SYLLABUS: LINGUISTICS 481
LANGUAGE AND LAW
SPRING 2022

Course Overview

Instructor

Instructor: Prof. Crystal Akers

Email address: cakers@rutgers.edu

Student Support/ Office hours: Thursday 10-11 am and by appointment; sign up at https://calendly.com/cakers-ling. I'll be available on Zoom using the link in the Student Support/ Office Hours page on Canvas; in-person appointments may be available later.

Communication: Throughout the semester, I will communicate with you via either **Canvas Announcements** or your **Rutgers email account**. For help, check out Accessing Rutgers Email.

Course Delivery

This course is asynchronous and fully online. To access the companion Canvas course site, please visit Rutgers Canvas and log in using your NetID. For help guides and information about course access and support, contact Canvas Help via email at help@oit.rutgers.edu, or call 833-OIT-Help (833-648-4357). Contact the Help Desk to resolve Canvas technical issues.

Learning remotely presents different challenges. For assistance with learning how to address these challenges, please consult the resources available here: https://rlc.rutgers.edu/remote_instruction.

Course Description

A teenage girl disappears, but her parents continue to receive text messages sent from her phone. Are they from her, or her kidnapper? An airline employee is accused of calling in fake bomb threats to his employer. Can his dialect exonerate him? A patient requests medical records in a suit against a hospital. Does the hospital's carefully-worded response reveal an intent to conceal information?

Determining "whodunnit" can involve language at every step of the legal process, from analyzing the linguistic evidence of ransom notes, bomb threats and corporate denials, to interrogating suspects, cross-examining witnesses, and instructing juries. This course provides

an introduction to forensic linguistics, or the application of linguistics within legal settings, and examines how language is used in laws and in courts. Topics such as syntax, semantics, phonetics, phonology, morphology, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics will inform our examination of language from evidence to courtroom.

Prerequisites

One of the following courses: Ling 305 (Syntax), 315 (Phonology), 325 (Semantics), or 350 (Pragmatics)

- You will be required to read, analyze, discuss, and present linguistic information in collaboration with other students. This prerequisite ensures a background in experience and skill analyzing language.

Important Dates

- The course begins on 1/18/2022 and ends on 5/2/2022, and the last day to drop the course without a "W" grade is 1/25/2022.

- Exams will be available on Canvas during the following periods:
  - Midterm Exam: Available from Monday, March 7 at 7 am until Wednesday, March 9 at 11:59 pm.
  - Final Exam: Available Thursday, May 7 at 7 am until Saturday, May 9 at 11 pm.

- **Academic Calendar Directory:** https://academicaffairs.rutgers.edu/academic-calendar-directory

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:
1. discuss, given examples of laws, testimonies, interrogations, or other uses of language in legal settings, the effect on the legal process of at least three different linguistic concepts, such as: presupposition, conversational implicature, structural and semantic ambiguity, syntactic complexity, and lexical variation.
   - *Assessed through quizzes, discussions and/or exam*
2. discuss the use of at least three different linguistic concepts -- such as syntactic structure, choice of lexical items, register, voice qualities, phoneme production, and prosody – for analyzing language as forensic evidence
   - *Assessed through quizzes, discussions and/or exam*
3. discuss at least two limitations of authorship analysis as forensic evidence
   - *Assessed through quizzes, discussions and/or exam*
4. collaborate on a project to explore how linguistic features are used for forensic authorship analysis
   - *Assessed in the completion of the authorship analysis*

Department Learning Goals Met by this Course

Students will:

- reason about language scientifically

- demonstrate knowledge of cross-linguistic variability and universal patterns in language

- investigate and analyze linguistic data

- extend their understanding of theoretical linguistics into other domains of linguistic research

- apply the techniques of linguistics to new topics, and

- access current research in the field.

Course Instructional Resources

Required Resources

- Solan, L. & Tiersma, P. (2005). *Speaking of crime: The language of criminal justice.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 978-0226767932
    - The textbook is available online through the [Rutgers University Libraries](#).

