ENG 558 01W: Sociolinguistics

COURSE SYLLABUS: Spring 2026

Instructor: Dongmei Cheng, Ph.D.
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COURSE INFORMATION

Textbook Required

Holmes, J. An introduction to sociolinguistics. (5th or 6th edition). London, U.K., & New York, NY: Routledge.

Additional Text Required:

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th edition). Those of you who are not familiar with APA style which is required in the discipline of TESOL/applied linguistics, need to purchase a copy of this manual. You should obtain this book from booksellers of your choice.

Catalog Description

This course focuses on the various aspects of human behavior and sociocultural interaction that affect language structure, use, learning, and acquisition. Topics discussed include sociolinguistic methodology, interactional sociolinguistics, variationist sociolinguistics, language and gender and language and ethnicity. Prerequisites: ENG 555.

Course Description

In this course you will attain an advanced understanding of the sociocultural nature of human language. Language may be studied at several structural or functional levels (such as phonology or syntax, for example). However, your attention to this course will be directed to the components of society and culture and to the relationships between these components and language variation within and across individuals. You will also be encouraged in the class to carefully examine your beliefs about your own language and your attitudes toward the language varieties that you and others use. Doing so will help you better understand the change that language constantly undergoes in personal and social use. Examining your beliefs and attitudes will also help you become more aware of the variation in language use from one group to the next and from one individual to the next.

Student Learning Outcomes

A student who completes ENG 558 will:
1. recognize the constant interplay between language and society in both English-speaking as well as in societies that speak other languages.
2. develop his/her attitudes to varieties of English and other languages.
3. develop an interest in a specific area of sociolinguistics research by completing a research paper.

Grading Criteria:
Each student's performance in the following areas will determine the student's grade for this course:

Online Discussions (30%): The weekly discussions provide opportunities for you to interact with your classmates to discuss key concepts and terms targeted in the course readings and lectures. You are expected to make a minimum number of comments and replies to your classmates' comments for every discussion. There are two deadlines each week: one for posting a reply to discussion prompts (i.e., by Thursday midnight), and one for responding to at least two classmates' posts (i.e., by Sunday midnight). The specific requirements are provided in the description for each discussion assignment.

Quizzes (30%): Each of the three quizzes covers the content of the previous instructional weeks and must be completed by the end of the week indicated on the course calendar (11:59pm, Sunday). Question forms include multiple choices, true/false, filling-in-blanks, short answers, and essay questions. The best way to get prepared is by reading the course materials, watching the weekly lectures, and participating in online discussions.

Final Research Paper & Presentation (40%): You will pick a topic presented in the course readings/lectures, conduct your own library/field research on it, and write a 10-15 page paper on it. Before turning in the final draft of your paper, you will also compose a prospectus and bibliography and present the gist of your paper in a 10-15 min presentation via an online presentation tool such as VoiceThread. In addition, you will receive feedback from your classmates on a rough draft, which will be due earlier than the final draft due date. Specific assignment details will be available on D2L. (*Final research paper cannot be revised and resubmitted*.)

Total Possible = 100%
("No curve" grading scale / 100 percent possible, 90-100=A   80-89=B   70-79=C   and so on. . .)

COURSE OUTLINE

Note: Schedule is flexible and subject to change.

Week 1 (1/29-2/1) Introduction to Sociolinguistics; Holmes Chapter 1 (What do sociolinguistics study?)

Week 2 (2/2-2/8): Holmes Chapter 2 (Language choice in multilingual communities)

Week 3 (2/9-2/15): Holmes Chapter 3 (Language maintenance and shift)

Week 4 (2/16-2/22): Holmes Chapter 4 (Linguistic varieties and multilingual nations)

Week 5 (2/23-3/1): Holmes Chapter 5 (National languages and language planning); **Quiz 1**

Week 6 (3/2-3/8): Holmes Chapter 6 (Regional and social dialect)

(3/9-3/15) Spring Break: NO CLASS

Week 7 (3/16-3/22): Holmes Chapter 7 (Gender and age)

Week 8 (3/23-3/29): Holmes Chapter 8 (Ethnicity and social networks); Holmes Chapter 9 (Language change)

Week 9 (3/30-4/5): **Final Research Paper Prospectus & Bibliography**

Week 10 (4/6-4/12): Holmes Chapter 10 (Style, context and register); **Quiz 2**

Week 11 (4/13-4/19) Holmes Chapter 11 (Speech functions, politeness and cross-cultural communication)

Week 12 (4/20-4/26): Holmes Chapter 12 (Gender, politeness and stereotypes); Holmes Chapter 13 (Language, cognition and culture)

Week 13 (4/27-5/3) Holmes Chapter 14 (Analyzing discourse); Holmes Chapter 15 (Attitudes and applications); **Quiz 3**

Week 14 (5/4-5/8): **Final Research Paper**

COURSE/ UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Course Ground Rules
Being successful in an online course requires tremendous self-discipline and high motivation. In this course, all work will be completed through D2L. You should log into the course website frequently for the course syllabus, assignments, announcements, and discussions. I strongly recommend dedicating set days/times to completing your work and working in advance so that you are always a day or two ahead. You are expected to put 2-3 hours a day to work on the course materials (involving reading and class assignments). Please note that assignment due dates are crucial and that you are expected to exert your maximum effort to meet these deadlines. We are co-constructing our knowledge in the online community. Please be prepared, read carefully, share thoughtfully, respond respectfully, and engage in all learning processes.

