

# Language and Gender

English 303/Linguistics 394, Winter 2010  
MW 2:40 – 4:00, 1202 SEB

## Instructor Information

Professors:	Robin Queen	Anne Curzan
Office:	406 Lorch Hall	3020 Tisch Hall
Office phone:	764-8030	936-2881
Email address:	rqueen@umich.edu	acurzan@umich.edu
Office hours:	Thurs. 1-3 (and by appt.)	Wed. 10-12, Thurs. 4-5 (and by appt.)
GSI:	Erica Beck	Angela McClain
Office:	459A Lorch Hall	3057 Tisch Hall
Email address:	beckle@umich.edu	amariem@umich.edu
Office hours:	Mon. 12-2 (and by appt.)	Tues. 12-2 (and by appt.)

## Course Description

The relationship between language and gender has been a widely researched and debated topic in sociolinguistics, English language studies, and linguistic anthropology since the early 1970s when Robin Lakoff published *Language and Woman's Place*. And the topic sparks lively conversations outside the academy as well. At the most basic level, do men and women really speak differently? If so, why? Are men and women represented differently in the language itself? If so, is English sexist? We examine these questions in light of recent scholarly findings and a range of theoretical models about the relationship of language and gender, and we consider how patterns of language may be linked to our experience of gender.

Discussions will also address how gender interacts with sexual identity, ethnicity, age, occupational and social/familial roles, social dynamics related to power, institutional settings, and other factors in terms of how we speak, as well as whether gender is connected to language change. As we unpack apparent gender biases in the language, we will think through the relationship of language and thought and what it means to advocate for conscious language change as part of socially situated political struggles. The work commitments will include short weekly written assignments, three papers (one of which will involve the transcription and analysis of a tape-recorded spoken conversation), and a final exam. No background in linguistics is required; a genuine interest in the workings and power of language is highly recommended.

## Required Texts (books available at university bookstores)

- Coates, Jennifer, ed. 1998. *Language and Gender: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Coursepack. Available at Dollar Bill Copy and as PDFs on the CTools site.

## Grading and Requirements

Weekly responses	25%
Data collection paper	20%
Discourse analysis paper	20%
Short literature review	10%
Final exam	20%
Participation/Section grade	5%

## Work Commitments

### *Weekly written responses*

Throughout the term, you will be writing 1-2 page, single-spaced papers in response to the readings and/or questions that we pose. Some of these assignments will build toward the longer papers; some of them will be useful for our discussions of the material. Written responses will be graded on a scale of 1-5 in the following way: 5=Outstanding; 4=Very good; 3=Fine; 2=Fair; 1=Weak; 0=Incomplete. If you work hard on these assignments and write them well, you should expect to receive a 4; we reserve the 5 for written responses that are in some way outstanding. We will announce the topic of the response papers during lecture and then post them to the CTools web site. Responses will be due in class as noted on the schedule and we will generally not accept late response papers. We will drop your two lowest response grades.

### *Individual data collection paper (due Feb. 5)*

You will conduct an investigative project involving the collection, analysis, and discussion of linguistic data. The paper will be approximately 4-5 pages (1½-spaced), and it will focus on gender in language—e.g., lexical items related to gender, such as derogatory terms for men and women, politically correct terms for particular groups, or taboo gendered terms. You will receive a handout with more details.

### *Short literature review (due Feb. 26)*

You will be asked to write a 2-3 page essay summarizing and synthesizing three scholarly journal articles dealing with an issue related to language and gender. More specific information will be provided closer to the due date.

### *Discourse analysis paper (due April 2)*

You will record a conversation involving either a mixed-sex or a same-sex group of up to 4 speakers. You will transcribe approximately 5 minutes of the conversation and write an approximately 4-5 page paper (1½-spaced) providing a description and analysis of the data in relation to the scholarship we will read. You will receive a handout with more details.

