

Language, Gender and Sexuality
Linguistics H367
Syllabus

Instructor:

Office:

Phone:

Office Hours:

The major purpose of this course is to teach you to think analytically about gender, about sexuality, and language; and especially about the relations among them. The goals are inseparably intellectual and political: Responsible scholarship and citizenship require the ability and eagerness to go beyond stereotype, common belief and the popular press, to evaluate claims for oneself in a knowledgeable way. The course will provide facts, theory, and analytic tools for critiquing the relationships among language, sex and gender in the world around you. The class will also carry out a real, live research project investigating these relationships, and you will have the opportunity to present our findings in light of your critical reading and discussion over the course of the quarter.

Another purpose – just as important as the first in terms of your general education – is to develop your mastery of critical thinking, reading and writing. Note that by ‘critical’ I have in mind not the first adjectival definition in the Oxford American Dictionary: ‘expressing adverse or disapproving comments or judgements.’ Rather, I mean that we will be ‘expressing or involving an analysis of the merits and faults’ (definition two in the Oxford American) of our reading material and the claims we can make based on the data we collect. We will explicitly discuss how to read research journal articles, and there will be in-class workshops on doing and representing one’s own research, whether it is qualitative or quantitative.

Reading & classroom participation

Issues surrounding language and gender, language and sexuality have been ‘hot’ in linguistics over the past 30 to 40 years, with research in the field producing lots of engaging, critical papers around both theoretical and practical issues. I expect you to continue and contribute to these scholarly conversations in the classroom, which means that you will have substantial reading to complete each week. You are expected to read everything required for class at least once before the class period in which it will be discussed. The course will succeed or fail on the strength of our classroom discussions, and the quality of your participation will be noted and will count toward your grade. If for some reason you find it difficult to participate in oral discussion in class, please see me

during my office hours to consider alternate ways of contributing. Note that class attendance is not included in your grade per se, but if you are not in class, you cannot participate.

There are two required texts for this course, both available at the bookstore:

Language and Gender. 2003. Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet.
Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Language and Sexuality. 2005. Deborah Cameron and Don Kulick. London:
Routledge.

In addition, original research articles will be assigned for several of the class meetings; these will be available on online reserve for your personal use.

Research and writing

As this course is designed to fulfill the second GEC writing requirement, you'll be either writing or collecting observations about gender/sexuality and language each week of the quarter. Some writing assignments ask you to engage critically with the reading material, others to develop your observations and analyses of real live language use into a well-argued essay.

1. Critical reading responses: During five weeks of the quarter (designated in the syllabus by the highlighted days), you are to write short (1-2 pp), informal papers responding to one of the readings assigned for the week. You will have the opportunity to revise some of these in response to my comments. At the end of the quarter, you'll collect these into a portfolio for a final assessment.
2. Field observation paper (3-5 pages): In Week 1, I will assign a field research exercise to be carried out in groups of three to four students. You will have one week to make your observations and report to the class. You will have another week to reduce your data as a group (we will discuss in class what that means and how to do it) and to write up individually your own response to the assignment. Your written report should touch on your experience doing the observations as well as support a claim with the class's data as evidence.
3. Class field-based research project: As a class, we will be investigating a single linguistic practice, complaining. You'll all get to observe and collect information about complaints – who does it, when and in what circumstances – and we will compile our data as a class. We'll confront problems that all researchers have, such as defining the object of study (what counts as a complaint?), how to categorize our observations in a meaningful way, and how to represent the data in ways that are meaningful to readers/audience members. There will be several progress check-ins over the quarter, most done in groups or as a class but some

individually, culminating in a final paper to be written individually. I will collect and comment on rough drafts in the last week of the quarter, and the final paper will be due on exam day.

Requirements and grading

Class participation	30%
Reading responses	20%
Discussion participation	10%
Field research observation	20%
Data collection & report	5%
Reduction, report	15%
Class research project	50%
Intermediate steps	20%
Presentation	10%
Final paper	20%

Submitting Assignments: All assignments should be submitted in class, before the lecture on the day they are due. Late assignments will not be accepted without permission granted by me before the due date.

Academic Misconduct: I encourage you to discuss readings with others, and of course the class research project will be a joint effort. However, I expect you to give credit where credit is due, as well as to take credit for your own work. This class will be successful only to the extent that you are engaged and honest. Acts of academic misconduct (representing others' work as your own) will be referred to the Academic Misconduct Committee. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, come and talk to me. Any time you use the ideas or the materials of another person or persons, you must acknowledge that you have done so in a citation. This includes material that you have found on the Web. You can find many useful resources about representing your work, at the OSU Writing Center <http://cstw.osu.edu/writingcenter/handouts/default.cfm>.

