

# Sociolinguistics: Language Variation and Change

Linguistics 9819A / French 9800A  
2017-18

Jeff Tennant  
jtennant@uwo.ca  
661-2111, ext 87885  
Office: Arts & Humanities Building 2R12A  
Course website "FRENCH 9800A 001 GF17" on Owl: <https://owl.uwo.ca>  
Tuesday 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.  
(8:30 to 12:30 some days; see schedule on OWL site)  
Arts & Humanities Building Room 2R09

## Office Hours (Arts & Humanities Building 2R12A):

My scheduled office hours will be posted on the OWL site. I am also available by appointment – e-mail me and we can arrange a time to meet.

## Course Description:

This course offers students the opportunity to explore foundational research as well as some of the most recent work on language and society, with a particular focus on the theory, methodology and findings of sociolinguistic research on language variation and change.

Students will carry out an empirical analysis of a set of language data as part of their course project, or do a critical survey of the literature to argue a position on a given sociolinguistic topic. Through bibliographic research and a class presentation, they will progress incrementally in their research on their chosen topic throughout the course, and this work will culminate in a final paper.

While some "classic" work in sociolinguistics will be read and reviewed, a significant proportion of our effort in the course will be devoted to studying some of the most recent research in the field.

*The language of instruction will be English but students have the option of submitting written work in English, French or Spanish. Students in French Studies graduate programs are required to submit all written work in French.*

## Weighting of Graded Assignments:

Chapter presentation	10%
Bibliography assignment:	20%
Abstract	10%
Oral presentation:	20%
Research paper:	40%

## **Readings:**

Readings are posted on the course OWL Site. There will be approximately 30 articles and book chapters assigned as required reading, and some optional readings on topics studied will also be made available on the site, or can be found in the Western Libraries system. Students will do readings in addition to these on a topic of their choice for course assignments.

## **Assignments:**

### Article or chapter presentation (to be scheduled to take place in October)

Each student registered in the course will present an overview of an article or chapter, and lead a discussion on it. No more than one week in advance of the class in which you are to present, you will submit a list of questions (three to five of them) to be distributed to the class, to serve as a basis for the discussion. Your presentation should be ten to fifteen minutes in length. Articles and chapters from which to choose for this assignment will be posted on the OWL site, and a Wiki page for signing up for a presentation date and chapter/article will be made available on the OWL site.

### Reference list on chosen topic (OPTIONAL, NO MARK ASSIGNED: due October 6)

As a preliminary step to the annotated bibliography assignment, you may prepare a list of ten to fifteen bibliographic references related to the topic on which you plan to do your research in the course. You may also draft a short paragraph describing the topic. Be sure to pay careful attention to the format of the bibliographic references.

### Annotated bibliography assignment (due October 31)

You are asked to prepare an annotated bibliography on your topic. Please see guidelines posted on the OWL site.

### Abstract: (due November 14)

You are asked to prepare an abstract of the research you plan to do for the presentation and the research paper. Please see guidelines posted on the OWL site.

### Presentation (December 5)

You are asked to make a presentation to the class, about 15 minutes in length (followed by 5 minutes of discussion), in which you will present the sociolinguistic issue(s) that you are studying. Please see guidelines posted on the OWL site.

### Research Paper (due date: January 5, 2018<sup>1</sup>)

This assignment involves preparing a well-structured research paper on a sociolinguistic topic, of about 15 pages in length (double-spaced, 12-point format). Possible approaches:

- A synthesis of the research on a particular issue: establish a position (thesis) on the question and argue your position while critically reviewing the relevant research
- An empirical study of data from a linguistic corpus. You must pay careful attention to the information below on research ethics if you are gathering a corpus, or making any other use of human subjects.

---

<sup>1</sup> December 15, 2017 if you are completing your graduate program at the end of this semester.

### **Format for Submission of Written Assignments:**

The preferred means for submission of written work in the course is as a word processing file (Microsoft Word) sent to the instructor via the OWL site on the Assignments page. This saves paper resources and facilitates the provision of timely and detailed feedback.

### **Submission Deadlines:**

All work in graduate courses must be submitted by the deadline set by the instructor. “Incompletes” will not be permitted without medical documentation. In order to continue to receive financial support from the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, each student must demonstrate satisfactory progression in her or his program. Regulations are available upon request from Chrisanthi Ballas in the Department of French Studies.

### **Bibliographic Style:**

Use of bibliographic sources is essential for research at the graduate level, and there are certain conventions for referring to the literature that it is important to follow. Style guidelines vary in terms of the format of citations in the text of a paper, the use of footnotes and endnotes, and the format of bibliographical references at the end of the paper. They also set specific guidelines for the format of subheadings, examples, tables and graphic illustrations, among other elements. **The prescribed style guidelines for this course are those of the *Canadian Journal of Linguistics***, which can be found on the course OWL site. You are advised to adhere to this style sheet as consistently as possible. You should focus on the minute details of style at the right stage in the drafting of your work, without losing sleep over them; fine-tuning of bibliographic style is for final editing, but should not be neglected. While you will not be severely penalized for falling short of perfection on such points of detail, it is expected that your work will demonstrate due attention to them. Appropriately acknowledging all sources is of course a requirement, and failure to do so can constitute plagiarism.

### **Plagiarism and other Scholastic Offences:**

It is expected that graduate students will be aware of the regulations regarding plagiarism and other scholastic offences that are to be avoided. Here the text that the Senate recommends we include in all course outlines:

“Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>”

### **Research Ethics:**

For your Research Paper, you may wish to do an empirical study of data you gather from human subjects. If you choose such a topic for your Research Paper, you must obtain ethics approval from the instructor before beginning your work with human subjects.

Information on Western’s policy governing ethical research involving humans can be found on the Office of Research Ethics website: <http://www.uwo.ca/research/ethics/>

Before undertaking research involving human subjects, please read the instructions below, and complete the tutorial at the following URL: <http://tcps2core.ca/welcome>

## Instructions to Student Researchers Whose Research Papers Involve Use of Human Subjects

The following instructions are a supplement to the description of the Research Paper found in the syllabus and on the OWL site. They apply to all assignments done for the course involving work with human subjects.

- a) The purpose of the project is to carry out a research project in the field of dialectology by means of interviews and/or questionnaire used to gather data on participants' language use patterns or perception of language forms.
- b) Once potential participants have been given the Letter of Information and had all of their questions answered to their satisfaction, you ask them to sign the Consent Form if they consent to participate. You must prepare the Letter of Information and Consent Form using the models provided on the REB website (copies are posted on the course OWL site in the Ethics folder under Resources). These must be submitted to the instructor for advance approval, **and you must not begin participant recruitment or data collection until after this approval has been obtained.**
- c) Participants can be recruited from among your friends, family, classmates, roommates, acquaintances, or people you do not know. Please note criterion 3 in the Guidelines, which states that participants must be adults and must be "capable of free and informed consent." Be sure to read the Guidelines thoroughly. You invite people to participate by explaining the purpose of the project and providing a copy of the Letter of Information (see section c) below for more information about this Letter). Please remember that "snowball" recruitment (i.e. obtaining participants contact information of other potential participants) is not permitted unless it is "mediated" i.e. potential participants are given the researcher's contact info and have the option to contact them or not, but the research doesn't receive their contact info.
- d) Since this project will likely involve only one session with each participant, it is not anticipated that a participant will withdraw part way through. If a participant does withdraw, assume that you cannot use any data gathered from the participant, and consult the instructor for advice. You may encounter participants who don't want to finish their interviews (for whatever reason). They should be given the option of asking for their recording to be erased, or for the recorded interview up until that point to be used.
- e) There is no formal requirement for debriefing (informing participants of the results of the research). If you do decide to do so, be sure to submit the proposed summary of the results to the instructor for approval before giving it to participants.
- f) You must take care to maintain data confidentiality. You must not identify participants by name in your paper or anywhere else; rather, use pseudonyms to protect anonymity and confidentiality when reporting on the results of your study. Any data you have allowing participants to be identified should be encrypted and destroyed when it is no longer needed.
- g) Please note the following important note in the Guidelines regarding risk: "The research projects must be no more than **minimal risk**. The standard of minimal risk is defined as follows: *If potential participants can reasonably be expected to regard the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by the participation in the research to be no greater than those encountered by the subject in his or her everyday life that relate to the research then the research can be regarded as within the range of minimal risk.*"