- Additional required resources can be accessed from links provided in the syllabus and course Canvas site.

Optional Resources

- Optional resources can be accessed from links provided in the syllabus and course Canvas site.

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.

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

Baseline technical skills necessary for online courses

- Basic computer and web-browsing skills
- Navigating Canvas
- For help, review the Rutgers [Tech Guides](#).

Technology skills necessary for this specific course

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

Publisher Content and Technology Tools Accessibility Statements:

- [Canvas accessibility statement](#)
- [Hypothes.is accessibility statement](#)
- [Playposit accessibility statement](#)
- [VoiceThread accessibility statement](#)

Assessment

Assignment Summary

This course will require you to spend roughly the same amount of time on the instructional resources, activities, and assessments each week as you would in a traditional 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.

Assignment	Points
Midterm Exam	20
Final Exam	25
Quizzes	15
Discussions	28
Authorship Analysis Project	12
Total	100

See course schedule, below, for due dates.

Assignment Overview

Midterm Exam: 20%

- The midterm exam contributes 20% toward your final grade and covers the topics learned in the first seven weeks of the course. The exam may include multiple choice, matching, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. Some questions may be taken from the quizzes. The midterm will include at least one essay-style question reflecting on the role of language in the legal process.

- The midterm exam is an unproctored, open-book exam. You will have 1.5 hours to take the exam once you begin it.

Final Exam: 25%

- The final exam contributes 25% toward your final grade and emphasizes, but is not limited to, the topics learned in last six weeks of the course. The exam may include multiple choice, matching, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. Some questions may be taken from the quizzes. The final exam will include at least one essay-style question discussing language as forensic evidence.

- The final exam is an unproctored, open-book exam. You will have 2 hours to take the exam once you begin it.

Quizzes: 15%

- Five highest scores; 3% each

- Short quizzes will assess factual knowledge, such as the definitions of key terms from each module, and may also assess higher-order knowledge using short-answer questions. Prepare for quizzes by completing the assigned instructional resources, which may include readings, videos or audio recordings, and by answering any formative questions associated with the required resources. Some quizzes may be cumulative, using questions from prior quizzes to review key terms or concepts. Quizzes will be available from Thursday through Sunday, and you will have 90 minutes to complete the quiz once you begin. **You are not permitted to consult with others as you work**, but you are expected to refer to the course materials as you take the quiz. The lowest quiz grade of six total quizzes will be dropped, leaving five quizzes contributing to this category.

- **Note: You may not always be supplied automatically with the correct answers to the quiz after it is graded, as some questions may be reused on exams; however, I am always willing to discuss quiz questions and answers with you on an individual basis after you have had a chance to try to determine the correct answer for yourself.** You may email your revised answers for additional feedback or visit during office hours for further discussion.

Discussions: 28%

- Seven discussions; 4% each.
- For full credit, **your first post in each discussion must explicitly use and cite the unit's required instructional resources**. "Use" of the sources can take many forms. If you took Expos 101 at Rutgers, you may have learned how sources can be used to complement, contradict, or complicate your positions. These are all valid ways of using the required resources in your posts. Your second post in the discussion should respond thoughtfully to someone else's post.
- Frequent interaction is vital to building an online learning community. In our course, interaction will primarily take place in small-group and full-class discussions. Sometimes you will be required to respond to a specific question I ask. Other times, you will have the opportunity to explore your personal interests in the topics we cover by suggesting your own discussion question and responding to your classmates'. Though I will evaluate that you are using the assigned materials to inform your discussion posts, I view the act of discussion itself as part of the process of learning, and for that reason the discussion rubric emphasizes qualities that lead to sustained, thoughtful engagement over the course of the week.
- Your initial response to the discussion will be due on Thursday night, with all required responses due by Sunday night of the given week. I strongly encourage you to review the Discussion Rubric, posted on our course site, as you work on your discussion posts.