### *Final exam (April 29)*

The final exam will be cumulative, covering both material in the assigned readings and material discussed in class. Attendance at the final exam is mandatory; there will be no make-up exam without written documentation of illness or a family emergency. If you know of a conflict that will make it impossible for you to take the exam, you must contact one of us as soon as possible.

### *Class Participation:*

Participation is vital to your success in this class. If you are not present, you can't participate. We are very open as to what counts as participation. Talking in class is only one type of participation; there are others, such as talking with us in office hours, being a leader in small group work, or posting lively discussion posts. We will occasionally give quizzes during lecture, which will be factored into the participation grade.

📄 All papers—response papers and longer essays—should be submitted in hard copy. Longer essays that are submitted late will receive a deduction for each day they are late.

💻 Please do not use laptops in class, unless it is a day when we need to access online resources. If you find using a laptop the most efficient way to take notes during lecture, please come talk with one of us.

📵 Please turn off all cell phones and beepers before class begins (please no “subtle in-class texting”).

🍷 Please do not eat during class; if you would like to bring a beverage, that is fine.

## **Attendance**

Attendance at your section meetings is required. More than two absences will result in your final grade being lowered. (The only exception is a documented extended illness; please stay in touch with us if you find yourself in these circumstances.) We give you these absences because we know that sometimes “life happens” and you have to miss a class. Use them wisely if you must use them. Your attendance at “lecture” (which will often be as much discussion as lecture) is in every way expected. This class rests on the premise that you are taking responsibility for your own education and will attend class to participate fully in this learning community.

## **Time Protocol**

All of our time is valuable and, as we all know, none of us ever has enough! We expect you to come to class and section on time. It is disruptive for everyone if you arrive late. In return, we promise to make every effort to end class on time. We also expect you to turn in your papers on time. You will typically turn these in to the GSIs in class; if you cannot be present in class, you must turn in the assignment BEFORE class by leaving it in the GSIs’ department mailbox.

## **E-mail**

We are delighted to hear from you on e-mail; e-mail can be a great way to ask a quick question, share a comment, and/or make an appointment to visit. If you have a long, complicated question, please come visit during office hours or make an appointment to come talk with one of us.

## **Plagiarism**

You should be fully aware of the University’s policies on scholastic dishonesty. When scholastic dishonesty is detected on any written assignment or exam, you will receive a zero. Further, the matter may be turned over to the Dean of Student Academic Affairs for inquiry. You should be particularly aware of plagiarism. **Plagiarism** is a form of cheating in which you use someone else’s ideas and/or words (including those of your roommate, classmate, parent, significant other, etc.) without proper citation of the source. It is plagiarism regardless of whether the material comes from a printed source, from the Internet, or from a lecture or a friend: if you got the idea from someone else, you must cite the source properly—and this is true even if you aren’t using the source’s exact wording. Please read the English Department’s web page on plagiarism carefully (<<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/english/undergraduate/advising/plagNote.asp>>) as well as LS&A’s policies on academic misconduct (<<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/saa/standards/acadjudic.html>>). If you have any questions about how to reference material or about what constitutes plagiarism, please come see us or either of the GSIs.

## **Documented Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability that requires special accommodations, please contact one of us at the beginning of the semester so that the proper arrangements can be made.

## **Investigating Student Learning Project**

Robin is currently involved in a research project that investigates the use of multimedia materials as enhancements to more traditional teaching methods. She plans to use this research to help her (and others) better teach linguistic and sociolinguistic concepts and to improve how future students learn the subject.

In this class, we will do several in-class activities that will explore the usefulness of different ways of using media resources. (These are things that we would do anyway regardless of this research.) Robin plans to analyze your work and your responses in these exercises as part of this research project.

In any presentation or publication of the results, Robin will not include your name or any other identifying details. If she plans to quote extensively from your work (i.e. more than a sentence or two), she will ask you with an e-mail message first and if you don't want her to quote your work, she won't.

If you are under 18, please let us know so that Robin can exclude your work from the study. However, you'll still do the same work as the rest of the class.

This project is being funded by the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching and has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University.

Please contact Robin if you have any questions or concerns. She's also happy to talk to you about the research once it's finished and is happy to give you a copy of any presentation or publication that comes out based on this research.

# Weekly Schedule

LG = Language and Gender (textbook)

CP = Coursepack (or PDF on CTools)

## **Week 1: Introduction to the Course**

Jan. 6 Introduction and Housekeeping  
Why study language and gender?

## **Week 2: Fundamentals in the Study of Language and Gender**

Jan. 11 Key concepts in the systematic study of language  
Read for class: Lippi-Green (CP)  
Response #1 due

Jan. 13 Key concepts in the study of language and gender  
Read: Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (CP)

## **Week 3: Gender and Grammar**

Jan. 18 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – NO CLASS

Jan. 20 Grammatical gender  
Read: Baron (CP)  
Response #2 due

## **Week 4: Gender and the Lexicon**

Jan. 25 The gendered lexicon  
Read: Sutton (CP)

Jan. 27 The taboo lexicon  
Read: Cameron (“Naming of Parts,” CP)  
Response #3 due

## **Week 5: Gender and Reference**

Feb. 1 Gender in the dictionary  
Read: Brown and Kitzinger (CP)

Feb. 3 Gender and definition  
Read: Sheidlower (CP)

\*\* Feb. 5 DATA COLLECTION PAPER DUE

## **WEEK 6: Gender and Discourse Markers**

Feb. 8 The case of *like*  
Daily-O’Cain (CP)  
Response #4 due

Feb. 10 The case of *dude*  
Kiesling (CP)

**Week 7: Gender and Language Variation**

Feb. 15 Sociolinguistic studies, part 1  
Read: Cheshire (LG); Trudgill (LG)  
Response #5 due

Feb. 17 Sociolinguistic studies, part 2  
Read: Nichols (LG); Eckert (LG)

**Week 8: Explanations: Deficit Models**

Feb. 22 Deficit models, part 1  
Read: Lakoff (CP)  
Response #6 due

Feb. 24 Deficit models, part 2  
Read: O’Barr and Atkins (LG)

\*\* Feb. 26 SHORT LITERATURE REVIEW DUE

**Week 9: Explanations: Difference Models**

March 8 Difference models, part 1  
Read: Tannen (LG); Maltz and Borker (LG)  
Response #7 due

March 10 Difference models, part 2  
Read: Brown (LG); Holmes (“Complimenting,” LG)

**Week 10: Explanations: Dominance Models**

March 15 Dominance models, part 1  
Read: DeFrancisco (LG); Fishman (CP)  
Response #8 due

March 17 Dominance models, part 2  
Read: West (LG)

**Week 11: Same-Sex Talk**

March 22 Same-sex talk: Men talking with men  
Read: Cameron (“Performing Gender Identity,” LG)  
Response #9 due

March 24 Same-sex talk: Women talking with women  
Read: Coates (LG); Holmes (“Women’s Talk,” LG)

**Week 12: Language, gender, and diversity**

March 29 Language, gender, ethnicity, and passing  
Read: Bucholtz (CP)  
Response #10 due

March 31 Language, gender, ethnicity, and power  
Read: Morgan (CP)

\*\* April 2 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS PAPER DUE

**Week 13: Language, Gender, and Sexuality**

April 5 Language, sexuality, and representation  
Read: Queen (CP)  
Response #11 due

April 7 Sexual identities and style shifting  
Read: Barrett (CP)

**Week 14: Language, Gender, and Desire**

April 12 Articulating desires  
Read: Kulick ("No," CP)  
Response #12 due

April 14 Where do we go from here?  
Read: Bergvall and Bing (LG)

**Week 15: Concluding Thoughts**

April 19: Questions from the floor

April 29, 10:30-12:30 FINAL EXAM