

## ANTH 304 – LANGUAGE, GENDER AND SEXUAL IDENTITIES

Professor: Valentina Pagliai  
Oberlin College

MWF 1:30-2:20pm

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**Course Description:** Do women and men speak different languages? Are they really from different planets? Or is it just a question of differential power? Is patriarchal dominance reinforced and maintained through sexist language? If so, can we change language to make it less sexist? Do “women” and “men” actually exist? How do we construct them through the way we speak? It is possible to pull apart the effects of gender from those of class, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and other aspects of identity? These are some of the questions raised by the study of gender and language in the past few decades. By considering some of these debates, students will explore how both language and gender are grounded in structures of power, authority, and social inequality. We will also examine the construction of sexual identities in conversation, including topics such as language use in the gay/lesbian communities, the discursive construction of masculinity, etc. The course will have a discussion-oriented format and students will conduct their own research on the topics addressed in class.

**Course Goals:** It is important to me that students understand this as a field of studies in the making, and that they are part of this “making,” that they are contributing to it. I want them to see how different scholars have brought different theories, methods and points of view to the study of gender and language, and how these differences lead to a complex and continuously changing field. Thus, while the readings will provide a large enough coverage of main issues and problems that have been raised over thirty years of studies, the “research practica” should allow the students to actually see for themselves when and how such studies are applicable to their own experience. The research practica will be particularly useful for the more advanced students, who can carry them out using methods of data gathering and transcription learned in previous linguistic courses. However, the research practica will be kept flexible and various enough to accommodate less experienced students. An important goal for me is to have the students raise new questions about what they read, entering in a dialogue with the authors of the readings. Hence, I privilege discussion and the sharing of ideas in a cooperative and dialectic environment.

### **Required Texts:**

- 1) Jennifer Coates 1998 *Language and Gender: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. (LGR)
- 2) Additional Readings: Copies of the course's additional readings are going to be found on Blackboard or in print reserve in the campus Library. Some readings may be available online through particular journals or databases. Specific information will be given when needed.

### **Optional Texts:**

- 1) Kira Hall & Mary Bucholtz 1995 *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*. New York and London: Routledge.
- 2) Jennifer Coates 1993 *Women, Men and Language*. London: Longman.

**Note:** All Readings and Assignments are to be done by the date they are listed on the syllabus.

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## WEEK 1

**M 2/6 --Introduction: What is gender? What is language? Why study their relationship?**

**W 2/8 – Do men and women speak differently? Where does this difference lay? Why are they different? What are the consequences?**

Readings: - Robin Lakoff 1975 “Language and Woman’s place” in *Language in Society* (45-80).

**F 2/10 -- Are women more polite than men, or not? Why?**

Readings: - Penelope Brown 1998 “How and Why are Women More Polite: Some Evidence from a Mayan Community” in LGR pp. 81-98.

- Janet Holmes 1998 “Complimenting – A Positive Politeness Strategy” in LGR pp. 100-118.

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## WEEK 2

**M 2/13 -- Are women linguistically conservative or innovative? Do they speak more standard language?**

Readings: - Peter Trudgill 1998 “Sex and Covert Prestige” in LGR pp. 21-27.

- Patricia Nichols 1998 “Black Women in the Rural South: Conservative and Innovative” LGR pp. 55-62.

- Susan Gal 1978 “Peasant Men Can’t Get Wives: Language Change and Sex Roles in a Bilingual Community” *Language in Society*: 7, 1-16. In LGR pp. 147-158.

Optional readings:

- Patricia Nichols 1983 “Linguistic Options and Choices for Black Women in the Rural South” in Thorne, Kramarae & Henley (Eds.) *Language, Gender and Society*. Cambridge: Newbury House Publishers. Pp. 54-66.

**W 2/15 – Comparative evidence from other cultures/societies: what does it teach us?**

Readings: - Keenan, Elinor 1974 “Norm-Makers, Norm-Breakers: Uses of Speech by Men and Women in a Malagasy Community.” In R. Bauman & J Sherzer (Eds.) *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 125-143.

