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Internet Linguistics (Ling 004B) Syllabus

Miranda Weinberg

Swarthmore College, mweinbe1@swarthmore.edu

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Internet Linguistics

Ling 004B
Spring 2020

Course meetings

Mondays
1:15-4:00 pm
Sci Center 103

Instructor

Dr. Miranda Weinberg
mweinbe1@swarthmore.edu
Office: Pearson 103, office hours Thursdays 1-3pm

Course Description

Despite predictions to the contrary, it seems that the internet has not destroyed English. But how has the internet changed language use, and the study of linguistics?

This course will be an exploration of the various forms that language takes online and in other digital formats, such as texting. We will explore questions such as:

- Why do my parents insist on texting in full paragraphs?
- Is the internet good or bad for the future of indigenous and minority languages?
- Is there a difference in meaning between :), :-), ^_^,?
- What are the differences and similarities between face-to-face and online communication?

We will look at a range of sources and methods for investigating language use online, and use some of these methods in our own investigations of internet language.

Course Outline

Table 1 - Summary of course topics

Dates	Activity
Week 1 - Jan 22	Introduction
Week 2 - Jan 27	Linguistic facts of (online) life
Week 3 - Feb 3	Tone! & sarcasm.
Week 4 - Feb 10	Multilingualism & multimodality
Week 5 - Feb 19	Communities & change
Week 6 - Feb 26	Identities, participation frameworks, context collapse
Week 7 - March 4	Citizen Sociolinguistics
□ Spring Break □	
Week 8 - March 18	Minoritized languages online 1
Week 9 - March 25	Minoritized languages online 2 (Zapotec)
Week 10 - April 1	Research methods, design & ethics
Week 11 - April 10	TBD 1
Week 12 - April 17	TBD 2
Week 13 - April 24	TBD 3
Week 14 - May 1	Conclusion: What have we learned? What next

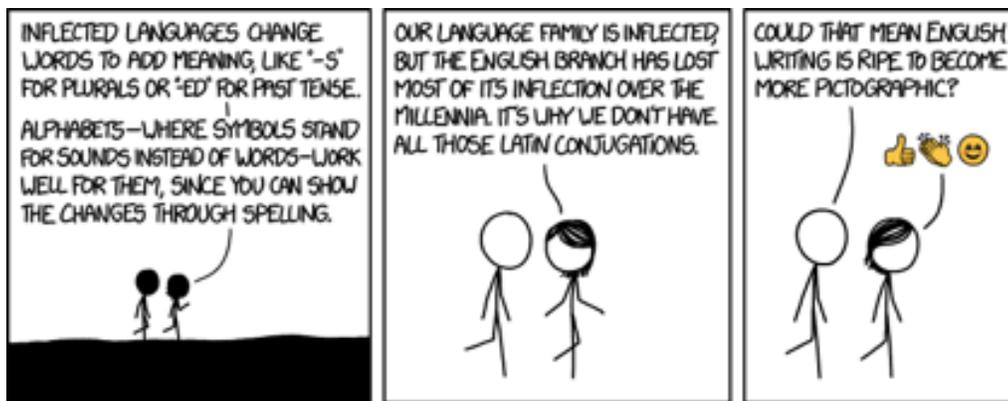
Course Materials

We will read two books that are available for purchase at the bookstore, request through E-ZBorrow, and on reserve at McCabe.

McCulloch, G. (2019). *Because internet*. Riverhead Books

McSweeney, M. (2018). *The pragmatics of text messaging*. Routledge.

Other course materials will be available online on Moodle.



xkcd.com/1709/

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand the distinction between prescriptive and descriptive grammar
- Understand that language change occurs in patterned ways
- Document internet linguistic usage
- Employ linguistic terminology to analyze a variety of digital texts
- Evaluate popular views on the nature of human languages and their users, and be able to critically evaluate claims about language
- Understand possibilities and drawbacks for researching language online, including ethical considerations

Assignments

Participation

Active participation in all classroom activities is essential for success in this course. Participating includes doing the readings, thinking about them before class, and contributing to the discussion. It does not mean speaking more than other students but rather **contributing to a supportive learning environment for everyone**. Full participation might sometimes mean holding back a comment to allow a peer to speak up.

Being prepared to participate means:

- doing all assigned reading/viewing/listening in sufficient depth to be prepared to discuss
- completing specific assignments by the deadlines so we can talk about them
- bringing copies of your readings & notes to class.

You can't participate if you don't show up. Please email me when you know that you will have to miss class. Please be punctual.

Be mindful about technology. Be sure your technology use is supporting your learning, not detracting. You may need to turn off wi-fi or use an app like *SelfControl* to block distractions. You will need copies of the week's readings with you which you may choose to have electronically or on paper.

Twitter

We will use Twitter as a tool for interaction among ourselves and with the broader community of people using and studying language online.

You may use a pre-existing Twitter account or create one for the purposes of the course. You'll need to follow me (@mirandaweinberg), our course account (L004B), and each other. Everyone must write at least 10 tweets during the course of the semester – 5 during your time as Twitter handler and at least five from your own account. My hope is you will find it a useful outlet and write much more!

