**CRS 384: DISCOURSE AND SOCIETY**

**Fall 2024**

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| Instructor: Dr. Sylvia Sierra  Office: Sims 115  Office Hours: Mondays 2-4pm; On Zoom (link on Blackboard)  Email: ssierra@syr.edu |

“Language lives in society, and so must we” --John Rickford and Sharese King, 2016

Course Description: In this course, we will examine discourse (broadly understood as “language in use,” “language in context,” or “situated interaction”) and its role in constructing our various social identities. The primary perspective taken is discourse analysis, a key qualitative approach in communication to examining how people create social worlds through language. We will also use insights from sociolinguistics and social psychology to examine accents, dialects, languages, and the social attitudes speakers hold toward how language is (or should be) used.

Course readings, lectures, and other materials will address questions related to discourse and identity (how identities are reflected, created, negotiated, and repaired through talk), discourse and relationships (such as how people negotiate hierarchy and equality in interaction), discourse and meaning (how meanings are jointly created or not understood), discourse and social action (such as how speakers use language to criticize and apologize), discourse and culture (the interrelationship between language use and culture), discourse and technology (such as how text-messaging is – and is not – changing discourse), and discourse and social problems (e.g., racial and gender discrimination) and social issues (such as the role of the English language in the U.S.).

Class Format: This course uses a combination lecture/discussion format. Students will regularly work in small groups.

Course Objectives:

1. To learn about how discourse is structured at various levels and used to accomplish various social goals.

2. To learn to analyze aspects of human interaction using the framework of discourse analysis, with insights from related approaches to language and communication.

3. To consider the role of linguistic/discursive devices and strategies in the creation of meanings, identities, personal relationships, social groups, and power structures.

4. To investigate important societal issues related to discourse, such as stereotyping and discrimination, intercultural miscommunication, language controversies, and how new technologies are changing the ways we communicate.

5. To investigate the application of theoretical concepts to everyday experiences.

6. To develop critical thinking abilities and awareness of the role that discourse plays in mediating social relations and fostering social change.

7. To discover connections between communication and other academic and professional interests, e.g., journalism and media studies, creative writing, teaching, business, and social life.

Required Materials:

Tracy, Karen and Robles, Jessica. *Everyday Talk*: *Building and Reflecting Identities* (Second Edition). Guilford Press, 2013. (available at the bookstore)

Other course readings and materials will be made available on Blackboard or are available elsewhere online.

A recording device for recording and transcribing a conversation (with permission!), e.g., a tape recorder, digital recorder, cell phone with a recording option, or camcorder.

Course Requirements:

To successfully complete the course, students must:

* Read all assigned material
* Participate in classroom discussions and activities
* Successfully complete reading response activities, record and transcribe 3 minutes of conversation, lead discussion of an assigned article, complete 1 mid-term presentation based on the transcript and 1 final presentation

*Attendance and participation*

This class relies on lively discussion and group work in class and attendance is required; active note-taking in class and active participation in class discussions based on required readings and analysis of texts is expected. You must be present in both mind and body. This means you are physically present, from the start to end of class, and do not leave the classroom for extended lengths of time. This also means you are present mentally, and not engaged in other unrelated activities during lecture. Arrive to class on time; I will take attendance at the beginning of every class and will not stop class to update the attendance or to fill you in on what is happening if you arrive late. **Chronic tardiness or leaving class early WILL negatively affect your attendance grade.** **If you are randomly going to be absent/miss class, I request that you DO NOT email me about it with an excuse. In my classes there are no excused or unexcused absences—you are simply absent.** In such cases I will notice you are absent and will mark you as such. **The only exception is if you know or if it becomes apparent that you will be absent for more than 2 days—then you should let me know. Every student is permitted to miss 2 days of class – generally any more days missed WILL negatively affect your attendance grade.** In the case of an unavoidable absence, it is **your responsibility** to keep up with coursework, get notes from classmates, etc. **There is no make-up work for attendance points/reading response activities**. (Note: If you are a student-athlete and must miss class for a university-sanctioned event, let me know in advance. Assignment deadlines are generally the same for student-athletes as for other students, even if the student misses class on a day when work is due.)

