

SYLLABUS: LINGUISTICS 191:91
LINGUISTICS, THE INTERNET, AND SOCIAL MEDIA
FALL 2023 ONLINE

Instructor: Lauren Ross-Feldman

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Student support hours: Monday 11am-noon and by appointment.

On Zoom using the link in the Student Support Hours page on Canvas

Communication: Throughout the semester, I will communicate with you via either Canvas Announcements or your Rutgers email account. If you prefer to use a different account, you must ensure that your emails are forwarded from your Rutgers account.

Course Description: With its acronyms, abbreviations, emoticons, emoji, and memes, the language used on the internet can seem wildly different from writing and speech elsewhere. Will emoji change written English as we know it? How does the language we use in social media reflect variables like age, gender, and our relationships with others? How does the language used on the internet today compare to its forms in the recent past? In this online, asynchronous, 1.5 credit course, students will examine “internet language”—the forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC) from email to IM, texts to tweets—to understand its affective and social functions and how it relates to other forms of written and spoken English. What linguistics is and how linguists study CMC will be examined throughout the course, using scholarly and popular sources covering topics including grammar, pragmatics, and variation and change. By the end of the course, students will develop a familiarity with some research methods linguists use to study language use in social media and the internet and explore how these methods can be used to investigate current usage of “internet language.”

Prerequisites: None

Dates: The course runs from Tuesday, October 24, 2023 through Wednesday, December 13, 2023.

Course Learning Objectives: By the end of this course, you will be able to

- discuss how computer-mediated communication (CMC) evinces at least three different linguistic concepts, which may include grammar, pragmatics, linguistic variation, or the social and affective functions of language use
- evaluate popular or sensationalist claims about CMC objectively and knowledgeably
- discuss different methods to investigate novel questions about CMC

Department Learning Goals: Students will be able to

- reason about language scientifically
- demonstrate knowledge of cross-linguistic variability and universal patterns in language
- evaluate a range of views on the nature, origin, and/or structure of language
- identify what someone knows when they know a language.

Course Delivery & Technical Support: This course is fully online. There are scheduled due dates for activities and assessments, but the course is asynchronous, which means that you can access the course and participate in it at the times that work best for you, *as long as your work is completed by the due dates*.

To access the course, please visit <http://canvas.rutgers.edu>.

For more information about course access or support, contact the OIT Help Desk at 833-OIT-HELP. Visit the [Rutgers Student Tech Guide](#) page for resources available to all students.

If you do not have the appropriate technology for financial reasons, please email the Dean of Students at deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu for assistance. If you are facing other financial hardships, please visit the [Office of Financial Aid](#).

Required Course Text(s), Videos, and Website Resources: Most of our required resources are in the public domain and can be accessed from links provided in the syllabus and course site. Others may be accessed on Canvas.

Optional Course Materials: Additional resources are linked in the “Optional Resources” section at the bottom of each Canvas unit page.

Technology Requirements: This course will require that you access online resources in the University’s Canvas site. Please review the [Canvas Student Resources](#) for assistance on getting started in Canvas, and visit the [Rutgers Student Tech Guide](#) page for resources available to all students.

Baseline technical skills necessary for online courses:

- Basic computer and web-browsing skills
- Navigating Canvas

Technology skills necessary for this specific course:

- Collaborating on VoiceThread
- Recording, editing, and uploading video

Accessibility Statements:

- [Canvas](#) / [Hypothesis](#) / [PlayPosit](#) / [VoiceThread](#)

Privacy Policies:

- [Canvas](#) / [Hypothesis](#) / [PlayPosit](#) / [VoiceThread](#)

Assignments: This course will require you to spend roughly the same amount of time each week on instructional resources, activities, and assignments as you would in a traditional full-semester classroom course—about 8 hours per week.

Below are the assignments required for this course and the value each assignment contributes to the final course grade. Please refer to the course calendar on Canvas and/or the course schedule below for specific due dates. **All information on Canvas supersedes the information here.** All assessments must be submitted by the last class day in order for me to grade them. You should expect to have at least one assignment in each of the first three categories each week.

The late penalty is described on p. 5. **Life happens, so you may have ONE no-questions-asked 48-hour extension on a Lesson OR an Assignment** (not on Discussions or the Final Assessment) but you must email me in advance of the due date in order to receive this penalty-free extension.

