

Course Outline for LING 520 (Sociolinguistics 2)

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: The version of LING 520 to be offered in the Winter of 2021 reflects major changes in curriculum delivery and student assessment that were made necessary by McGill's decision to switch to a remote instruction model for public health reasons. The basic content of the course is the same as in previous years, but lectures are replaced with a schedule of directed reading, following the model of independent study courses, and exams are replaced with written assignments. Assuming the public health situation allows it, the course will return to its previous format in future years. Students are encouraged to consider their options carefully when deciding whether to take the course in its revised version this year or wait until the standard version can be taken at a later point.

Content: This course will provide you with an intensive, advanced-level survey of correlational **SOCIOLINGUISTICS** -- the study of socially conditioned variation in language; that is, how linguistic structure and behavior are affected by social factors such as age, sex, social class and speech style. The focus of the course will be on both theory and practice. A survey of some of the most influential primary literature in the field, including the seminal work of William Labov, will trace the evolution of sociolinguistic theory and methodology since the 1950s, while a field project will give you a chance to apply your knowledge to the design, implementation and analysis of a sociolinguistic research project.

Instructional method and technology policy: In the past, this course has relied on traditional lectures as the main instructional method, along with required readings and class discussion. Given the current pandemic situation, lectures will be replaced with a schedule of directed reading and written work that can be done remotely. **The course will not involve any online content or materials:** submission and return of written work and all communication between students and the instructor will be exclusively by **email**. Emails will be sent to the addresses on the official class list; it is the student's responsibility to make sure that they are received.

Time/Place: Tuesday/Thursday, 13:05-14:25 a.m., but lectures will not take place, so time and place are irrelevant.

Instructor: Prof. Charles Boberg. E-mail: charles.boberg@mcgill.ca

Access to the instructor: You are encouraged to e-mail me if you have questions or concerns about the course or about other advising matters.

Prerequisite: LING 320 (Sociolinguistics 1) or permission of instructor. LING 330 (Phonetics) is also recommended but not required.

Level of difficulty: As a 500-level course, Sociolinguistics 2 assumes a solid knowledge of linguistic theory and analysis, and especially of phonemic analysis and phonetic transcription, which will help in understanding the material we will read. Students without this background

NB: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the code of student conduct and disciplinary procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information). Also note that, in accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

may face significant difficulties in this course. Prospective students are also advised that the course involves a large amount of fairly difficult reading, as well as a major independent research project (see below). Success in the course therefore requires a high level of dedication and discipline, as well as ability. If you feel your interest in the subject is only casual and you have doubts about your motivation to keep up with the readings and work, you are strongly encouraged to choose a different course.

Required textbook: William Labov. 1972. *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. (Available at McGill Bookstore or electronically through McGill Library.)

Required supplementary readings available through McGill Library at:

<https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/courseReserves/course/id/17313550>

- Fischer, J.L. 1958. Social influences on the choice of a linguistic variant. *Word* 14:47-56.
Cheshire, J. 1978. Present tense verbs in Reading English. In P. Trudgill (ed.), *Sociolinguistic Patterns in British English*. London: Edward Arnold, 52-68.
Kroch, A. 1978. Toward a theory of social dialect variation. *Language in Society* 7:17-36.
Labov, W. 1980. The social origins of sound change. In W. Labov (ed.), *Locating Language in Time and Space*. New York: Academic Press, 251-65.
Eckert, P. 1989. The whole woman: sex and gender differences in variation. *Language Variation and Change* 1:245-67.
Labov, W. 1990. The intersection of sex and social class in the course of linguistic change. *Language Variation and Change* 2:205-54.
Wagner, S.E. 2012. Real-time evidence for age grad(ing) in late adolescence. *Language Variation and Change* 24: 179–202.
Bell, A. 1984. Language style as audience design. *Language in Society* 13:145-204.
Laferriere, M. 1979. Ethnicity in phonological variation and change. *Language* 55:603-17.
Boberg, C. 2004. Ethnic patterns in the phonetics of Montreal English. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 8/4: 538-568. [available separately from instructor]
Milroy, J. and L. Milroy 1978. Belfast: change and variation in an urban vernacular. In P. Trudgill (ed.), *Sociolinguistic Patterns in British English*. London: Edward Arnold, 19-36.
Eckert, P. 2007. Variation and the indexical field. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 12/4: 453-476.

