

Faculty of Business
IBH 1AC3
Introduction to Language and Society
Winter 2026



Instructor Information

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Office Hours:

Wednesday, 1:30-2:20 p.m.

or by zoom

Course Information

- What does the way you speak tell about you?
- Does your language influence the way we see the word?
- Do we judge the same person differently depending on which language they are speaking?
- Can someone use slang incorrectly?
- What are secret languages?
- Do the Inuit have dozens of words for snow?
- Is African American English 'incorrect English'?
- Why don't we use 'whom' anymore?
- Do languages degenerate over time?

- Why do parts of Sean Paul's, Bob Marley's or Drake's lyrics sound like gibberish to us?
- What is the difference between a promise, a warning and a threat?

These and many more questions related to language will be answered in this course. We will debunk a number of existing myths and will point out a few facts that sound like myths to most people. Ultimately, the course is exploring a connection between a language's structure, its use by speakers, and the structure of a society.

Course Dates: 01/05/2026 - 04/07/2026

Units: 3.00

Course Delivery Mode: In Person

Course Description: This course equips students with basic linguistic terminology and the necessary tools to examine the relationship between language and society. Topics covered include linguistic variation (regional, social, situational), language and gender, language and disadvantage/power, multilingualism, language change, pidgin and creole languages. Lectures (three hours) Prerequisite(s): Registration in Level 1 of the Integrated Business and Humanities Program Antirequisite(s): Not open to students with credit or enrolment in LINGUIST 1ZZ3 or 2S03

Meeting Details

All classes are conducted in person unless otherwise noted on A2L.

Important Links

- [Mosaic](#)
- [Avenue to Learn](#)
- [Student Accessibility Services - Accommodations](#)
- [McMaster University Library](#)
- [eReserves](#)

Course Learning Outcomes

- develop general knowledge of the relationship between variations in language form, use and socio-cultural factors;
- develop general knowledge of 1) how language is used in a society; 2) how power is manifested through the language, 3) what makes effective communication, and 4) how our perception of the world is affected by the language we speak.

Course Learning Goals

- By the end of the course students are expected to have acquired understanding of the basic concepts and tenets of sociolinguistics, and be aware of the ways in which language structure (grammar), language use and cultural norms of human societies are interconnected.
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Required Materials and Texts

Please sign in with your MacID [here](#) to view your booklist

There are two optional textbooks in this course. All other reading, i.e. academic articles and book chapters will be provided on A2L

Both of these textbooks are available under e-Reserves

Optional Course Materials

Please sign in with your MacID [here](#) to view your booklist

An Introduction to Sociolinguistics

Authors: Wardhaugh, Ronald.

Publisher: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated

Publication Date: 2014
available to students under e-reserves free of charge

Language in Society : An Introduction to Sociolinguistics

Authors: Romaine, Suzanne
Publisher: Oxford University Press, Incorporated
Publication Date: 2001
available to students under e-reserves free of charge

Class Format

In Person

Students are expected to learn by:

- attending the lectures;
- participating in small-group problem-solving tasks during class time;
- completing assigned readings at home;
- completing written reflections & assignments.

Lectures will be supplemented by videos, articles, guest speakers, tutorials, and workshop sessions as appropriate.

The students will have access to the lecture slides presented in class.

Course Evaluation

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Grade Component	Weight	Description
Midterm Examination	20%	The midterm examination will include various questions, including multiple choice, short answer and textual analysis.
Individual Homework reflections	2 @ 5% = 10%	Instructions and specific details will be discussed in class and posted on Avenue.
Group	2 @	2 x 15% each. Instructions and specific details will be discussed

Assignments	20%	in class and posted on Avenue. Note: the dates for the assignments in the tentative course schedule are tentative and may still change.
Final Exam	30%	The final exam is cumulative and will include some of the material tested on the midterm.

Course Evaluation Details

Midterm

There will be a one-hour midterm examination during class time.

In the event of a documented absence or a valid MSAF, the midterm grade will be carried over to the final examination.

Reflections & Assignments

Students will need to complete two reflections and two assignments during the term. The details will be announced and discussed in class before each due date.

Final Exam

There will be a cumulative two-hour final exam during the April exam period. Please note that the instructor has no control over the date of this examination.

Undergraduate Grading Scale

The breakdown of McMaster's 12-Point Grading Scale.