Students with Special Needs: If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Week 1: March 24 –

Monday Introduction; Reading critically

Wednesday Dichotomous thinking
Field Observation assignment 1 given

- Language and Gender, Introduction and Chapter 1, 'Constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing gender'
- Linked on Carmen: News stories about the athlete who 'failed' a gender test; websites of the Intersex Society of North America, The UK Intersex Association

Week 2: March 31 –

Monday The discursive construction of gender

- Language and Sexuality, Chapters 1, 'Making connections' and 2, 'Talking sex and thinking sex: the linguistic and discursive construction of sexuality'
- Optional: Goffman, Erving. 1972. The arrangement between the sexes. *Theory and Society* 4: 301-32.

Wednesday Film Bombay Eunuch and discussion
Field Observation data due: discussion in class

Week 3: April 7 –

Monday The organization of speech activities [Reading response due]

- Language and Gender, Chapter 3
- Ochs, Elinor and Carolyn Taylor. 1992. The "father knows best" dynamic in dinnertime conversations. In *Gender articulated: Language and the socially constructed self*, ed. by Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz, 97-120. New York and London: Oxford University Press. 1992.
- Optional: William Labov. Rules for ritual insults. *Language in the inner city*, ed. by William Labov, 1972. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 297-353.

Wednesday Conversation
Field Observation paper due

- Kiesling, Scott. Dude. *American Speech*. 79,3: 281-305.
- Visit Scott's Dude webpage, linked from Carmen.
- Optional:

Zimmerman, D. and C. West (1975). Sex roles, interruptions and silences in conversation. *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*. B. Thorne and N. Henley. Rowley MA, Newbury House. 105-29.

Tannen, D. (1994). *Interpreting interruption in conversation*. Gender and Discourse. New York, Oxford University Press.

Carol Edelsky. 1982. Who's got the floor? *Language in Society* 10. 383-421.

Week 4: April 14 –

Monday **Interactional style** [Reading response due]

The Complaints project – assignment given

- Language and Sexuality, Chapter 3, 'What has gender got to do with sex? Language, heterosexuality and heteronormativity'
- Scott Kiesling. Balancing and re-creating cultural discourses of masculinity. *Language in society* 34, 695-726.
- Marjorie Harness Goodwin. 2002. Exclusion in girls' peer groups: Ethnographic analysis of language practices on the playground. *Human development*. 45:392-415.

Wednesday Speech acts

- Language and Gender, Chapter 4 'Making social moves'

Week 5: April 21 –

Monday Status, politeness, respect and deference

The Complaints project – observation experience discussion

- Language and Gender, Chapter 5 'Positioning ideas and subjects'

Wednesday Presupposition and metaphor

- Language and Gender, Chapter 6 'Saying and implying'

Week 6: April 28 –

Monday **Grammatical gender** [Reading response due]

- Boroditsky, Lera. 2003. Linguistic Relativity. In Nadel, L. (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science*. London: MacMillan Press. p 917-921.
- Hall, Kira, and Veronica O'Donovan (1996). Shifting Gender Positions Among Hindi-speaking Hijras. In Victoria Bergvall, Janet Bing, and Alice Freed (eds.), *Rethinking Language and Gender Research: Theory and Practice*. London: Longman. 228-266.

- Wednesday Categories and labels
The Complaints project – In class report #1 due
- Language and Gender, Chapter 7 ‘Mapping the world’

Week 7: May 5 –

- Monday Gender and the sounds of English
Complaints project – In class report #1 due
- Spend some time with the web resources on phonetics linked on Carmen:
 - University of Iowa’s interactive articulatory phonetics website
 - website of the International Phonetics Association for the complete IPA alphabet
 - Indexes of languages and sounds on the vowels and consonants page of the UCLA Phonetics lab

- Wednesday Gendered voices I
Complaints project – In class report #2 due
- The strong link between voice and gender leads voice to be a prime object for transgenering people. Visit the transgender websites linked on Carmen that give some advice for developing a female voice, google around for others, and consider the advice that's being given.

Week 8: May 12 –

- Monday Gendered voices II
Complaints project summary and data compilation
- (The reading for today is to get a head start on the reading for Wednesday...)

- Wednesday Gender and the linguistic market [Reading response due]
- Language and Gender, Chapter 8 ‘Working the market: The use of varieties’
 - Susan Gal. 1979. Peasant men can't get wives: Language change and sex roles in a bilingual community. *Language in Society*, 7.1-16.
 - Kira Hall. 1995. Lip Service on the Fantasy Lines. In Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (eds.), *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*. New York: Routledge. 183-216.

Week 9: May 19 –

- Monday Gender and dialect variation

Wednesday Performativity revisited [Reading response due]

- Language and Sexuality, Chapter 4 'Sexuality as identity: gay and lesbian language'
- Barrett, Rusty. 1994. "She is not white woman": The appropriation of white women's language by African American drag queens. Cultural Performances: Proceedings of the third Berkeley women and language conference, ed. by Mary Bucholtz, A.C. Liang, Laurel A. Sutton and Caitlin Hines, 1-14. Berkeley: Berkeley Women and Language Group.

Week 10: May 26 –

Monday: Memorial Day – no class

Wednesday: Review