

Walt Wolfram (walt_wolfram@ncsu.edu)
with Tyler Kendall, Jeannine Carpenter, and Sarah Hilliard
ENG 523 Language Variation Research Seminar
Fall, 2006

Course Syllabus

I. Course Description

This seminar introduces students to field-initiated research on sociolinguistic variation in English—in particular, varieties of North Carolina English and its extensions—to provide an empirical foundation for examining major issues related to language variation and change. Individual or collaborative research projects are designed and sociolinguistic fieldwork is conducted as appropriate. A wealth of data on various dialects is already available in the Linguistics Lab, Tompkins 204, but additional interviews will be collected related to the Raleigh Urban Dialect Study (RUDS), Hispanic English, or other current research projects. Data are analyzed using current qualitative and quantitative methods in the study of language variation. Students regularly discuss the development of their research project in class and write a paper suitable for professional presentation. Students should be familiar with Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, *American English: Dialects and Variation* (2006).

Prerequisite: ENG 525 or the consent of the instructor.

II. Texts

The text for the course is J.K. Chambers, Peter Trudgill, and Natalie Schilling-Estes (eds.), *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change* (Blackwell 2002). Students are expected to have a copy of the book for regular assignments. The text will be supplemented by readings from other texts and journal articles, many of them on the NC SLAAP website. Some of these will be assigned as topics in the course emerge.

Relevant Web Sites for the Course

<http://ncsu.edu/linguistics>
<http://ncslaap.lib.ncsu.edu>
<http://talkingnc.com>

III. Requirements

Students are required to complete the following projects for satisfactory completion of the course:

- 1) Conduct at least three interviews related to a sociolinguistic research project selected by the student in consultation with the instructor.
- 2) Extract data for a linguistic variable using the NC SLAAP protocol.
- 3) Transcribe five (5) minutes of a sociolinguistic interview as the basis for a discussion of issues in transcription and the extraction of data and for use in NC SLAAP.
- 4) Write a 300-400-word abstract for a research paper presentation at a professional conference.
- 5) Give up to two brief reports on assigned readings; reports will include an overview of the article and a reaction to it.
- 6) Give a research presentation on some aspect of variation analysis in a format that is

suitable for scholarly presentation at a sociolinguistics conference. The presentation may be singly or co-authored. The presentation will be delivered as a 20-minute, in-class presentation.

- 7) Prepare a handout or PowerPoint presentation to accompany the oral presentation following current sociolinguistic formatting conventions.
- 8) Submit a 10-20 page written version of the paper following a format suitable for publication in a journal. It should be sectionized (and paginated and stapled), with a 100-150-word abstract at the beginning.

Student Evaluation Percentages:

There are no exams! Students will be evaluated on their regular participation in class, including their familiarity with assigned reading, class assignments, presentation of the paper to the class, and final written paper. Percentages are as follows:

In-class Reports	5%
Assignments	15%
Class presentation	20%
Final Paper	60%

Due dates for assignments:

Sept 20	Abstract due
Sept 27	Extraction due
Oct. 11	Transcript due
Oct. 25	Outline for paper due
Nov. 15	Handout for paper due
Dec. 13	Final paper due

IV. Course Structure

The course will be conducted as a seminar, with lectures, discussions, lab sessions, and collaborative analyses. Students and staff who have expertise in various skills relevant to the analysis and presentation of data will give brief lectures and/or demonstrations. In addition, some class sessions will have a practical “time out” (PTO) for aspects of fieldwork and analysis, a 15-20 minute session on practical items such as a tape recorder maintenance, subject background information sheets, Internal Review Board protection of human subjects, format for a linguistic handout, etc. As the course proceeds, there will be less lecturing and more in-class discussion of assigned reading and analysis of data.

V. Course Outline

The following topics will be covered in the course, though the outline will not necessarily match the weekly sequencing.

