidgin and creole languages; proposals about the relationship of language, thought, and culture; and the structure and role of discourse in different cultures. The course concludes by investigating several sociolinguistic issues of contemporary interest: language and gender; the ‘U.S. English’ controversy; language and public policy.

Student responsibilities include attentive reading and preparation for class discussion, four written assignments, a small independent project in which students gather and analyze original sociolinguistic data, and midterm and final exams. Previous course work in linguistics is not required. Enrolled undergraduates receive Cultural Diversity credit; graduate students will, on occasion, meet separately with the instructors and carry out an alternate plan of assignments.

2. Course materials

One textbook is required, and is available at the B.C. Bookstore under SL362: Ronald Wardhaugh’s *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 5th edition (2006, Blackwell). Additional readings / materials will be placed on Reserve, or made available through WebCT.

3. Grading

Three written assignments	See attached schedule for dates	30%
Research project	Due Thurs., 6 Dec., by 5:00 PM	30%
Midterm exam	Thurs., 11 Oct., in class	20%
Final exam	Fri., 13 Dec., 9:00–11:00 AM	20%

Final course grades are those described in the *Boston College Bulletin 2007–8*, p. 41. In general: A \geq 97%; B = 86 to 89%; C = 75 to 78%; D = 64 to 67%; F \leq 59%. ‘Plus’ and ‘minus’ grades fall somewhere in between.

4. Student Responsibilities

- Regular attendance and careful preparation for class are essential.
- Please submit written assignments on time

Late work is penalized as follows: Assignments turned in late will be reduced by one-half point for each day they are delayed. For example, an assignment which would have received a grade of 6.5 (out of 7 points) that

was due on Tuesday but handed in on Thursday will receive a grade of 5.5; handed in on Friday, 5.0 etc. No credit can be given for assignments turned in more than four days late.

Note that the deadline for submission of the research project is fixed at the beginning of the semester, and is to be considered immovable.

- Students must be thoroughly familiar with College-wide policies regarding academic integrity. Please read the *Boston College Bulletin 2007–8*, pp. 35–6, and seek clarification of any policy or procedure you are unfamiliar with.

5. Tentative course schedule and outline of assignments

Date	Topic	Assign. due / test scheduled (Complete readings BEFORE class)
Tu 9/4	Introduction to course	
Th 9/6	Kinds of linguistic variation; Assign. #1	Skim Chapter 1; Read 2
Tu 9/11	Pidgin & creole languages	Chapter 3
Th 9/13	Bilingualism	Chapter 4; ASSIGN. #1 DUE
Tu 9/18	Code-switching/mixing; Assign. #2	<i>Do you spk. Amer.?</i> clip
Th 9/20	Speech communities	Chapter 5
Tu 9/25	Regional variation in US; Assign #3	Chapter 6; ASSIGN. #2 DUE
Th 9/27	Case studies in language & social status: NYC; Martha's Vineyard; ancient Rome	Chapters 7
Tu 10/2	North Carolina <i>patouà</i> ; language change	Chapter 8
Th 10/4	Register; slang; euphemism/dysphemism	Pp. 238–41; ASSIGN. #3 DUE
Tu 10/9	Australian mother-in-law languages; Review	
Th 10/11	Mid-term exam	
Tu 10/16	Research project; Sapir-Whorf hypothesis	Chapter 9
Th 10/18	Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, con't.	
Tu 10/23	Ethnography of speaking: speech & silence	Chapter 10; LIT REVIEW DUE
Th 10/25	Ethnography con't.: power, politeness, solidarity	Chapter 11
Tu 10/30	Research project, con't.; structure of discourse	PROJ. PROPOSAL DUE
Th 11/1	Case study: Classroom discourse	Chapter 12
Tu 11/6	Discourse, con't.: conversation & cooperation	MEET WITH M.T.
Th 11/8	Language & gender	Chapter 13; METHOD SECT DUE
Tu 11/13	Language & gender	
Th 11/15	Language planning	Chapter 15
Tu 11/20	Case studies in language planning: Ireland; East Asia; North Africa (?)	
Th 11/22	[Thanksgiving break]	
Tu 11/27	'U.S. English': pro and con	Chapter 14
Th 11/29	African American language	
Tu 12/4	U.S. educational policy & language	
Th 12/6	Summary & review of the course	Ch. 16; PROJECT DUE 4:00 PM
Th 12/13	Final exam (9:00–11:00 AM)	