Assignment Overview

Online Discussions (25%)

- In lieu of in-person classroom conversation, we will have online discussions about each week's topic. You'll be required to log in on at least two days: the first to make a post answering the weekly question and the second to respond to *at least* one of your classmates' posts.
- Most, if not all, of the prompts will require you to find language online.
- You'll be divided into smaller discussion groups; these groups may vary from week to week.

Lessons (Readings & Videos) (25%)

- Each of the modules will include readings and/or videos. For some readings/videos, there will be questions or activities to allow you to assess your understanding of the lessons.

Assignments (25%)

- Each module will end with an assignment requiring you to apply what you've learned. For example, you might be asked to find and analyze examples of CMC in public social media accounts, or you might be asked to design interview questions or experimental instruments to understand why people use the language they do. Your work will be graded according to a rubric, which will be provided with each assignment.

Final Assessment (25%)

- Open-book, multiple choice quiz including content from Weeks 1-6.
- *You will have two hours to complete the exam once you open it.*
- You may submit your final assessment any time after Week 7 begins. *It is due on the last scheduled class day.*

Warning Grades: At the mid-point of the semester, instructors are asked to submit Warning Grades for students who have poor performance (W1), poor attendance (W2) or both (W3). When I submit Warning Grades, I look for students whose current grade puts them in danger of not earning a C for the course (W1) or who have not been logging in to Canvas regularly to participate (W2). If you receive a warning grade, think of it as an invitation for us to talk. (You've probably already received an email from me, so think of it as another invitation!) I am committed to helping to support you in succeeding in this course, and welcome you to contact me with any concerns, at any time in the semester.

Grade Range:

A 90 – 100	C+ 75 – 79.9	F Below 60
B+ 85 – 89.9	C 70 – 74.9	
B 80 – 84.9	D 60 – 69.9	

Student Participation Expectations: Because this is an online course, your attendance is based on your online activity and participation. The following is a summary of everyone's expected participation:

- **Logging in AT LEAST TWICE PER WEEK:** Be sure you are logging in to the course in Canvas each week, including weeks with holidays or weeks with minimal online course activity. (During most weeks you will probably log in several times.) If you have a situation that might cause you to miss an entire week of class, discuss it with me as soon as possible.
- **Time Commitment:** To be successful in this course, you should plan to dedicate approximately 8 hours per week. This is a half-semester, 1.5 credit course. Each week is designed to require you to spend the same amount of time you would each week for a 3-credit, full-semester course.
- **Student support/Office hours (Optional):** Any live, scheduled events for the course, including my student support hours, are optional, but please drop in! See the Student Support Hours page on Canvas for more information and for links to schedule appointments.
- **Participating in discussion forums 2 OR MORE TIMES PER DISCUSSION:** As participation, during a week with an assigned discussion you can expect to post at least two times as part of our substantive class discussion on the module's topics.

Discussion and Communication Guidelines: Our activities and assignments give us lots of opportunities to interact. I encourage you to bring your authentic self and interests to this course and to your work within it. Please join me in creating a welcoming, inclusive community marked by respectful, thoughtful engagement. Here are some guidelines we will follow:

- **Style:** Class discussions and intro activities are informal academic activities, and your writing and speech styles typically can match that informality. (After all, we all love an occasional emoji or well-chosen gif, even when it's not the topic of the week.) Remember to be respectful and collegial in your interactions.

- **Citing your sources:** Please cite your sources to support what you say. For the textbook or other course materials, provide at least the title and page numbers or section headings. For online sources, include a link.
- **Tone and civility:** Let's maintain a supportive learning community where everyone feels safe and where people can disagree amicably. Remember that sarcasm doesn't always come across online. Treat your instructor and fellow students with respect at all times, and in all communications.

Late and Missing Work: All work will be completed asynchronously for this course; however, regular class engagement will be assessed through the assigned activities and assessments. I reserve the right to make exceptions to the policy here.