Grade	Equivalent Grade Point	Equivalent Percentages
A+	12	90-100
A	11	85-89
A-	10	80-84
B+	9	77-79
B	8	73-76
B-	7	70-72
C+	6	67-69

Grade	Equivalent Grade Point	Equivalent Percentages
C	5	63-66
C-	4	60-62
D+	3	57-59
D	2	53-56
D-	1	50-52
F	0	0-49

Graduate Grading Scale

Graduate Student Grading Scale (Except for MBA and Master of Finance)

Grade	Points	Equivalent Percentage	Pass/Fail
A+	12	90-100	P+
A	11	85-89	
A-	10	80-84	
B+	9	77-79	P
B	8	73-76	
B-	7	70-72	
F	0	69 and under	F

MBA and Master of Finance Grading Scale

Grade	Points	Equivalent Percentage	Pass/Fail
A+	12	90-100	P+
A	11	85-89	
A-	10	80-84	
B+	9	75-79	P
B	8	70-74	
B-	7	60-69	
F	0	59 and under	F

Course Schedule

DATE	TOPICS AND READINGS	Important Dates
Week 1	Intro to course, What is Sociolinguistics?	Wardhaugh Chapter 1 pp.1-25

Week 2	Intro to Language Variation	Wardhaugh Chapter 3 pp.62-81	
Week 3	Languages, Dialects, Varieties.	Wardhaugh Chapter 2 pp. 27-62 Romaine Chapter 1 pp.1-32	Reflection 1 due on Friday, January 23
Week 4	Regional Variation.	Wardhaugh Chapter 6 pp. 141-152; Chapter 7 169-195	
Week 5	Social Variation 1: Methods & Analysis	Wardhaugh Chapter 7 pp. 152-169 Romaine Chapter 3 pp. 64-100	Assignment 1 due on Friday, Feb. 6
Week 6	Review	Midterm: Wednesday, February 11	
READING WEEK			
Week 7	Social Variation	Wardhaugh Chapter 7 pp. 152-169 Romaine Chapter 3 pp.64-100	
Week 8	Social Variation	Wardhaugh Chapter 7 pp. 152-169 Romaine Chapter 3 pp.64-100	
Week 9	Language Change	Wardhaugh Chapter 8 pp. 152-169; 196-225 Romaine Chapter 5 pp.135-166	
Week 10	Languages in Contact: Codes in Multilingual Societies	Wardhaugh Chapter 4. pp.82-114 Romaine Chapter 2 pp. 32-63	
Week	Languages in Contact:	Wardhaugh Chapter 4.	Assignment 2 due

11	Codes in Multilingual Societies	pp.82-114 Romaine Chapter 2 pp. 32-63	on Friday, March 27
Week 12	Contact Languages (Pidgins and Creoles)	Wardhaugh Chapter 5 pp.114-139 Romaine Chapter 6 pp. 167-204	
April 7-8			Reflection 2 is due on April 7

Late Assignments

Missed reflections/assignments

In the event of a documented absence or a valid MSAF, a 1 week extension will be given to submit reflections and assignments.

Without a valid MSAF a 10% per day lateness penalty will be applied to late submissions.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

In the event of a documented absence or a valid MSAF, a chance to rewrite the midterm will be given. Missed midterms must be re-written within 1 week of the original midterm date.

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work” and the link below;

<http://ug.degroote.mcmaster.ca/forms-and-resources/missed-course-work-policy/>

Turnitin.com

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be

expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Generative AI: Use Prohibited

Students are not permitted to use generative AI in this course. In alignment with [McMaster academic integrity policy](#), it "shall be an offence knowingly to ... submit academic work for assessment that was purchased or acquired from another source". This includes work created by generative AI tools. Also state in the policy is the following, "Contract Cheating is the act of "outsourcing of student work to third parties" (Lancaster & Clarke, 2016, p. 639) with or without payment." Using Generative AI tools is a form of contract cheating. Charges of academic dishonesty will be brought forward to the Office of Academic Integrity.

APPROVED ADVISORY STATEMENTS

Academic Integrity

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or

suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Authenticity / Plagiarism

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. Avenue to Learn, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

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Courses with an On-line Element

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn, LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-

line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Online Proctoring

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make

arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the [Policy on Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work](#).

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous, or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, Indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office ***normally within 10 working days*** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, Avenue to Learn and/or McMaster email.