*Reading Activities*

In lieu of quizzes or written reading responses, students are required to participate actively during in-class small group reading activities. I will assign small groups, which will rotate 4 times during the semester, about every 3 weeks. Prompts for discussion will be provided. You are required:

1. to read to assigned reading and *annotate* it (e.g., highlight/underline/take notes)
2. to use your annotated reading and/or notes to post to the online Discussion Board about the reading at least one hour before class. Consider the questions: What did the authors do, what did they find, why does it matter? What are some keywords--were there any new words or concepts for you? What questions do you have? If you don’t have any questions, what was most interesting to you? You must address this question for full credit: What connections did you make to your own life, or to current events? You can also choose to respond to Discussion Prompts posted by Student Discussion Leaders for that day, and/or you can respond to each other’s posts.
3. to attend class and have the annotated reading (whether the textbook or the article/book chapter) and/or your notes and participate actively in your group based on your annotated reading and/or notes.
4. to peer evaluate your group members at the end of each 3 week period (I will provide guidelines when we get there - you will evaluate your group members on the 3 items listed above – *evidence* that they *read comprehensively*, not on how well they can talk about the topic of the reading)

I will assign you a grade based on your reading activities at the end of each 3-week period.

*Conversational Transcript*

Students will record a casual conversation in which you take part with friends or family (with their permission) and will create a written transcript of a 3-minute segment of the conversation. I will provide you with further instructions on how to transcribe conversational data and the requirements for this transcript early on in the class.

*Projects*

Students will present two projects in which they synthesize the course readings and discussions and analyze aspects of conversations that they have recorded and transcribed. Students may opt to work with partners or in small groups but it is not required. The first project should be a discourse analysis based on your conversational transcript. The second project may be a presentation of an analysis, or a website, a portfolio, a workshop, a media project (e.g. a film). I encourage you to draw from your personal skills and interests and to be creative! Note on film option: your film cannot simply be interviews of your friends/family without any substantive analysis/commentary on what they say. I can show you an example of a good student film project toward the end of the semester.

*Discussion leading*

Each student will lead class discussion on an assigned article either individually or in a pair in during the semester. These discussions will be on the dates listed in the syllabus. Students will be able to sign up for their preferred article. You are expected to pose a series of 3-5 thoughtful, stimulating, and complex questions for your classmates to discuss. Avoid ‘pointed’ or ‘leading’ questions. You can also deepen our consideration by drawing a connection to something outside of the text (this might be your transcript, a contemporary event, a recent news story, something from your own research for your project, a comparison/contrast with something else we have read, etc). The primary goals of this assignment are to encourage you to think about the themes that emerge from each of our readings (and that cut across multiple readings) and to make sense of the readings in a more robust context relevant to your own lives. I urge you to read ahead and begin preparing well in advance for your discussion leading session; you are also always welcome to meet with me about your ideas.

*Evaluation*

The final grade will be calculated based on the following distribution of graded class assignments:

In-class Reading Response activities: 20% (graded every 3 weeks 4x; 5 pts per 3 weeks)

Conversational Transcript: 15%

Analysis Presentation 1: 21% (1% is peer presentation response)

Analysis Presentation 2: 26% (1% is peer presentation response)

Attendance: 12%

Discussion leading: 6%

Grade Scale for the Class, g is the student’s final grade.

A 92.5000 ≤ g

A- 89.5000 ≤ g ≤ 92.4999

B+ 87.5000 ≤ g ≤ 89.4999

B 82.5000 ≤ g ≤ 87.4999

B- 79.5000 ≤ g ≤ 82.4999

C+ 77.5000 ≤ g ≤ 79.4999

C 69.5000 ≤ g ≤ 77.4999

D 59.5000 ≤ g ≤ 69.4999

F g < 59.5

**Grades are earned – they are not subject to negotiation, and I do not provide “extra credit” opportunities. It is your responsibility to keep up with assignments and to monitor your progress as well as grades on Blackboard. I generally do not accept late work.**

Grading criteria will be made explicit for all assignments. Assignment rubrics will generally be handed out at least one week before the assignment is due and when applicable I will post examples, or ‘exemplars’ of each assignment on Blackboard.

Other Course Policies:

Classroom conduct: Arrive on time and prepared to engage with the material and other people in a respectful manner. Do not engage in disruptive behavior such as chatting during a lecture. **Cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices are prohibited (except in cases of special permission from the instructor) to facilitate classroom interaction**. Violators of these policies will be marked absent for the class period; repeat offenders will lose additional participation and/or activity points.

