Course Content

The goal of this course is twofold: first, to examine the factual basis of many popular beliefs about language; second, to learn how linguists and other social scientists design experiments to answer questions about how the world works. Coursework involves reading and evaluating popular writing on language, critically evaluating experiments that have been carried out to study language, and completing a final project. Along the way, we will attempt to answer complex real-world questions such as ‘Do women talk more than men?’ and ‘Does texting make you a bad speller?’ No background in linguistics is required.

This course fulfills two General Education requirements: Social and Behavioral Sciences (BF) and Quantitative Reasoning B (QB). At the end of the course, you will be able to:

- discuss the truth or falseness of several popular beliefs about language; and
- describe the current state of our knowledge about language in several domains, including grammatical structure, use of language by various kinds of people and by animals, and the influence of technology on language; and
- discuss some of the fundamental issues related to experimental design and interpretation in the social sciences, including concepts such as statistical significance and confounding variables.

Course Requirements

Prerequisites & Preparation

There are no prerequisites for this course. However, you should read the textbook before August 13, or at least the chapters listed in the schedule below.

In addition, do the following two assignments before class on August 13.

1. Submit (in the Examples of Language Beliefs assignment on Canvas) two claims about language that you have heard. These may be things that your friends have said, things
that you have read in the news or seen on television, or things that you have heard else-where. We will discuss and evaluate some of these claims during the first class period.

2. Talk to four people you know (who are not in this class). Ask each person to name one language that he/she finds beautiful, and one language that he/she finds ugly, and why. Submit the languages (and the reasons given) in the Beautiful and Ugly Languages assignment on Canvas.

Technology

We will use technology often in this class for a variety of purposes: watching videos, viewing websites, analyzing data, etc. We have access to a computer lab at the Sandy campus, and this should be sufficient for our needs. However, you may find it convenient to bring a laptop to class; alternatively, a tablet or phone will probably be useful for some (but not all) purposes.

Textbook

The textbook for this course is *Women Talk More than Men... and Other Myths about Language Explained*. It’s available from the campus bookstore, and from Cambridge University Press (as well as the usual places, such as Amazon).

Attendance

I will not take attendance, but the nature of week-long intensive courses makes attendance imperative. It will be very hard to pass this class if you do not attend all five days. If you must miss class because of an emergency, please contact me as soon as possible.

Assignments

There are six types of assignments:

- **Readings** from the textbook, supplemented with videos or other online resources. The readings aren’t graded, but you’ll do very poorly without them.

- **Assignments** (50% of your final grade) to be completed during the day (or, if need be, overnight), sometimes alone and sometimes in groups. Two assignments detailed above must be completed before the first class meeting.
• **Study analyses** (20% of your final grade) in response to short academic papers read during the week.

• **Final project** (30% of your final grade). After the week of class, you will collect your own linguistic data and analyze it; there is a series of assignments for this project, and we will discuss due dates at the end of the intensive week.

**Grading**

We will use the following grading scale.

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100.00% – 93.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A–</td>
<td>92.99% – 90.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
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Be aware that Canvas may not know how to weigh each assignment, so the course average shown there is likely to be wrong.

**Other Stuff**

**Academic Honesty**

Cheating will not be tolerated. While you are encouraged to discuss course material with each other, all submissions must be written up/completed independently unless otherwise indicated. If you have questions about what is allowed, please ask the instructor. See this website for more information about academic integrity: [http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html](http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html)

**ADA Policy**

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building,
581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

Sexual Misconduct Policy

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran’s status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677 (COPS).

Schedule

Here is a tentative schedule for the week. We will cover roughly two topics each day (=two chapters from the book).

Monday Introduction; Basic Statistics (Appendix A); Standard & Nonstandard Dialects (Chapter 2)

- Spurious Correlations
  Variants of -ing (Part 1)
  Study Analysis: Siegel (1997)
  Variants of -ing (Part 2)

Tuesday Sign Language (Chapter 3); Language & Animals (Chapter 4)

- Guess the Meanings of Signs
  Study Analysis: Vinson et al. (2008)
  Yerkish
  Koko’s Chat

Wednesday First-Language Acquisition (Chapter 5); Bilingualism (Chapter 7)

- Feedback in CHILDES
  Study Analysis: Demetras et al. (1986)
  Study Analysis: Bain & Yu (1980)

Thursday Language & Gender (Chapter 8); Language & Technology (Chapter 9)
• Uptalk (part 1)
  Uptalk (part 2)
  Study Analysis: Brooks (1982)
  Tag Questions
  Textisms

**Friday**  Beautiful & Ugly Languages (Chapter 10); Final Project & Wrap-up

• Dialects of French
  Discussion of Summer Assignment