Authorship Analysis Project: 12%

- Authorship analysis is a common task for forensic linguists, who may be called to present the evidence of whether a suspect wrote a ransom note – or whether one novelist plagiarized another. For this project, you'll learn more about authorship analysis techniques applied to a real corpus of corporate emails (the Enron Email Corpus) and have a chance to get creative as you adopt the linguistic "voice" of a specific executive. Will your classmates be able to use your linguistic clues to identify you? We'll find out!
- The project will allow you to:
  - learn more about the challenges of identifying authorship problems in real texts
  - imitate a particular style for a particular audience
  - use your knowledge of stylistic variation and authorship analysis to evaluate your peers' creative efforts
- This project will be completed as a series of tasks beginning after the midpoint of the semester. You may work in a group of up to 4 people on this project, or work alone.

Grading Scale

Grade	Range
A	90 – 100

Grade	Range
B+	85 – 89
B	80 – 84
C+	75 – 79
C	70 – 74
D	60 – 69
F	Below 60

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 course week, including weeks with holidays or weeks with minimal online course activity. (During most weeks you will probably log in many 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 8-10 hours per week.

- **Midterm Exam: REQUIRED**

  The midterm exam is an unproctored, open-book exam available on Canvas. You will have 1.5 hours to take the exam once you begin it.

- **Final Exam: REQUIRED**

  The final exam is an unproctored, open-book exam available on Canvas. You will have 2 hours to take the exam once you begin it.

- **Support/ Office hours and live sessions**: **OPTIONAL**

  All live, scheduled events for the course, including my support/ office hours, are optional. For any live presentations, I will provide a recording that you can watch later. If you are required to discuss an assignment with me, please contact me at the beginning of the week if you need a time outside my scheduled office hours.

- **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 week's topics.

Discussion and Communication Guidelines

The following are my expectations for how we should communicate as a class. Above all, please remember to be respectful and thoughtful.

- **Writing style**: While there is no need to participate in class discussions as if you were writing a research paper, you should remember to write using academic style for grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Informality (including an occasional emoticon) is fine for non-academic topics. Please also refrain from using all CAPITAL LETTERS, as this is often interpreted as shouting.
- **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.
- **Citing your sources**: When we have academic discussions, you must cite your sources to back up what you say. For the textbook or other course materials, include at least the title and page numbers or section heading. For online sources, include the site name and a link.
- **Backing up your work**: Consider composing your academic posts in a word processor, where you can save your work, and then copying into the Canvas discussion.

Support and Policies

Late Work and Make-up Exams

Because all work will be completed asynchronously for this course, there is no formal attendance policy; however, regular class engagement will be assessed through the assigned activities and assessments. All quizzes are available for multiple days, and there are multiple sessions available for the exams. Please take note of the availability periods on the attached schedule and plan accordingly.

- Except for documented cases of illness or religious observance, **no quizzes will be accepted late.**

- **For late discussions and tasks in the Authorship Analysis project, your work will lose 10% of the maximum points possible for each day late. Any submissions later than 5 days will receive a maximum of 50% credit.**

Extra Credit

You have the opportunity to raise your final grade by up to 2 points through experimental participation.

- Some faculty and graduate students in the Department of Linguistics do experimental research on language. This research depends on the participation of undergraduate participants.

- You have the option of participating in Linguistics experiments during the semester. Each experiment usually takes between 20 and 45 minutes.

- You will get **1 point credit for every half hour** of experimental participation. It does not matter what subfield of Linguistics this experiment is in, but it must be in <u>Linguistics</u>.

- Experiments are offered through the Linguistics Department [experimental management system (sona) website](#) . Towards the beginning of the semester, your name and email will be added to the experiment system. You will be issued an anonymous id to participate in experiments through this system. Once Linguistics experiments are posted, you can sign up online. Note that this system is different from the psychology pool, and you should not use a psychology ID to log in to the system.