Netiquette
I expect that students will exhibit courtesy toward others in this online class. Courtesy means NOT engaging in online rudeness or refusing to focus on group or class discussion. Courtesy means engaging in such behaviors as listening carefully to others, accepting that various points of views can be valid, maintaining a focus on the discussion in hand and treating others as you wish to be treated. Online courtesy requires meeting some different standards than face2face situations: a good guide to Netiquette can be found at:
http://www.albion.com/netiquette/

Assignment Submissions
• All assignments must be submitted to D2L Brightspace by the designated due date (generally Sunday midnight).
• The submission should be in an appropriate academic format (i.e., APA). Failure to confirm to the standards will result in points deducted. To learn more about the APA format, please consult an APA style manual or check the website of Purdue Online Writing Lab (Purdue OWL).

• If you have trouble uploading the assignment to the course site, please e-mail your paper to me at dongmei.cheng@etamu.edu

Learning Management System D2L (Brightspace)
D2L is committed to performing key application testing when new browser versions are released. New and updated functionality is also tested against the latest version of supported browsers. However, due to the frequency of some browser releases, D2L cannot guarantee that each browser version will perform as expected. If you encounter any issues with any of the browser versions listed in the tables below, contact CITE Helpdesk or D2L Support.

Note the following:
• Ensure that your browser has JavaScript and Cookies enabled.
• For desktop systems, you must have Adobe Flash Player 10.1 or greater.
• The Brightspace Support features are now optimized for production environments when

using the Google Chrome browser, Apple Safari browser, Microsoft Edge browser, Microsoft Internet Explorer browser, and Mozilla Firefox browsers.

• You will need regular access to a computer with a broadband internet connection. The minimum computer requirements are:
   o 512 MB of RAM, 1 GB or more preferred
   o Broadband connection required courses are heavily video intensive
   o Video display capable of high-color 16-bit display 1024 x 768 or higher resolution

• You must have a:
   o Sound card, which is usually integrated into your desktop or laptop computer
   o Speakers or headphones.

• Both versions of Java (32 bit and 64 bit) must be installed and up to date on your machine. At a minimum Java 7, update 51, is required to support the learning management system. The most current version of Java can be downloaded at: JAVA web site http://www.java.com/en/download/manual.jsp

• Current anti-virus software must be installed and kept up to date.

Communication
I encourage you to contact me if you have any questions about the contents of this course. Please send messages directly to dongmei.cheng@etamu.edu. I generally reply email within 24 hours. If you desire an online conference via Zoom or face-to-face meeting, please always email me first to set up an appointment. If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778.

Syllabus Change Policy
The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

Student Conduct
All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the Student Guidebook: http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.asp. Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: http:// www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html

TAMUC Attendance
For more information about the attendance policy please visit the following webpages: http:// www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx

http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf

Academic Honesty Policy
 Texas A&M University-Commerce does not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Conduct that violates generally accepted standards of academic honesty is defined as academic dishonesty. "Academic dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another and passing them off as one's own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material.

Avoid Self-plagiarism
Self-plagiarism is reusing one's own previously written work partially or entirely in another piece of work without referring to the previous use. Instructors expect unique coursework for individual classes to demonstrate students' persistent learning and growth. Submitting an assignment that has already been submitted for another class, also called "recycling fraud", is a form of academic misconduct and never allowed. In case you want to further explore a research topic that you have examined in another class, please do ask for the instructor's permission beforehand.

AI Use in Course
Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors 'guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty
13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty

Dr. Cheng's guidelines on the use of AI in coursework:
- You cannot trust anything said by an AI tool. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is wrong unless you can verify it with another credible source. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics you understand.
- Do not trust AI to supply citation information. Do your own research and include the proper citation information in your writing.
- You are not allowed to use AI to generate an entire assignment.

- You are permitted to use AI to facilitate your completion of the course assignments if you acknowledge your use of it and document how you use it. Please include a statement at the end of any assignment that uses AI explaining what you used the AI for and the link of your chat history. Failure to do so is in violation of academic honesty policies.
- When in doubt about whether your use of AI in a course assignment is appropriate, check with me before submitting your work for a grade.

ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library- Room 162
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu
Website: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/

Nondiscrimination Notice
Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement
Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to the Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus document and/or consult your event organizer. Web URL: http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34Safet yOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf. Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

Counseling center statement
The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers

counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145.For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel