SYLLABUS: LINGUISTICS 191:91
LINGUISTICS, THE INTERNET, AND SOCIAL MEDIA
SPRING 2024 ONLINE

Instructor: Lauren Ross-Feldman
Email address: lauren.rossfeldman@rutgers.edu
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, January 16, 2024 through Monday, March 4, 2024.

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:

The remaining required resources are in the public domain and can be accessed from links provided in 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.

**Assignment Overview**

**Weekly comprehension quizzes on readings (20%)**

- To make sure that you understand the concepts needed to do the week’s work, there will be a quiz on the readings each week. These quizzes are open book and open note and you may retake the quiz, without penalty, if you aren’t happy with your initial score. While the quizzes are not due until the last day of the unit (Monday), *I strongly recommend taking them before participating in the weekly discussion threads.*

**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 make three posts:
  1. Answer the weekly question(s)
  2. Respond to *at least* one of your classmates’ posts
  3. Respond to the people who commented on your post
- 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.

**Midterm Assignment (15%)**

- You will write a short (2-5) page paper on a topic related to the course content.

**Final Assessment (15%)**

- You will write a short (2-5) page paper on a topic related to the course content.

**Grade Range:**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90 – 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>85 – 89.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80 – 84.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>75 – 79.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70 – 74.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>65 – 69.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 65</td>
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**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 3 OR MORE TIMES PER DISCUSSION:** As participation, during a week with an assigned discussion you can expect to post at least three times as part of our substantive class discussion on the module’s topics.

*While warning grades do not apply to mini-semester courses, I do monitor participation and performance carefully. I will refer students to SAS academic advisors if appropriate.*

**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:** Do not wait until the end to complete late work. Submit your work on time, or as soon as possible, as each week builds on the previous one, and my feedback will help you complete the next week’s work with greater success. Students who submit work on time in this course generally do well. Students who accumulate late penalties see this reflected in their grades.

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.
- **Use of AI such as ChatGPT is not permitted in any stages of the writing process on any assignment.**

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/
- UWill: free immediate access to teletherapy; you can choose a therapist based on your preferences including issue, gender, language, ethnicity: http://health.rutgers.edu/uwill/
- Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance: www.vpva.rutgers.edu/
- Office of Disability Services: https://ods.rutgers.edu/
- Basic Needs Assistance (food, housing, and other essentials): https://ruoffcampus.rutgers.edu/basic-needs
- Rutgers Student Food Pantry: https://ruoffcampus.rutgers.edu/food-pantry
## 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.**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week &amp; Topic</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Required Resources</th>
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| **Week 1** 1/16-1/22 | What is linguistics? | 1. Recognize course policies and expectations 2. Recognize subfields of linguistics by definition and by example 3. Distinguish forms of variation, given examples 4. Explain the difference between prescriptive and descriptive grammar | **Syllabus Quiz**  
**Quiz 1**: Language and Social Media  
**Lesson 1**: Essentials of Linguistics  
**Discussion Post 1**  
**Discussion Reply 1**  
**Discussion Response 1** | • Read: Syllabus  
• Read: Textbook, Chapter 1 “Language and Social Media”  
• Watch: Anderson (2018) *Essentials of Linguistics*, Chapter 1, "Thinking Like a Linguist" (~30 min) |
| **Week 2** 1/23-1/26 | Language Use & Variation | 1. Identify variation in CMC 2. Explore differences among genre, register, and style 3. Learn how these differences are manifested in online settings | **Quiz 2**: “Using social media for your purpose”  
**Lesson 2**: Crash Course  
**Discussion Post 2**  
**Discussion Reply 2**  
**Discussion Response 2** | • Read: Textbook, Chapter 2 “Using social media for your purpose: Exploring genre, register and style”  
• Watch: Crash Course: Sociolinguistics (~12 min) |
| **Week 3** 1/30-2/5 | Intraspeaker Variation | 1. Identify intraspeaker variation 2. Understand how language can be used to project identity 3. Analyze intraspeaker variation | **Quiz 3**: “Using social media to speak to your tribe”  
**Lesson 3**: van Oostendorp  
**Discussion Post 3**  
**Discussion Reply 3**  
**Discussion Response 3** | • Read: Textbook, Chapter 3 “Using social media to speak to your tribe: Considering Audience Design, language choice and multilingualism”  
• Watch: van Oostendorp video (~8 min) |
| **Week 4** 2/6-2/12 | Emoji | 1. Understand the design features of language 2. Explain to what extent emoji possess these features 3. Argue for or against the potential of emoji to replace natural language | **Quiz 4**: “Emoji and other Internet Gestures”  
**Lesson 4**: Linguistic Secrets  
**Discussion Post 4**  
**Discussion Reply 4**  
**Discussion Response 4** | • Read: *Because Internet* Chapter 5 “Emoji and other Internet Gestures”  
• Watch: Linguistic Secrets Found in Billions of Emoji (~25 min) |

**Midterm Assignment due Monday, February 12**
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<th>Week &amp; Topic</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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| **Week 5 2/13-2/19** | 1. Understand how English creates new words  
2. Examine hashtags as an example of linguistic creativity online  
3. Explore whether/to what extent hashtags exemplify processes of word formation | **Quiz 5**: “Using social media to amuse and entertain:”  
**Lesson 5**: Word Formation  
**Discussion Post 5**  
**Discussion Reply 5**  
**Discussion Response 5** | - **Read**: Textbook, Chapter 8 “Using social media to amuse and entertain: Introducing word-formation and grammatical constructions”  
- **Watch**: Word Formation video (~4 min) |
| **Word Formation & Hashtags** | | | |
| **Week 6 2/20-2/26** | 1. Explain how language influences our social expectations of speakers  
2. Identify and describe instances of codeswitching | **Quiz 6**: “Language in Society”  
**Lesson 6**: Baugh  
**Discussion Post 6**  
**Discussion Reply 6**  
**Discussion Response 6**  
**Final Assignment Variable** | - **Read**: Because Internet Chapter 2 “Language in Society”  
- **Watch**: Baugh video (~14 min) |
| **Attitudes toward Language Variation** | | | |
| **Week 7 2/27-3/4** | | **Quiz 7**: “Epilogue” | - **Read**: Textbook, Chapter 10 “Epilogue: Ethical considerations and language change” |
| **Wrap-Up** | | | |

*Final Assignment Due Monday, March 4, 2024*