- Any student enrolled in a Linguistics undergraduate course is eligible to participate in Linguistics experiments, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, language status, or impairments, disorders, or disabilities (as long as his/her instructor provides the opportunity). You cannot be denied participation for any of these reasons.

- **You have the right to not participate in experiments to earn extra credit. You may speak with me about possible research alternatives, such as reading a pre-approved scholarly article in linguistics and writing a 2-page paper summarizing it.**

- If you are taking multiple Linguistics courses that allow for experimental participation to count towards extra credit, <u>you</u> are responsible for making sure you have assigned the credit correctly through the experiment system online. This is <u>not</u> your instructor's, the experimenter's or the experiment system administrator's job!

- If you sign up for, but fail to show up for, two or more experiments, you may be barred from further participation and restricted to research alternatives as described above, so please note the time and location of your experiments and take your schedule and transportation time into account. Many experiments have restrictions on how late you may cancel online.

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@canvas.rutgers.edu or call 877-361-1134 if you have a technical problem.)

Grading and Feedback

For large weekly assignments such as quizzes with short answer questions or discussions, you can generally expect feedback within **7-10 days** of the assignment's due date.

E-mail

I will reply to e-mails within **24 hours** during the work week and by the next business day on weekends and holidays.

Please include the course number or name (Ling 481; Lang & Law) in the subject line.

Discussion Board

I will check posts in the discussion forums regularly; however, I may not post a response every night. I view discussions as your opportunity to talk amongst yourselves, and I will generally be a lurker.

Academic Integrity

Rutgers University takes academic dishonesty very seriously. By enrolling in this course, you assume responsibility for familiarizing yourself with the Academic Integrity Policy and the possible penalties (including suspension and expulsion) for violating the policy. As per the policy, all suspected violations will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to):

- Cheating
- Plagiarism
- Aiding others in committing a violation or allowing others to use your work
- Failure to cite sources correctly
- Fabrication
- Using another person's ideas or words without attribution
- Re-using a previous assignment
- Unauthorized collaboration
- Sabotaging another student's work

Please note: collaboration and interaction are expected and often 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:

- Do not work on quizzes together
- Do not talk about quiz questions and answers during quiz availability periods, including those contained in the "Questions for the Required Resources."
- Submit your own work for discussions and collaborative assignments.

- Cite your sources, including classmates whose thoughts have informed your own opinions.

    o *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.*

Please review the [Academic Integrity Policy](#). If you are in doubt about any issue related to plagiarism or scholastic dishonesty, please discuss it with your instructor.

Any collaboration with other students to answer quiz questions is a violation of Rutgers' Academic Integrity Policy. Students caught cheating or committing plagiarism will be penalized, as per Rutgers policy.

Grievances and Complaints

The Bylaws of the Department of Linguistics direct that any concern must first be directed to the Course Instructor/Lecturer. (The concern should be shared in a timely manner, and that individual should be given an opportunity to address the concern.)

- If the concern is still not resolved, it will be referred to the Undergraduate Program Director.

- If the concern is still not resolved, it will be referred to the Chair of the Department of Linguistics.

- If the concern is still not resolved, it will be referred to the Dean.

Additional information regarding grievances, disciplinary procedures, and the process for making a complaint can be found in the [Making a Complaint](#) section of the Student Conduct website.

Accommodations for Accessibility

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. 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: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the [Registration form](https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration) (https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration).

Student Support Services

Academic Services:

- For academic support visit Rutgers Academics Student Support.
- Any student can obtain tutoring and other help at the Learning Centers on each campus.
- For coaching help with writing skills and assignments visit the Writing Coaching page.
- Many library resources are available online. Assistance is available through phone, email, and chat. For information, check the Rutgers Libraries website.

Rutgers Student Health Services:

Rutgers Student Health Services is dedicated to health for the whole student body, mind and spirit. It accomplishes this through a staff of qualified clinicians and support staff. Services are available at several locations throughout the New Brunswick-Piscataway area. For more information visit: http://health.rutgers.edu/

Veteran Services:

Rutgers is proud to support veterans. If you are a veteran of the armed forces, please visit the Office of Veteran and Military Programs and Services website for more information.