Grades: Grades are not up for negotiation. However, if you feel a grading error has been made, or if you do not understand a written comment on your work, set up an appointment to discuss your concerns. **The policy of this class is not to discuss grades until 24 hours have elapsed since assignments are returned**; this gives students the opportunity to re-consider the assignment sheet, re-read their work, and consider the instructor’s written remarks prior to discussion.

Contacting your instructor by email: In the university context, email should be considered as a form of professional communication. Send emails from your syr.edu account. **The message subject line should include our course number, section, and your reason for emailing (e.g., CRS 384 section 1: Transcript question).** If you do not follow these requirements, you might not receive a response. I check and respond to email 9am-5pm M-F. Please allow at least 24 hours for a reply.

Educational use of student work: I intend to use academic work that you complete this semester in this semester and subsequent semesters for educational and/or research purposes. Before using your work for that purpose, I will either get your written permission or render the work anonymous by removing identifying material. Please let me know if you do NOT want me to use your work for educational and/or research purposes.

Letters of reference/recommendation: I write letters of recommendation for students who have taken at least 2 classes with me. For me to be able to write you one, you need to make yourself known to me as an individual. You also need to ensure that you provide me with the deadline of your letter and that you request it with enough time for me to write it.

SU policies:

As a pre-eminent and inclusive student-focused research institution, Syracuse University considers academic integrity at the forefront of learning, serving as a core value and guiding pillar of education. Syracuse University’s Academic Integrity Policy provides students with the necessary guidelines to complete academic work with integrity throughout their studies. Students are required to uphold both course-specific and university-wide academic integrity expectations such as crediting your sources, doing your own work, communicating honestly, and supporting academic integrity. The full Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy can be found by visiting class.syr/edu, selecting, “Academic Integrity,” and “Expectations and Policy.”

Upholding Academic Integrity includes the protection of faculty’s intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or share instructors’ course materials, including presentations, assignments, exams, or other evaluative materials without permission. Using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material (e.g., Chegg, Course Hero) to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others, which are then presented as your own violates academic integrity expectations in this course and may be classified as a Level 3 violation. All academic integrity expectations that apply to in-person assignments, quizzes, and exams also apply online.

Students found in violation of the policy are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered. Students may not drop or withdraw from courses in which they face a suspected violation. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.

All generative-AI tools are prohibited in this course because their use inhibits achievement of the course learning objectives. This policy applies to all stages of project and writing processes including researching, brainstorming, outlining, organizing, and polishing. Do not use Generative-AI tools to create any content (i.e., images and video, audio, text, code, etc.). If you have any questions about a feature and whether it is considered Generative-AI, ask your instructor.

The Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric establishes recommended guidelines for the determination of grade penalties by faculty and instructors, while also giving them discretion to select the grade penalty they believe most suitable, including course failure, regardless of violation level. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.

For more information about the policy, see <https://class.syr.edu/academic-integrity/>. If you have any questions about academic integrity, proper citation of sources, inappropriate collaboration, and so on, please communicate with me about it.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation.  There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in this course.  I invite any student to contact me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success and to collaborate with the Center for Disability Resources (CDR) in this process. If you would like to discuss disability-accommodations or register with CDR, please visit [Center for Disability Resources](https://disabilityservices.syr.edu/). Please call (315) 443-4498 or email [disabilityresources@syr.edu](mailto:disabilityresources@syr.edu) for more detailed information. The CDR is responsible for coordinating disability-related academic accommodations and will work with the student to develop an access plan. Since academic accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact CDR as soon as possible to begin this process.

Faith tradition observances: Syracuse University recognizes the diversity of faiths represented in the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their traditions. Under the policy, students should have an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors no later than the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes and by the submission deadline for flexibility formatted classes. Student deadlines are posted in MySlice under Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances/Add a Notification.