Evaluation: 5 reading responses @ 10% = 50%
 Field project 50%

Reading responses: due every two weeks, these will give you an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the material covered by the required readings (Labov and others). There will be five responses, each with two questions, focusing on sets of readings addressing a common theme: foundational studies; social variation; sex-based variation; change in progress; style variation; ethnicity; social networks and ‘third wave’ indexicality; and an overview of foundational issues. Responses should be in your own words, not copied directly from the readings. You may work either individually or in groups. Each response will be approximately 1,000-1,500 words long and worth 10% of your grade. Grading will be on a 5-point scale: 5 for

outstandingly good relative to other papers in the class; 4 for very good but not outstanding; 3 for basically satisfactory; 2 for somewhat unsatisfactory or partially incomplete; 1 for totally unsatisfactory or substantially incomplete; and 0 for missing (not submitted). The criteria used in grading responses are the following: 1) factual accuracy (a factually correct summary of the material being reviewed); 2) completeness (addressing all of the relevant points, beyond a minimal response); 3) thoughtful analysis (showing reflection on relevant issues at a broader level, indicating an enthusiastic engagement with the material); 4) effective writing (articulate, clear and logical); and 5) absence of grammatical, stylistic, spelling and typographical errors. Responses will be due on the dates indicated in the schedule below; you will be sent the questions by email at least one week before each due date. You may consult with me by email if you need guidance in writing a response.

Field project: this will be an original investigation of a social or stylistic difference in English or another language, involving at least one linguistic variable in at least two socially or stylistically defined groups, with at least twenty participants in each group, which you conceive, carry out, analyze and write up yourself or in a group of students, in consultation with the instructor. Examples of socially defined groups would be older vs. younger people; men vs. women; or people with different occupations or levels of education; examples of stylistically defined data sets would be people reading a prepared text vs. speaking to their friends, or speaking to different people on different occasions. You are strongly encouraged to seek the instructor's approval of your project before you begin working on it. For basic advice on topics, consult the separate document, "Guidelines for Planning Research Projects" (to be circulated by e-mail), but by this point in your linguistic education, having taken Sociolinguistics 1 (LING 320), you should be well aware of the general scope of previous sociolinguistic research, which can guide your thinking. If you are considering a socio-phonetics project, see the separate handout "How to Do a Socio-phonetics Project" (also available via e-mail). Once your investigation is complete, you must submit a written report on it, of at least ten pages, for which you will be given detailed guidelines later in the term, in addition to the guidelines for submission of written work that appear below. Normally, you must also present your project orally to the class, but given the pandemic situation, that requirement does not apply for the W21 version of the course.

You may work on your project either alone or with other students in a group. You should not feel pressured to work with others if you prefer working alone, but working with one or more classmates can have advantages, like the ability to collect more data than you can collect on your own, pooling complementary skills in research and writing, and motivational reinforcement. Group work can be limited to data collection, with each member writing a separate report on a common set of data, or may involve joint analysis and/or write-up as well: it is up to you to negotiate the nature and extent of your collaboration with the other member(s) of your group. If a group report is submitted, all group members will receive the same grade.

Prospective students are advised that a successful research project for this class typically requires substantial and sustained effort and time commitment over the entire semester. Unlike some term papers, it cannot be effectively carried out during the final weeks of the term. It therefore requires good time management skills. For instance, many students use the study break to collect their data, which means having a topic selected, elicitation materials prepared and participants identified before the break. It is therefore recommended that you use the first two weeks of class, before the add/drop deadline, to think carefully about a topic and method for your project, so that you can begin working on it by the third week. If you cannot think of an

appropriate topic or method before the add/drop deadline, you should consider dropping the class, as it will be very difficult to do well in this course without an effective research project, even if you do well on the reading responses.