Links for Additional Rutgers Resources:

- Resources (from the Division of Student Affairs)
- Student Success Essentials
- Student Tech Guide

Course Schedule and Deadlines

Please see the appropriate unit on the course site to find detailed information about each assignment, including rubrics and specific due dates. All required Instructional Resources are provided here; the course site may include additional optional resources. Information provided on the course site supersedes details provided here.

Week	Topic	Activities & Assessments	Instructional Resources
1 1/18	Course Introduction	1. VT: Self-Introduction 2. Quiz: Course Intro (ungraded, but required)	**Read:** Syllabus **Read:** S&T Ch 1 **Watch:** Introduction Video

2 1/24	Pragmatics and Police Interaction: Consent to Search	1. Quiz 1	**Read:** S&T Ch. 2 "Discourse and Inferences from Context"; Part 2 Intro, "Gathering the Evidence"; Ch 3, "'Consensual' Searches" **Watch:** [Trump comments remind Comey of famous quote from King Henry II](#)
3 1/31	Pragmatics and Police Interaction: Interrogation, Confession, Right to Counsel	1. Discussion 1: Invoking right to counsel in *State of Louisiana v. Warren Demesme*	**Read:** S&T Ch 4
4 2/7	In Court: Questions & Testimony	1. Quiz 2	**Read:** O&L 13 **Read:** Heffer: "Narrative in Trial" **Read:** Holt & Johnson: "Socio-pragmatic aspects of legal talk "
5 2/14	In Court: Dialect & Testimony	1. Discussion 2: Dialect and testimony in *State of Florida v. George Zimmerman*	**View:** Rickford & King (2/19/2014) **Read:** Famous Trials: [The George Zimmerman Trial: An Account](#) **Optional, Recommended Watch:** [Rickford & King (2/10/2014)](#)
6 2/21	In Court: Jury Instructions	1. Quiz 3	**Read:** Tiersma, "Instructions to Jurors"
7 2/28	In Court: The meaning of laws	1. Quiz 4	**Read:** O&L Ch 16 (pdf) **Read:** Solan (1993)
8 3/7	**Midterm**	1. Multiple Choice & Essay Format	*See "Important Dates" for date and time info.*
9 3/14	*Spring Break*		

10 3/21	Authorship Analysis (I) – Written Texts	1. Discussion 3: Written text analysis for "Three Schoolboys' account…."	**Read:** O&L Ch 10 **Watch:** Weiner 2013; 4:00-22:00 **Read:** Wright 2013
11 3/28	Authorship Analysis (II) - Voice Analysis	1. Discussion 4: Voice analysis expert testimony in *State of Florida v. George Zimmerman* 2. Authorship Analysis Project - 1	**Read:** S&T Ch 7 **Read:** O&L Ch 6 (Excerpts; pdf) **Watch:** Voice Analysis of Zimmerman trial
12 4/4	Authorship Analysis (II) – Limitations	1. Quiz 5	**Read:** S&T Ch 8 **Read:** Olsson Ch. 4 **Listen:** Rehm (2015)
13 4/11	Crimes with words (I) – Solicitation, Conspiracy, Bribery	1. Discussion 6: Crimes in media 2. Authorship Analysis Project - 2	**Read:** S&T Ch 9
14 4/18	Crimes with words (II) - Perjury	1. Quiz 6	**Read:** S&T Ch 11 **Read:** Famous Trials: Clinton Impeachment
15 4/25	Wrap-Up	1. Discussion 7: Linguistics and the legal process 2. Authorship Analysis Project – 3, "Presentations"	**Watch:** Weiner (2015); 9:50-18:42
16 5/2	**Final Exam**	1. Cumulative; multiple-choice and essay format	Available during final exam period; *May 7 and 9*

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