Discussion posts

Each student will write 10 brief (200-400 word) discussions of class reading/viewing/listening. Posts are due by midnight before class. You may use our course Wordpress blog **or** write a Twitter thread (be sure to use the course hashtag #IntLx). You will also write at least 5 substantive responses (i.e., not just 'I agree') to others' posts throughout the semester.

Special roles

There will be four special roles, which each student will complete once:

- Twitter handler

Each student will take over the Twitter account for one week (from Thursday through the following Wednesday). During this week, they will be responsible for at least five tweets, at minimum:

- two comments on material (reading/viewing/listening) for the next class
- one engagement with a fellow student or the professor
- one engagement with something or someone outside of our class (e.g., retweeting/quote tweeting something you see online)
- one point from class (either live tweets or summary)
- Discussion starter:
 - Read classmates' posts and come to class prepared with no more than five minutes of synthesizing comments and at least five questions to launch a discussion.
- Curator:
 - Find an additional piece of data or information to present in class. This might be an article, a brief video, or other media.
- Note taker/summarizer:
 - Post your summary of what happened in class on our course blog or on twitter.

Assignments

Table 2 - Summary of Proposed Grade Breakdown

Assignment	Percentage
Reading responses & participation (every week)	20%
Special roles (to be chosen after week 1)	20%
Four short written homework assignments (weeks 2, 4, 6, 14)	20%
Final project (broken into small chunks during 2 nd half of semester)	30%
Midterm & final self-evaluations	10%

Course Policies

Grades

Feedback is extremely important for learning. Grades, however, are a bad form of feedback. They don't provide you with a lot of detail, nor do they provide you with information about how to improve. Research has consistently found that grades are a poor motivator for student learning. Instead, emphasis on grades encourages students to work for grades, sometimes in ways that limit opportunities for real learning. For a relatively recent review of research on grades, see Schinske & Tanner (2014; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4041495/>). We will work together at our first meeting to determine a grading policy for this course.

Assignment submission

Assignments should generally be submitted on Moodle. Many of our assignments will serve as the basis for discussion or further work, so timely submission is important for everyone's learning. If an assignment does not turn out as you had hoped, please talk to me about a plan for revisions.

Contacting me

I encourage you to ask me questions about the course and assignments. It is much better to ask questions than to sit around wondering. The best ways to contact me are email or stopping by my office. I will do my best to answer emails in a timely manner; however, I have other demands on my time (as do you!) and may not respond for up to 24 hours, or longer over the weekend.

Office hours

Office hours are an opportunity for you to ask questions, talk about your interests, and address concerns. Research in higher education shows a strong association between attending office hours and success in college courses. Feel free to stop by as often as you want! If Thursday afternoons are not a good time for you, please get in touch to find another time to talk.

Office hours are from **1-3pm on Thursday in Pearson room 103**. This is the time I will definitely be available to talk. I am in my office at many other times; if my door is open, I am available.

Academic integrity

You must be clear about what words and ideas are your own, and which you have borrowed from other people. All sources must be identified as clearly, accurately, and thoroughly as possible. When in doubt about whether to identify a source, either cite the source or consult me. Please do not try to make others' work appear as your own. It's very easy for others to tell, and it's dishonest.

For Swarthmore's official policy on academic honesty, see the Academic Freedom, Honesty, and Responsibility section of the Swarthmore College Guide to Student Life. The Writing Center has helpful information on paraphrasing and citation, and is a good resource if you have further questions. (<https://www.swarthmore.edu/writing/paraphrasing-citation>).

Accessibility & Accommodations related to disabilities

I am committed to making this course accessible to all. Please contact me as soon as possible about what you need to learn successfully in this course.

If you believe you need accommodations for a disability or a chronic medical condition, please contact Student Disability Services (Parrish 113W, 123W) via e-mail at studentdisabilityservices@swarthmore.edu to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs. As appropriate, the office will issue students with documented disabilities or medical conditions a formal Accommodations Letter. Since accommodations require early planning and are not retroactive, please contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. For details about the accommodations process, [visit the Student Disability Services website](#). You are also welcome to contact me privately to discuss your academic needs. However, all disability-related accommodations must be arranged, in advance, through Student Disability Services.

Important Resources

Taking care of yourself at Swarthmore

You may face stressful or difficult situations during your time as a student. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, there is support available through Swarthmore College. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers confidential and free professional mental health services. You may learn more at <https://www.swarthmore.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services> or contact CAPS at 610-328-8059 or at their office in Worth Health Center. Other resources include your RA, friends, coaches, and advisors to groups you are part of. I urge you to take care of your mental and physical health.

Basic needs

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Swat FLI (First-Gen/Low-Income) Program for support (<https://www.swarthmore.edu/swat-fli>). Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable doing so. This will enable me to connect you to any resources that I know about.

Library

Librarians are amazing professionals who know many things your faculty do not. They can help you in many ways, from narrowing down paper topics to finding resources and tools. The Linguistics subject librarian is Roberto Vargas: rvargas1@swarthmore.edu, 610-957-6107, McCabe Library 120.

Writing Center

Writing is hard. I encourage you to get feedback on your writing from your peers, and by visiting the Writing Center.