Discrimination or Harassment: The University prohibits harassment or discrimination related to any protected category including creed, ethnicity, citizenship, sexual orientation, national origin, sex, gender, pregnancy, disability, marital status, age, race, color, veteran status, military status, religion, sexual orientation, domestic violence status, genetic information, gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender. Any complaint of discrimination or harassment related to any of these protected bases should be reported to Sheila Johnson-Willis, the University’s Chief Equal Opportunity & Title IX Officer. She is responsible for coordinating compliance efforts under various laws including Titles VI, VII, IX and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. She can be contacted at Equal Opportunity, Inclusion, and Resolution Services, 005 Steele Hall, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244-1120; by email: titleix@syr.edu; or by telephone: 315-443-0211. Federal and state law, and University policy prohibit discrimination and harassment based on sex or gender (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and retaliation). If a student has been harassed or assaulted, they can obtain confidential counseling support, 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, from the Sexual and Relationship Violence Response Team at the Counseling Center (315-443-8000, Barnes Center at The Arch, 150 Sims Drive, Syracuse, New York 13244). Incidents of sexual violence or harassment can be reported non-confidentially to the University’s Title IX Officer (Sheila Johnson Willis, 315-443-0211, titleix@syr.edu, 005 Steele Hall). Reports to law enforcement can be made to the University’s Department of Public Safety (315-443-2224, 005 Sims Hall), the Syracuse Police Department (511 South State Street, Syracuse, New York, 911 in case of emergency or 315-435-3016 to speak with the Abused Persons Unit), or the State Police (844-845-7269). I will seek to keep information you share with me private to the greatest extent possible, but as a professor I have mandatory reporting responsibilities to share information regarding sexual misconduct, harassment, and crimes I learn about with the University’s Title IX Officer to help make our campus a safer place for all.

Hunger and food scarcity. There are food pantries at both Hendricks Chapel and on South Campus, stocked with edibles and personal care items. To find out more, go to the [Hendricks Food Pantry Site](https://chapel.syracuse.edu/student-support/food-pantry/), or contact Syeisha Bird at [smbyrd@syr.edu](mailto:smbyrd@syr.edu), or at 315-706-4526.

Mental health and overall well-being are significant predictors of academic success. As such it is essential that during your college experience you develop the skills and resources to effectively navigate stress, anxiety, depression and other mental health concerns. Please familiarize yourself with the range of resources the Barnes Center provides ([https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/](https://maestro.syr.edu/trk/click?ref=zvu694kig_1-5908x39e88x01654&)) and seek out support for mental health concerns as needed. Counseling services are available 24/7, 365 days, at 315-443-8000. I encourage you to explore the resources available through the Wellness Leadership Institute, [https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/wellness-leadership-institute/](https://maestro.syr.edu/trk/click?ref=zvu694kig_1-5908x3f53dx01654&).”