- **Missing work:** Canvas is set to automatically record a "0" for any assignment that has no submission once the due date passes. This setting is intended to help you have an accurate picture of your current grade.
- **Late work:** You may submit work late, up to the last date listed for Week 7 on the course schedule. **Canvas is set to automatically deduct 5% for each day that an assignment is late. Any submissions later than 10 days will receive a maximum of 50% credit.**
 - Example 1: An assignment is due the last day of Week 1. You submit it 2 minutes late. Canvas counts this as late 1 day. Canvas will automatically deduct 5% from the maximum grade for the assignment.
 - Example 2: An assignment is due the last day of Week 1. You submit it the last day of Week 7. Canvas counts this as 42 days late. Canvas will automatically deduct 50% from the maximum grade for the assignment.
- **Word to the wise:** I don't recommend waiting until the end to complete late work. The best strategy is to submit your work on time, as each week builds on the previous one, and my feedback will help you complete the next week's work with greater success.

Faculty Feedback and Response Time: I am providing the following list to give you an idea of my intended availability throughout the course. (Remember that you can email help@oit.rutgers.edu or call 833-648-4357 if you have a technical problem.)

- **Grading and Feedback:** For activities and assignments that have free responses, you can generally expect feedback within 7 days of the assignment's due date.
- **E-mail:** I will reply to e-mails within 24 hours on school days, and by the next business day on weekends and holidays.
- **Discussions & Lessons:** Some activities or assignments may involve posting in discussion forums or other online spaces where you can interact with your classmates. I view these spaces as your places to talk amongst yourselves, and while I will check these spaces regularly, I may not post a response myself every time.

Academic Integrity: The consequences of scholastic dishonesty are very serious. Please review the Rutgers' [academic integrity policy](#).

Academic integrity means, among other things:

- Develop and write all of your own assignments.
- Show in detail where the materials you use in your papers come from. Create citations whether you are paraphrasing authors or quoting them directly. Be sure always to show source and page number within the assignment and include a bibliography in the back.
- Do not fabricate information or citations in your work.
- Do not facilitate academic dishonesty for another student by allowing your own work to be submitted by others.

If you are in doubt about any issue related to plagiarism or scholastic dishonesty, please discuss it with your instructor.

Please note: Collaboration and interaction are expected and integral aspects of work in this class and outside of it in the highly-connected world we live in today. I encourage you to work together whenever possible and to make the most of the collaborative tools available on our course site and social media—or just get together in person if you're on campus.

Here is some specific guidance on where collaboration is and is not permitted in this course:

- Avoid working on quizzes together
- Avoid talking about quiz questions and answers during quiz availability periods.
- Submit your own work for all assignments.
- Cite your sources, including classmates whose thoughts informed your opinions.
 - This point is especially important for discussions. Identifying a classmate who has changed or expanded your thinking in some way not only gives them proper attribution, it helps us build an online learning community that recognizes and values participation.

Consult the following link for tips on how to improve your note-taking to avoid accidental plagiarism:

- [RU Citing? Solutions & Strategies for Avoiding Plagiarism](#)

Protecting intellectual property of students and instructors: Almost all original work is the intellectual property of its authors. These works may include syllabi, lecture slides, recorded lectures, homework problems, exams, and other materials, in either printed or electronic form. The authors may hold copyrights in these works, which are protected by U.S. statutes. Copying this work or posting it online without the permission of the author may violate the author's rights. More importantly, these works are the product of the author's efforts; respect for these efforts and for the author's intellectual property rights is an important value that members of the university community take seriously. For more instructions on copyright protections at Rutgers University, please refer to the [Rutgers Libraries](#).

Accommodations for Accessibility: In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation. More information can be found in the Documentation Guidelines section of the [Office for Disability Services](#) website.

Student Support and Mental Wellness: The following may be useful to you

- Student Success Essentials: <https://success.rutgers.edu>
- Student Support Services: <https://www.rutgers.edu/academics/student-support>
- The Learning Centers: <https://rlc.rutgers.edu/>
- Rutgers Libraries: <https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/>
- Bias Incident Reporting: <https://studentaffairs.rutgers.edu/bias-incident-reporting>
- Dean of Students – Student Support Office: <https://success.rutgers.edu/resource/dean-students-student-support-office>
- Office of Veteran and Military Programs and Services: <https://veterans.rutgers.edu>
- Student Health Services: <http://health.rutgers.edu/>
- Counseling, Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program & Psychiatric Services (CAPS): <http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>
- Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance: www.vpva.rutgers.edu/
- Office of Disability Services: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Course Schedule and Deadlines

Please see the appropriate unit on the Canvas site to find detailed information about each assignment, including rubrics and specific due dates.

