

English 441D: Seminar in Gender and Language Fall 2006, St. John Fisher College

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 12-2 p.m.
Tuesdays/Thursdays 9-9:30 a.m.

and by appointment at other times.

To make an appointment, talk to me before or after class,
email me with several available times, or give me a call.

Course Description and Goals

This course is a comprehensive introduction to the study of language and gender. The course examines the role of gender in a variety of spoken and written language situations and styles, with particular attention to our local community. The course has a strong theoretical as well as practical focus. We will consider the theoretical debates in sociolinguistic studies of gender and use these frameworks to conduct our own investigations of language and gender. Questions we will attempt to answer include: Do women and men use language differently? If so, how, to what degree, with what effect, and most importantly, why? We will analyze and critique research on language and gender to discern true gender differences from folk linguistic myths. Students will develop the ability to ask and explore questions about language and communication through original research projects.

Students need not have any previous linguistic, social-science, or gender studies training to enroll in the course. However, those with some background in each field will probably reap additional benefits from the course. The seminar is geared toward advanced students, and a high degree of discussion participation and independent work will be required.

Required Texts

Virginia P. Clark, Paul A. Eschholz, and Alfred R. Rosa, *Language: Readings in Language and Culture*
Deborah Cameron, ed., *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*
Graddol and Swan, *Gender Voices* (recommended; we have several readings from this book)
Reserve readings (Lavery Library)

Course Website

The course website features copies of course materials, including printable and downloadable handouts; study questions; paper topics and projects; paper-writing guidelines, and other materials. There are links to related topics, and I encourage you to suggest additional ideas for the course website. By week 3, there will also be an online photo gallery to help you get to know your classmates.

course website: URL: <http://www.jadwin.net/441>

Assignments

Collaborative Exercises (8% each, 24% total)

The three collaborative exercises require you to work with other class members (groups of up to 3 members) in researching, writing, and presenting your study. A collaborative effort helps ease research and writing and helps develop strong ideas. With a partner or team you will be able to pool resources such as data collection time and places, equipment, data corpus, interpretations, etc. However, collaboration demands good teamwork - equal participation and communication among members - so choose your partners carefully. Each group will turn in a single report for each assignment. I evaluate group reports as single endeavors and give them a single grade.

More information, including topics, is available in the "Collaborative Exercises" handout.

Daily Quizzes (21%)

Because there are no midterms or final exam in this course, we'll have daily quizzes focusing on the main points of each reading assignment. Quizzes are designed to help you focus on major ideas and memorize terms, when necessary. Quizzes may be offered in multiple-choice or short-answer format at my discretion and will generally be administered in the first ten minutes of class. **There are no makeups for quizzes, and your lowest grade will be dropped at the end of the semester.**

Research Project (40%)

Project proposal due: end of Week 6

Presentations due: Weeks 13-16

Final project due: by end of scheduled final exam period for this course (time t.b.a. by Registrar)

Each student will conduct a study that examines how language (naturally occurring speech or written texts, but not made up talk) reflects and constructs gender in our local community. The foundation of your study will be the qualitative analysis of spoken and/or written texts, however, you may want to augment your study and analyses with ethnographic data such as interviews and participant observations. In addition, you may want to include quantitative analyses showing percentages and counts. The focus of your study will be the examination of the interplay of cultural elements and linguistic features. Linguistic features include pragmatics (interruptions, overlaps, topic control, extended development, tag questions, and hedges); prosodic elements (intonation and loudness); pronunciation (range of casual and careful speech and dialect/code switching); semantic (meanings and content), and genre (narratives, reports, memos, jokes, etc.).

The project will be a combination of field and library research. The project will include a research proposal, a 10-minute presentation of your study and findings, a report draft, and a final written report of about 10 pages that you will submit to me during finals week. I and other class members will give you feedback on your presentation. The feedback from the presentation will help you revise your final report so that it will be a strong piece of writing and information.

More information, including topics, is available in the "Research Project" handout.

Participation (15% of your final grade)

In a discussion course, class members' *attendance and participation* are very important. As discussants we concentrate on building a community where people cooperate in interpreting and creating meaning.

The *attendance* policy in this course is consequently very strict. Make sure you understand it fully and that you're prepared to abide by it before you decide to stay in this course. You are entitled to miss the equivalent of one week of class meetings for any reason. Additional absences will lower your grade regardless of the circumstances, because this is not the kind of class you can make up if you're absent. Students absent for 3 weeks of class or more may receive an F for the course (FA). There's no difference between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. If you have a serious emergency, such as a death in the family, auto accident, hospitalization, etc., please contact me as soon as possible so that we can work with the Dean of Students to make arrangements, as you may need to withdraw from the course. Students with perfect attendance will receive a bonus in their final grade calculation.

If you miss class, you are still responsible for any deadlines, assignments, changes in assignments, and material covered that day. Arrange for someone to deliver your assignments to me, to pick up handouts, go over class with you or lend you notes. Extra handouts and worksheets will be available on the front of my office door (and, as soon as possible, on the course website).