**Schedule of Readings and Assignments (subject to change)**

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| **Date** | **Topic** | **Readings Due** | **Assignments/Notes** |
| Tuesday, August 27 | Introduction | Syllabus |  |
| Thursday, August 29 | Talk & Identity; Descriptivism | Everyday Talk, Ch. 1 (skip section on Gricean maxims) AND Genre: Personal Conversation (pgs. 259-262) | *Assign reading groups* |
| Tuesday, September 3 | Transcribing talk | Everyday Talk, Ch. 5 The Sound of Talk ONLY pgs. 107-121. AND pgs. 42-52 of **Deborah Tannen’s** Conversational Style | *Recording and Transcribing guidelines*  *Student info sheets*  *Paper Bags* |
| Thursday, September 5 | Referring to people in talk | Everyday Talk, Ch. 3 (skip section on Sapir Whorf Hypothesis) | **Bring your paper bags/items!** |
| Tuesday, September 10 | Speech Acts | Everyday Talk, Ch. 4 | **submit student info sheets!** |
| Thursday, September 12 | Interaction Structures/  Turn-taking | Everyday Talk, Ch. 6 | **1st Peer Review of Reading Activities**  *Sign-up sheet for Discussion Leading*  *Cover sheets for transcripts* |
| Tuesday, September 17 | Data fest! | None! Work on your transcript; we will listen to all the recorded conversations in class | **Transcript due (upload 3-minute clip and transcript on Blackboard)** |
| Thursday, September 19 | Style | Everyday Talk, Ch. 8 AND **Deborah** **Tannen**, New York Style also available at: www.pbs.org/speak/seatosea/americanvarieties/newyorkcity | *New reading groups*  *Project 1 instructions* |
| Tuesday, September 24 | Stance | Everyday Talk, Ch. 9 |  |
| Thursday, September 26 | Style & Gender | **Elinor Ochs** (1992) Indexing Gender | Discussion Leading |
| Tuesday, October 1 | Style & Gender | **Casey Miller & Kate Swift** (1972) One step for Genkind AND  **Scott Kiesling** (2005) Homosocial desire in men’s talk | Discussion Leading  Discussion Leading |
| Thursday, October 3 | Gender & sexuality in discourse | **Jennifer Coates** (2013) The discursive production of everyday heterosexualities  AND  **Lal Zimman** (2017) Transgender language reform  Optional: **Lucy Jones** (2018) ‘I’m not proud, I’m just gay’: Lesbian and gay youths’ discursive negotiation of otherness | **2nd Peer Review of Reading Activities**  Discussion Leading  Discussion Leading |
| Tuesday, October 8 | Narrative | Everyday Talk, Ch. 10 |  |
| Thursday, October 10 | Accents & Dialects | none; work on your project! | *Prepare peer presentation response handouts* |
| Tuesday, October 15 | NO CLASS | FALL BREAK |  |
| Thursday, October 17 | NO CLASS | I will be attending a conference |  |
| Tuesday, October 22 | Midterm | None; work on your project! | **Midterm Project Presentations** |
| Thursday, October 24 | Midterm | None; work on your project! | **Midterm Project Presentations** |
| Tuesday, October 29 | Dialects & language ideologies | Everyday Talk, Ch. 5 only pgs. 121-131, AND **Rosina Lippi-Green** (2012) Language Ideology and Language Prejudice | *New reading groups*  *Watch crash course sociolinguistics on Labov’s NYC department store study*  *Final Project Instructions*  Discussion Leading |
| Thursday, October 31 | Stigmatized dialects in the US | **Arthur Spears** (2014) African American English AND **Carmen Fought** (2014) Chicano English (Bb; for both you can stop reading at “further reading” sections) | Discussion Leading  Discussion Leading |
| Tuesday, November 5 | Language attitudes, Linguistic discrimination, and Linguistic profiling | **Pick 1: Rosina Lippi-Green** (2012) The unassimilable races: what it means to be Asian  OR  **Rosina Lippi-Green** (2012) Hillbillies, hicks, and Southern Belles: The language rebels  AND 2 videos on “Mock Spanish”  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaIly9_umbI&t=24s>  AND  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tq5qP8Kgrog> | Discussion Leading |
| Thursday, November 7 | Dialects in Media | **Rosina Lippi-Green** (2012) Teaching children how to discriminate: What we learn from the Big Bad Wolf AND  **Barbra Meek** (2006) And the Injun Goes How: Representations of American Indian English in White Public Space  Optional: **Carmen Fought & Karen Eisenhauer (2022)** the conclusion of their book *Language and Gender in Children’s Animated Films: Exploring Disney and Pixar* (if interested, you can check out the rest of the book online via SU libraries) | **3rd Peer Review of Reading Activities**  Discussion Leading  Discussion Leading |
| Tuesday, November 12 | Dialects in Media | **Rodney Jones** (2023) Lip-synching and young people’s everyday linguistic activism on TikTok | *New reading groups*  Discussion Leading |
| Thursday, November 14 | Code-switching and Language Selection | **Natalie Schilling-Estes** Constructing Ethnicity in Interaction | Discussion Leading |
| **NO CLASS NOVEMBER 19-21st** | NO CLASS | Everyday Talk, Ch. 7  (I will be attending a conference) | **Do a reading post on Ch. 7 by November 21st!** |
| NOVEMBER 24TH-DECEMBER 1ST | **THANKSGIVING BREAK** |  |  |
| Tuesday, December 3 | Discourse & Social Media | Deborah Tannen. (2013) The Medium is the Metamessage: Conversational Style in New Media InteractionANDAndreas Schellewald (2024) Discussing the Role of TikTok Sharing Practices in Everyday Social Life | Discussion Leading  Discussion Leading |
| Thursday, December 5 | Discourse & Politics | **Cynthia Gordon** (2004) ‘Al Gore's our guy’: Family political identity  AND **Sylvia Sierra & Natasha Shrikant.** 2020. Fake Alignments. In: *Language in the Trump Era* *Emergencies and Scandals* | Discussion Leading  **4th Peer Review of Reading Activities** |
| Tuesday, December 10 | **Final Project presentations** | None; work on your final project | **Final Project due** |
| Wednesday, December 11 | **Final Project presentations** | None; work on your final project | **Final Project due** |