Information provided on the course site supersedes details provided here.

Week & Topic	Objectives	Assignments	Required Resources
Week 1 10/24-10/30 What is linguistics?	1. Recognize course policies and expectations 2. Recognize subfields of linguistics by definition and by example 3. Understand what it means for language to be the “original wiki” 4. Distinguish forms of variation, given examples 5. Explain the difference between prescriptive and descriptive grammar	Lesson 1: Gawne & Vaughn (PlayPosit) Discussion Post 1 Discussion Reply 1 Assignment 1: Quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Syllabus • Read (or watch): Anderson (2018) <i>Essentials of Linguistics</i>, Chapter 1, "Thinking Like a Linguist" • Watch: Gawne & Vaughn, “I can haz language play: Construction of Language and Identity in LOLspeak” (20 min)
Week 2 10/31-11/6 Variation & Social Groups	1. Collect language data from public social media accounts 2. Identify variation in CMC 3. Identify social factors relevant to online social groups 4. Discuss CMC variation in terms of social groups	Lesson 2A: Crash Course (PlayPosit) Lesson 2B: Holmes (Hyp) Discussion Post 2 Discussion Reply 2 Assignment 2: Language in an Online Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch: Language Variation and Change (8 min) • Watch: Sociolinguistics: Crash Course Linguistics #7 (9 min) • Read: Holmes, “Social Factors, Dimensions, and Explanations”
Week 3 11/7-11/13 Intraspeaker Variation	1. Identify intraspeaker variation in public social media accounts 2. Understand how language can be used to project identity 3. Analyze intraspeaker variation	Lesson 3: Language & Identity (PlayPosit) Discussion Post 3 Discussion Reply 3 Assignment 3: Intraspeaker Variation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch: Language & Performing Identity 1-3 (9 min, 9 min, 7 min) • Listen: Lingthusiasm Episode 13 (45 min)
Week 4 11/14-11/20 Attitudes toward Language Variation	1. Explain how language influences our social expectations of speakers 2. Design a survey to assess social expectations based on language	Lesson 4A: Drager (Hyp) Lesson 4B: Baugh (PlayPosit) Discussion Post 4 Discussion Reply 4 Assignment 4: Matched Guises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Drager 2014 • Read: Kircher – Matched Guise Technique • Read: McCulloch, Because Internet, Ch. 2 • Watch: Baugh – The Significance of Linguistic Profiling (14 min)

<p>Week 5 11/21-11/27</p> <p>What does it mean?!: Implied meaning in CMC</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify & discuss how social and affective functions of language are conveyed and interpreted 2. Discuss implicature in CMC 	<p>Lesson 5A: Implicatures & Gunraj et al. (PlayPosit) Lesson 5B: McCulloch 2015 (Hypothesis) Week 5 Activity: Implied Meaning in CMC Assignment 5: Retweets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen: Dankosky, “How Hashtags, Texts, and Tweets are Influencing Digital Language” (17 min) • Watch: Implicatures & Gunraj et al. (17 min) • Read: McCulloch 2015 • Read: Gunraj et al. 2016
<p>Week 6 11/28-12/4</p> <p>What’s language and what’s not: The limits of emoji</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the design features of human language 2. Discuss the evidence for or against language-like qualities in emojis and LOLspeak 3. Evaluate popular or sensationalist claims about CMC objectively and knowledgeably 	<p>Lesson 6A: McCulloch (PlayPosit) Lesson 6B: Cohn (Hypothesis) Discussion Post 6 Discussion Reply 6 Assignment 6: The Future of Emoji</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch: Design Features of Human Language (10 min) • Watch: McCulloch, “The Linguistic Secrets Found in Billions of Emoji”. Focus on slide 27 and later. (25 min) • Read: Cohn: Will emoji become a new language?
<p>Week 7 12/5-12/11</p> <p>Wrap-Up</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyze language in CMC 2. Discuss social factors of variation in CMC 3. Discuss a method to investigate novel questions about CMC 	<p>Final Assessment</p>	