

## **Course Outline for LING 520 (Sociolinguistics 2)**

**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 research project will give you hands-on experience in applying your knowledge to research design and quantitative analysis of sociolinguistic data.

**Instructional method and technology policy:** This class involves traditional teaching methods, including lectures (without PowerPoint) and class discussion. **The course will not involve any online content or materials:** submission of written work and all non-classroom communication between students and the instructor will be exclusively by **email** (*not* myCourses). 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. Regular attendance in class and good note-taking are therefore encouraged, as is doing assigned readings before the class in which they will be discussed. Laptops and voice recorders are permitted in the classroom, but photography is not. Use of laptops and other electronic devices must be appropriate to and respectful of the classroom environment: recreational use of the internet during class is inappropriate and distracting for other students. Cell phones should be turned off and put away during class. If you do not think you can function well in this environment, you are strongly encouraged to choose a different course.

**Time/Place:** Monday/Wednesday, 4:05-5:25 p.m., in SH688 294 (room subject to change depending on class size and other factors).

**Instructor:** Prof. Charles Boberg. E-mail: [charles.boberg@mcgill.ca](mailto:charles.boberg@mcgill.ca). Office: 1085 Dr. Penfield, #223.

**Access to the instructor:** Please e-mail me if you have questions or concerns about the course or about other advising matters. If desired, an in-person meeting can be scheduled by e-mail. If you have brief comments or questions, you are encouraged to talk to me after class.

**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 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

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](http://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.

research project (see below). Success in the course therefore requires a high level of dedication and discipline, as well as academic ability and an enthusiastic interest in sociolinguistics. 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, or if are looking for an upper-level course to fulfill your program requirements but have no background in language variation and change, you are strongly encouraged to choose a different course.

**Required textbook:** William Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (Philadelphia: U. Penn. Press, 1972). Available at McGill Bookstore:

<https://mcgillcampusstore.ca/textbooks>

It may also be possible to purchase new or used copies from various sources, or even to find online access to a digital copy, though the instructor does not condone the use of unlicensed materials. The McGill Library has 5 print copies, of which 3 have been put on reserve.

**Other required readings:** the following articles are available in a course pack from the McGill Bookstore. You can find electronic versions of some of them through the Library or elsewhere online, but some are difficult or impossible to find online, so the course pack is the best option.

- 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.

<b>Evaluation:</b>	First midterm exam	20%	Research project proposal	5%
	Second midterm exam	20%	Research project (oral)	5%
	Research project (written)	50%		

**Midterm exams:** to be written in class on the day indicated below. Absences on the exam day (anticipated or unanticipated) should be discussed with the instructor as soon as possible. At the

instructor's discretion, following discussion of the reason for the absence, a grade adjustment may be possible. In the case of absence on medical grounds, proper documentation of a suitably serious and unanticipated condition is required. Where the absence is not deemed excusable, a grade of zero will be awarded.

**Research project:** this is an original investigation of social or stylistic variation in English or another language, involving at least one linguistic variable in at least two socially differentiated groups or stylistic conditions (with at least 20 participants in each group or in the stylistic comparison), which you conceive, carry out, analyze and write up yourself, in consultation with the instructor. A short written **proposal** for the project must be submitted for approval on the date indicated below. In separate handouts you will be given guidelines for topic selection and proposal format. In addition to a **written report of 15-20 pages**, for which you will be given detailed guidelines later in the term, you must **present** your project **orally** to the class.

Prospective students are advised that the research project for this class typically requires a **substantial effort and time commitment**. Unlike some term papers for other courses, it cannot be effectively carried out during the final weeks of class. It requires good time management skills; for example, 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. If you think you may not have the time, resources or inclination to carry out a research project on this scale, or if you have difficulty coming up with a proposal for what you expect will be an effective project, you are advised not to take this class.

**Group work:** 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 significant advantages: for example, the ability to collect more data than you can collect on your own; or pooling complementary skills in research and writing; or simply 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.

**Policy on submission of written assignments (research project report):** either individual or **group work** and submissions are acceptable. For group submissions, names of all members should be clearly indicated and all members will receive the same grade.

Your report should be **submitted by email** (to [charles.boberg@mcgill.ca](mailto:charles.boberg@mcgill.ca)) as a **Word or pdf attachment**, by 11:59 pm (23h59) on the date indicated in the schedule below. 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 to the instructor. It is best not to wait until the last minute to submit your work, as unanticipated delays can occur: you should plan to submit your work at least an hour before the deadline.

**Late submissions** will be penalized at a rate of 10% of the paper grade per day, including weekends and starting at midnight of the due date (a minute after 11:59 pm). **Extensions** of submission deadlines will not be granted except in cases of legitimate, unanticipated and properly documented medical emergency or other serious incapacity. Requests for extension should be made as soon as possible and it is the student's responsibility to mitigate as much as

possible any delays arising from unexpected obstacles. The instructor reserves the right to reject extension requests that do not appear to be adequately justified.

In writing and **formatting** your text, you should observe the following guidelines:

- 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. For group assignments, ID numbers may be omitted 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 of the paper should be in **12-point font, double-spaced**.
- The text should be free of typographical, stylistic and grammatical errors, so **edit** your work carefully before submitting it. Care in this regard shows respect both for your own work and for your reader. 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.
- **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 or concerns about citation, consult the instructor.
- Papers 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 model).
- **Tables and figures** (graphs or illustrations), if used, 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.