Policies on submission of written assignments (reading responses and project report): either individual or **group work** is acceptable. For group submissions, names of all members should be clearly indicated and all members will receive the same grade. Papers should be **submitted by email** on the dates indicated below. Either **Word** or **pdf** format is acceptable: submissions in other formats may be rejected if they cannot be read. Comments and grades will be returned to you by email.

Extensions of submission deadlines will not be granted except in cases of legitimate, unanticipated and properly documented medical emergency or other serious incapacity. **Late submissions** without extension will be penalized at a rate of 10% of the paper grade per day, including weekends, starting at midnight of the due date. It is the **student's responsibility** to ensure timely and effective submission of all written work; any irregularities in this respect, including late submissions, should be communicated clearly and as soon as possible to the instructor.

In writing and formatting your text, you should observe the following **guidelines**. Papers that ignore the guidelines may be penalized or rejected.

- All written assignments should be **neatly** presented, beginning with a **title page** stating the student's name and McGill ID number, the title of the submission, the course (LING 520) and the date. ID numbers may be omitted from group submissions on privacy grounds.
- **Page numbers** and a header containing the student's or group's name should be included on every page of text (following the title page) except, if you prefer, the first page; page numbering should count the first page of text, not the title page, as page 1.
- The main text should be in **12-point font, double-spaced**.
- The text should be free of typographical, stylistic and grammatical errors. If you have difficulties in this respect, or you are not a native-speaker of English, you are encouraged to seek help in checking over your text before you submit it. All students should **edit** their work carefully before submitting it. Care in this regard shows respect both for your own work and for your reader.
- **In-text citation** should follow the normal practice in Linguistics, which is to identify the author's last name and the year and, if possible, page number of the citation in parentheses after the quotation or cited idea, e.g., "quoted text" (Smith 1975:12).
- Students are reminded that all ideas, facts and spoken or written passages taken from other sources or authors must be properly attributed to their original sources and/or authors, and that failure to do so may constitute **plagiarism**, which could result in a failing grade on the paper or, potentially, more serious disciplinary measures. If you have questions about citation, consult the instructor.
- Fieldwork projects should conclude with a **list of references** to all works cited in the text, in a consistent format, with entries listed alphabetically by author's last name. Beyond that, the particular reference format you use is up to you (if in doubt, use the reference list in the course textbook or one of the assigned articles as a guide).
- **Tables and figures** (graphs or illustrations) should be sequentially numbered for easy reference and accompanied by brief captions explaining their content.

- **Appendices** of extra material may be included after the list of references but will not be read unless specifically referred to in the body of the paper; appendices do not count towards the page-length of the paper.

If you have any additional questions or concerns about written assignments, you are encouraged to consult the instructor as early as possible.

Tentative schedule of lectures, readings, assignments and exams:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Reading schedule</i>	<i>Written work due</i>
01.07	TH	Fischer (1958)	
01.12	TU	Labov (1972), Ch. 1	
01.14	TH	Labov (1972), Ch. 2	
01.19	TU	Labov (1972), Chs. 4&5	Reading Response #1
01.21	TH	Cheshire (1978)	
01.26	TU	Kroch (1978)	
01.28	TH	Labov (1980)	
02.02	TU	Eckert (1989)	Reading Response #2
02.04	TH	Labov (1990)	
02.09	TU	Labov (1972), Ch. 7	
02.11	TH	Wagner (2012)	
02.16	TU	Labov (1972), Ch. 3	Reading Response #3
02.18	TH	Bell (1984)	
02.23	TU	Laferriere (1979)	
02.25	TH	Boberg (2004)	
03.01-03.05	M-F	No class: STUDY BREAK	STUDY BREAK
03.09	TU	Milroy & Milroy (1978)	Reading Response #4
03.11	TH	Eckert (2007)	
03.16	TU	Labov (1972), Ch. 8	
03.18	TH	Labov (1972), Ch. 9	
03.23	TU		Reading Response #5
03.25	TH	Work on project reports	
03.30	TU	Work on project reports	
04.01	TH	Work on project reports	PROJECT REPORTS DUE
04.06	TU	Coursework complete	
04.08	TH	Coursework complete	
04.13	TU	Coursework complete	
04.19-04.30	M-F	(EXAM PERIOD)	n/a