**Sociolinguistics: Language Variation and Change**  
**Linguistics 9819A / French 9800A – 2017-18**  
**SCHEDULE OF COURSE MEETINGS\***

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Readings to do before the class</b>	<b>Assignments and other work</b>
1. Sept. 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overview of course, syllabus, assignments</li> <li>- Overview of sociolinguistics and its place within linguistics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bell (2013) Chapter 1: What are sociolinguistics?</li> </ul>	
2. Sept. 19 (4 hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Origins and theoretical foundations of variationist sociolinguistics</li> <li>- Bibliographic resources and tools for sociolinguistic research</li> <li>- Methods: data gathering</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bell (2013) Chapter 7: Variation in language</li> <li>- Chambers (1995) excerpt: The linguistic variable as structural unit</li> <li>- Labov (1972) chapter: The social stratification of (r) in New York City department stores</li> </ul>	
3. Sept. 26 (4 hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Methods: quantitative data analysis</li> <li>- Guest lecture: Naomi Nagy and collaborators on Faetar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bayley (2013) The Quantitative paradigm</li> <li>- Nagy (2011) A multilingual corpus to explore geographic variation</li> <li>- Nagy, Iannozzi and Heap (forthcoming) Faetar null subjects: A variationist study of a heritage language in contact</li> </ul>	
4. Oct. 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Methods: quantitative data analysis</li> <li>- Social class and social networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guy (1993) The quantitative analysis of linguistic variation</li> <li>- Ash (2013) Social class</li> <li>- Guy (1988) Language and social class</li> <li>- Milroy &amp; Llamas (2013) Social networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Article/chapter presentations</li> </ul>
5. Oct. 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sex and gender in language variation and change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Queen (2013) Gender, sex, sexuality and sexual identities</li> <li>- Labov (1990) The intersection of sex and class in the course of language change</li> <li>- Eckert (1989) The whole woman: Sex and gender differences in variation</li> <li>- Chambers (2013) Patterns of variation including change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reference list due (optional; no mark assigned)</li> <li>- Article/chapter presentations</li> </ul>
6. Oct. 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observing language change in progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cuckor-Avila and Bayley (2013) Real time and apparent time</li> <li>- Sankoff and Blondeau (2007) Language change across the lifespan</li> <li>- D'Arcy and Tagliamonte (2015) Not always variable: probing the vernacular grammar</li> <li>- D'Arcy (2012) The diachrony of quotation: Evidence from New Zealand English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Article/chapter presentations</li> </ul>
7. Oct. 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethnicity in language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fought (2013) Ethnicity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annotated</li> </ul>

	variation and change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hoffman &amp; Walker (2010) Ethnolects and the city: Ethnolinguistic orientation and linguistic variation in Toronto English</li> <li>- Boberg (2004) Ethnic patterns in the phonetics of Montreal English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bibliography due</li> <li>- Article/chapter presentations</li> </ul>
8. Nov. 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sociolinguistic variation in language contact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sankoff (2013) Linguistic outcomes of bilingualism</li> <li>- Blainey (2016) Language contact and contextual nasalization in Louisiana French</li> <li>- Mougeon &amp; Nadasdi (1998) Sociolinguistic discontinuity in minority language communities</li> </ul>	
9. Nov. 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Three waves of variation study</li> <li>- Acquisition of variation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eckert (2012) Three waves of variation study: The emergence of meaning in the study of sociolinguistic variation</li> <li>- Miller (2013) Acquisition of variable rules: /s/-lenition in the speech of Chilean Spanish-speaking children and their caregivers</li> <li>- Habib (2014) Vowel variation and reverse acquisition in rural Syrian child and adolescent language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Abstract due</li> </ul>
10. Dec. 5 (4 hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student Presentations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentations</li> </ul>
11. Dec. 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A classic and a precursor in the study of language variation and change: Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968) and Gauchat (1905)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968) Empirical foundations for a theory of language change</li> <li>- Chambers (2008) Louis Gauchat, proto-variationist, in Chambers, Cummins &amp; Tennant (2008)</li> <li>- Gauchat (1905) L'unité phonétique dans le patois d'une commune, English translation in Chambers, Cummins, Tennant (2008), or original French version posted</li> </ul>	

\*More details of the work for each class will be posted on a regular basis on the OWL site. Some modifications may be made to the assigned readings as we progress in the semester.