**Policy on attendance:** attendance in classes is not mandatory but is strongly encouraged, as students who do not attend regularly will miss important material, which may have a significant negative impact on their performance in the course. This includes classes in which exam results are reviewed. If you must be absent for medical or other serious and unavoidable reasons, upon presenting documentation of those reasons you may request an individual meeting in which the material you missed can be reviewed and discussed. If your absence is not sufficiently justified, no accommodation will be offered, but students who were absent for an exam review may ask to see their exams briefly after a subsequent class.

**Policy on grades:** the grades assigned to assignments, papers and exams in this class are **not negotiable**. Students are encouraged to point out mathematical errors in grade calculation and are also welcome to request explanations of grades in cases where they do not understand the

basis of the assessment, but requests for review and explanation aimed principally at negotiating for a higher grade (also known as “grade-grubbing”) will not be well received. Students should keep in mind that such requests reflect very poorly on the student making them and are disrespectful of both the instructor and the other students in the class.

**Policy on fairness and accommodations:** it is crucially important that all students in this class be assessed and evaluated according to the same standard, as set forth in this course outline. Requests that special circumstances be taken into consideration in individual cases must therefore be assessed very carefully, as granting them may give one student an unfair advantage over others: without proper justification, a request for advantageous treatment of one student, such as a deadline extension, amounts to asking that all other students be put at an unfair disadvantage. Students with professionally diagnosed and ongoing medical or psychological conditions that require accommodation have recourse to the Student Accessibility and Achievement service (<https://www.mcgill.ca/access-achieve/>). In all other cases, any accommodations that are granted shall have the goal of restoring fairness in situations where it has been compromised by serious and unavoidable barriers or challenges faced by an individual student, such as an unanticipated medical condition or family trauma. Even in these situations, students are expected to act responsibly to mitigate the impact of the setback, as well as to communicate promptly, clearly and honestly with the instructor about their situation. Only requests judged by the instructor to be both valid and properly documented shall be granted and the nature of any accommodation offered shall be at the instructor’s discretion.

**Policy on cell phones and other electronic devices in relation to exams:** further to the general technology policy stated above, students are reminded of McGill’s policy, stated in its University Regulations and Resources, that, “As per the Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures, Article 17, cheating in any examination is considered a serious offence that could lead to expulsion from the University. Students are not permitted to have in their possession, or to use, any unauthorized materials during an examination. This includes electronic devices such as cell phones, iPods, MP3 players, PDAs, smart watches, and other web-access devices. Unauthorized items used during an exam will be reported to the Disciplinary Officer.” In this class, any student who consults a cell phone or other device during an exam will receive a grade of zero on the exam and be reported to the university authorities. Exams in this class are confidential. Any student who photographs an exam or is suspected of sharing copies or images of an exam with other students, or of receiving such copies or images, will be reported to the authorities.

**Policy on use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) applications:** the written work you submit in this class should represent your own research, thinking and writing. Using AI tools to produce written work limits your learning as a student and misrepresents the skills and achievements that are being assessed in this course. Inappropriate use of AI will be treated as a form of cheating and reported to the Disciplinary Officer.

**Tentative schedule** of lectures, readings, assignments and exams:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Reading schedule</i>	<i>Readings due, etc.</i>
01.06	M	Introduction; project planning	Handout
01.08	W	No class: instructor absent (at conference)	
01.13	M	Review of general sociolinguistic theory; project planning	Fischer 1958
01.15	W	Classic studies: Labov M.V. ('63); project planning	Labov 1972 Ch.1
01.20	M	Classic studies: Labov NYC ('66); project planning	Labov 1972 Ch. 2 <b>Research Project Proposal</b>
01.22	W	Style and addressee effect in linguistic variation	Labov 1972 Ch. 3
01.27	M	Style and addressee effect in linguistic variation	Bell 1984
01.29	W	Social class and linguistic variation	Labov 1972 Chs. 4, 5
02.03	M	Vernacular culture	Cheshire 1978
02.05	W	The social origins of language change	Kroch 1978
02.10	M	The social origins of language change	Labov 1980
02.12	W	<b>FIRST MIDTERM EXAM</b>	<b>EXAM</b>
02.17	M	Sex and gender and linguistic variation	Eckert 1989
02.19	W	Sex and gender and linguistic variation	Labov 1990
02.24	M	Age and linguistic variation: change in progress	Labov 1972 Ch. 7
02.27	W	Age and linguistic variation: change in progress	Wagner 2012
03.03-03.07	M-F	No class: STUDY BREAK	<b>BREAK</b>
03.10	M	Ethnicity and linguistic variation	Laferriere 1979
03.12	W	Ethnicity and the phonetics of Montreal English	Boberg 2004
03.17	M	Social networks and linguistic variation; current sociolinguistics and the "Third Wave".	Milroy & Milroy 1978; Eckert 2007
03.19	W	Explaining sociolinguistic variation	Labov 1972 Ch. 9
03.24	M	Overview	Labov 1972 Ch. 8
03.26	W	<b>SECOND MIDTERM EXAM</b>	<b>EXAM</b>
03.31	M	Oral presentations	
04.02	W	Oral presentations, continued	
04.07	M	Oral presentations, continued	
04.09	W	Oral presentations, continued	
04.10	TH	No class (submission of research projects)	<b>RESEARCH PROJECTS DUE</b>