Introduction to Sociolinguistics
Master Syllabus
Rosina Lippi-Green
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About this course:

Sociolinguistics is, in the broadest sense, the study of the role of language in human society. Formal study began in the late 50s with the hypothesis that language variation is not random, but structured and emblematic, and that all language change is preceded by a period of variation, short or very long. Since those early days, theory, methods and focus have evolved greatly.¹

I will lecture for about ¼ of class time overall. The other ¾ of our time will be consumed by class discussions, presentations, and case study workgroups. Grading is based on preparation, participation in class discussions (for which you need to be present, of course), your presentation of a newspaper article or news broadcast report (details forthcoming), and a final case study/paper with an oral exam element.

Goals: Students should finish this course with an understanding of

- the scope of sociolinguistics and its relationship to other linguistic subdisciplines and other academic fields
- traditional sociolinguistic theory and methods
- more recent theoretical constructs, in particular critical language studies, perceptual dialectology language ideology
- a variety of major case studies which underlie our understanding of how language functions in the community
- field methods, data gathering, and analysis

Possible primary texts:


¹ Introduction to Sociolinguistics has been designed for those who have had an introductory linguistics class. If you don’t have that preparation but you believe you have enough subject knowledge and you would like to take the class, please contact me to set up a meeting.
Readings by Topic
from primary texts and/or course pack

Theory: Then and Now


Iconic Studies


Ideology


Changes in Progress


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Perceptual Dialectology


Regional Variation


Social Factors in Variation Leading to Change


African American Vernacular English


Spanish-speaking Americans


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Language Policy, Language Rights & Bilingualism