1. Types of Research in Language Variation

- NC language variation research: Research and community involvement
- Progress report on the North Carolina Language and Life Project
- An Overview of Diagnostic Linguistic Variables for NC English
- Practical issues

2. Selecting a Research Project

- Research options

- Background linguistic and sociocultural context
 - Formulating hypotheses
 - Selecting appropriate samples
3. Sociolinguistic Interviewing
 - Designing modules
 - Structural elicitation tasks
 - Minimal word pairs
 - Reading passages
 - Rapid and anonymous surveys
 - Ethics consideration and human subject research
 4. The Extraction of Data
 - Linguistic variables
 - Transcripts and extraction
 - Data management programs
 5. The Analysis of Data
 - Quantitative data
 - A statistical excursus
 - ❖ Measures of central tendency
 - ❖ Measures of variance
 - ❖ Non-parametric statistical tests
 - ❖ Parametric tests
 - VARBRUL: A probabilistic-based multivariate analysis
 - Data Analysis in Excel
 6. Essential Constructs in Variation Analysis
 - Temporal and spatial constructs
 - Social constructs
 - Socio-psychological constructs
 - Language contact and accommodation
 - Linguistic structure and variation
 7. Beyond Variation Analysis
 - Acoustic phonetics
 - Implicational analysis
 8. The Presentation of Data
 - Framing a sociolinguistic issue
 - Presenting data
 - Empirically based argumentation
 - Rationally based argumentation
 - Writing an abstract
 - Preparing a handout

VI. Tentative Class Schedule

Following is an approximate schedule of class sessions. *The schedule is certain to change, given students' interests and the inability of the instructor to accurately gauge class time allocation.*

Date	Topic	Reading
Aug. 23	Contextualizing Types of Variation Research	J.K. Chambers, "Studying Language Variation." In C, T, & S-E, 3-14.

	Research in the NCLLP tradition	Walt Wolfram, "Variation and Language, an Overview" (<i>Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics</i> TBD(to be distributed))
Aug. 30	PTO—Recording equipment Other Approaches to Variation Research Introduction to NC SLAAP	Dennis Preston, "Language with an Attitude." In C, T, & S-E, 40-66. Edgar Schneider, "Investigating Variation and Change in Written Documents." In C, T, & S-E, 67-96 Laurie Bauer, "Inferring Variation and Change from Public Corpora" In C, T, & S-E, 97-114. Charles Boberg. 2005. The North American Regional vocabulary survey: New variables and methods in the study of North American English. <i>American Speech</i> 80:22-60.
Sept. 6	PTO—The sociolinguistic abstract Fieldwork—the sociolinguistic interview Types of questionnaires	Crawford Feagin, "Entering the Community: Fieldwork," In C, T, & S-E, 20-39. Ethical guidelines on human subjects: http://ohsr.od.nih.gov (read section on "Regulations and Ethical Guidelines IRB Policies and Forms http://www.ncsu.edu/sparcs/IRB/policies.html
Sept. 13	Extracting data	Robert Bayley, "The Quantitative Paradigm," In C, T, & S-E, 117-41. Walt Wolfram, (1993) Identifying and interpreting variables. In Dennis R. Preston (ed.), <i>American Dialect Research</i> . Philadelphia/Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 193-221. (TBD) Gregory Guy (1993) The quantitative analysis of linguistic variation. In Dennis R. Preston (ed.), <i>American Dialect Research</i> . Philadelphia/Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 223-49. (TBD)
Sept. 20	Abstract due PTO-Transcribing in NC SLAAP The sociolinguistic transcript	Jane Edwards (2001)," The Transcription of Discourse." In Deborah Tannen, Deborah Shiffrin, and Heidi Hamilton (eds), <i>Handbook of Discourse Analysis</i> , 321-48 (TBD). Tyler Kendall (2006), "Advancing the Utility of the Transcript: A Computer-Enhanced Methodology." Ms.(TBD)]
Sept. 27	NC SLAAP Extraction due Quantitative basics in analysis	Statistical primer (TBD) Documentation for VARBRUL (TBD)
Oct. 4	Essential Constructs in Variation Analysis	External factors and constructs in variation analysis Guy Bailey, "Real and Apparent Time," In C, T, & S-E, 312-32 J.K. Chambers, "Patterns of Variation, including Change. "C, T, & S-E, 349-72. Julie Roberts, "Child Language Variation," In C, T, & S-E, 333-48 David Britain, "Space and Spatial Diffusion," in C, T, & S-E, 603-37
Oct. 11	NC SLAAP transcript due Social Divisions: Part I	Miriam Meyerhoff, "Communities of Practice," In C, T, & S-E, 526-48. Lesley Milroy, "Social Networks," In C, T, & S-E, 549-