Active participation is not simply attending class. Active participation is a combination of being prepared for class and productively interacting with others in the class. I expect you to come to class having read and completed all assignments, ready to talk about assignments--this means completing readings, thinking and taking notes of your thoughts prior to class, and completing written assignments before class. Students who never or rarely speak in class - as well as students who fail to pay attention, talk while others are speaking, or fall asleep in class - will receive low grades for participation.

Policies

Academic Honesty

We often do our best work in collaboration with others, and throughout your life you will consult with other people, in person and in print, as you develop your ideas. However, while it is entirely legitimate to consult others, it is unethical to take their ideas and pass them off as your own. The best way to guard against plagiarism is to acknowledge the source(s) of your ideas. If you borrow someone else's ideas, whether you use a direct quote, summary, or paraphrase, clearly indicate who it belongs to. In writing you'll use MLA-style citations. (See the course website for an online guide to MLA style.) When speaking, explain where you got your information. Sometimes it's hard to tell when and what you need to cite. Familiarize yourself with the section of the Student

Handbook on plagiarism, and talk with me if you have questions.

Ignorance about what constitutes plagiarism does not excuse it. Students who are found to have plagiarized will be disciplined as detailed in the Student Handbook, up to and including failing the course.

Statement for Students with Diagnosed Disabilities

In compliance with St. John Fisher College policy and applicable laws, appropriate academic accommodations are available to you if you are a student with a disability. All requests for accommodations must be supported by appropriate documentation/diagnosis and determined reasonable by St. John Fisher College. Students with documented disabilities (physical, learning, psychological) who may need academic accommodations *must* make an appointment with the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities in the Student Development Center, Kearney 211. *Late notification will delay requested accommodations.*

Calendar of Readings and Assignments

Each week's readings must be completed by the beginning of class each *Tuesday* as indicated. (In other words, you'll complete each week's reading by Tuesday morning.) If it becomes necessary to change assignments or due dates to accommodate the needs of the class, I will give you plenty of notice. **Make your reserve copies early - there's always a crunch during the week we're reading them.**

LRLC = *Language: Readings in Language and Culture*

FCLR = *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*

RESERVE = available on reserve at Lavery Library - **make a photocopy for yourself and bring to class.**

introduction to basic concepts of cultural linguistics

- 1 9/9 Introduction to course.
- 2 9/12 LRLC: Bolton, "Language: An Introduction"
9/14 FCLR: Simmonds, "Naming and Identity"
- 3 9/19 LRLC: Daniels, "Nine Ideas about Language"; Crystal, "Language and Thought"
9/21 Heny, "Brain and Language"; Roberts, "Speech Communities"
-> Collaborative Exercise 1 due at beginning of class **Thursday.**
- 4 9/26 LRLC: Francis, "Word-Making: Some Sources of New Words"
9/28 Nilsen *et al.*, "Literary Metaphors and Other Linguistic Innovations in Computer Language"
- 5 10/3 RESERVE: Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* chapters 1-10
10/5 Jadwin, "'Argument as Conquest: Rhetoric and Rape"
-> Collaborative Exercise 2 due at beginning of class **Thursday.**

gender and linguistics

- 6 10/10 LRLC: Pfeiffer, "Girl Talk - Boy Talk"
10/12 Tannen, "I'll Explain It to You"; Kantrowitz, "Men, Women, Computers"
-> Research project **proposal** due at beginning of class **Thursday.**
- 7 10/17 FCLR: "Introduction"; Spender, "Extracts from *Man Made Language*"
10/19 Black and Coward, critique of *Man Made Language*
- 8 10/24 FCLR: carryover of discussion from previous week if necessary
10/26 Bodine, "Androcentrism in Grammar."

- 9 10/31 FCLR: Clark, "The Linguistics of Blame"
 11/2 McConnell-Ginet, "The Sexual (Re)Production of Meaning: A Discourse-Based Theory"
 -> Collaborative Exercise 3 due at beginning of class **Thursday**.
- 10 11/7 FCLR: Tannen, "The Relativity of Linguistic Strategies. . ."
 11/9 Uchida, "When 'Difference' is Dominance. . ."
- 11 11/14 LRLC: Miller, "Nonverbal Communication"
 11/16 Graddol and Swann, Chapter 2 of *Gender Voices*
- 12 11/21 FCLR: Hall, "Lip Service on Fantasy Lines"
 -> Presentations and critiques (sign-up sheet will be distributed).
No class on Thursday - happy Thanksgiving!

presentations

- 13 11/28 -> Presentations and critiques (sign-up sheet will be distributed).
 11/30 -> Presentations and critiques (sign-up sheet will be distributed).
- 14 12/5 -> Presentations and critiques (sign-up sheet will be distributed).
 12/7 -> Presentations and critiques (sign-up sheet will be distributed).
- 15 t.b.a. -> Final projects due by end of final exam period (date and time t.b.a. by Registrar at mid-semester)