		72. Sharon Ash, "Social Class," In C, T, & S-E, 402-22. Jenny Cheshire, "Sex and Gender in Variationist Research," In C, T, & S-E, 423-43
Oct. 18	PTO: The prototypical sociolinguistic paper Beyond Variationist Analysis	Erik Thomas, "Instrumental Phonetics," In C, T, & S-E, 168-200. Acoustic analysis: Practical use of Praat by Tyler Kendall The analysis of Rhythm: Practical primer by Phillip Carter (Reading TBA)
Oct. 25	Outline for paper due Social Divisions: Part II	Carmen Fought, "Ethnicity" In C, T, & S-E, 444-72 Norma Mendoza-Denton, "Language and Identity," In C, T, & S-E, 475-99. Kirk Hazen, "The Family," In C, T, & S-E, 500-25. Natalie Schilling-Estes, "Investigating Stylistic Variation," In C, T, & S-E, 375-401.
Nov. 1	NWAV Practice papers PTO: The Linguistic Handout/Powerpoint	Gillian Sankoff, "Linguistic Outcomes of Language Contact," In C, T, & S-E, 638-68. Paul Kerswill, "Koineization and Accommodation," In C, T, & S-E, 669-702. Sali Tagliamonte, "Comparative Linguistics," In C, T, & S-E, 729-63
Nov. 8	Linguistic Gratuity and Sociolinguistic Research: Options and Examples	Matthew Gordon, "Investigating Chair Shifts and Mergers," In C, T, & S-E, 244-66. Ronald MaCauley, "Discourse Variation" In C, T, & S-E, 267-82. John Rickford, "Implicational Scales," In C, T, & S-E, 142-67. Alison Henry, "Variation and Syntactic Theory," In C, T, & S-E, 267-82.
Nov. 15	Handout due Variation and Language Contact Language Variation and Linguistic Structure	Walt Wolfram (forthcoming) "Sociolinguistic Engagement in Community Perspective. In Michael Picone and Catherine Davies, (eds.), <i>Language Variation in the South III</i> . Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press (TBD).
Nov. 22	NO CLASS-Thanksgiving	
Nov. 29	Student paper presentations: Part 1	TBA
Dec. 6	Student paper presentations: Part 2	TBA
Dec. 13	Final Papers due	

VI. Office Hours

Room 208, Tompkins Hall

Monday 4-6 PM; Wednesday 4-6 PM

Other times by appointment

Office Phone: (919) 515-4151

FAX (919) 515-1836

Email: walt_wolfram@ncsu.edu

VII. Student Rights and Responsibilities

Students should be advised of the university policy on Academic Integrity; See <http://www.fish.ncsu.edu/ncsulegal/41.03-codeof/htm> for details.

From the statement on academic integrity

7.1 The free exchange of ideas depends on the participants' trust that they will be given credit for their work. Everyone in an academic community must be responsible for acknowledging, using the methods accepted by the various academic disciplines, their use of others' words and ideas. Since intellectual workers' words and ideas constitute a kind of property, plagiarism is like theft.

7.2 Furthermore, as a reader you may want to follow other writers' paths of research in order to make your own judgments about their evidence and arguments. You will depend on those writers' accuracy and honesty in reporting their sources. In turn your readers will depend on yours.

7.3 The free exchange of ideas also depends on the participants' trust that others' work is their own and that it was done and is being reported honestly. Intellectual progress in all the disciplines demands the truthfulness of all participants.

7.4 Plagiarism and cheating are attacks on the very foundation of academic life, and cannot be tolerated within universities. Section eight (8) of the Code defines academic dishonesty and provides information on potential sanctions for violators of academic integrity.

VIII Policy on Working with Students with Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653. For more information on NC State's policy, see http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/hat/current/appendix/appen_k.html.