- Bambi Schieffelin 1987 “Do different worlds mean different words? An example from Papua New Guinea” in Philips, Steele and Tanz (Eds.) *Language, Gender and Sex in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 249-260.

1<sup>st</sup> Summary/reflections Due on the readings done so far

**F 2/17 – Class discussion of 1<sup>st</sup> research practicum: Do men swear more than women?**

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## WEEK 3

**M 2/20 – Can language be sexist? Is sexist language reinforcing sexism in society?**

Readings: - Wendy Martyna 1983 “Beyond the He/Man Approach: The Case for Non-Sexist Language” in Thorne, Kramarae & Henley (Eds.) *Language, Gender and Society*. Cambridge: Newbury House Publishers (available in print reserve) pp. 25-35. **OR USE** Nancy Henley 1987 “This New Species that Seeks a New Language: On Sexism in Language and Language Change” in Penfield (Ed.) *Women and Language in Transition*. Albany: State of New York University Press. Pp. 3-23. (Available in print reserve)

**W 2/22 – How can we diminish or eliminate sexism in language?**

Readings: - Alleen Pace Nilsen 1987 “Guidelines Against Sexist Language: a Case History” and the Appendix “Guidelines for Nonsexist Use of Language in NCTE Publications (Revised 1985)” in Penfield pp. 37-52 & pp. 54-63. (Available in print reserve)

- Barbara Withers 1987 “Resources for Liberating the Curriculum” in Penfield pp. 65-71.

- Nan Van Den Bergh 1987 “Renaming: Vehicle for Empowerment” in Penfield pp. 130-135. (Available in print reserve)

2<sup>nd</sup> Summary/reflections Due on the readings done up to today included

**F 2/24 – Sexist language continued.**

**Selection and discussion of your personal research projects.**

Deadline to select a topic for your personal research and final paper

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## WEEK 4

**M 2/27 – Class discussion of 2nd research practicum: Create a Sexist Language Rating Scale!**

**W 3/1 – Woman language or powerless language? Are men reinforcing their power over women through the way cross-sex interactions take shape? The articulation of the dominance paradigm.**

Readings: - William O’Barr and B. Atkins 1998 “Women’s Language or Powerless Language?” in LGR pp. 377-386.

- Candace West and Don Zimmerman 1983 “Small Insults: A Study of Interruptions in Cross-Sex Conversations between Unacquainted Persons” in Thorne, Kramarae & Henley (Eds.) *Language, Gender and Society*. Cambridge: Newbury House Publishers pp. 102-115.

**F 3/3 – How women get to be oppressed by men through their role in interaction.**

Readings: - Fishman “Interaction: the Work Women Do” in Thorne, Kramarae and Henley pp. 89-101.

- Susan Herring et al. 1998 “Participation in Electronic Discourse in a Feminist Field” LGR pp. 197-208.

- Victoria Leto de Francisco 1998 “The Sounds of Silence: How Men Silence Women in Marital Relations” in LGR pp. 176-182.

- Norma Mendoza-Denton 1995 “Pregnant Pauses: Silence and Authority in the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas Hearings” in Kira Hall & Mary Bucholtz 1995 *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*. New York and London: Routledge. pp. 51-65.

Optional readings:

- Susan Herring etc. 1995 “This discussion is going too far!: Male resistance to female participation on the Internet” in Kira Hall & Mary Bucholtz 1995 *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*. New York and London: Routledge. Pp. 67-94.

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## WEEK 5

**M 3/6 – Do women and men belong to different cultures (and thus speak not the same language, but different languages)? Is this the cause of misunderstandings among the sexes? The difference paradigm.**

Readings: - Daniel Maltz & Ruth Bonker 1998 “A Cultural Approach to Male-Female Miscommunication” in LGR pp. 417-432.

**W 3/8 – Are men and women just not understanding each other?**

Readings: - Deborah Tannen 1990 “Put Down that Paper and Talk to Me!: Rapport Talk and Report Talk” in: *You just don’t understand: Women and men in conversation*. New York: William Morrow and Co. Pp. 74-95. (Book available in print reserve)

- Senta Troemel-Ploetz 1998 “Selling the Apolitical” in LGR pp. 446-457.

3<sup>rd</sup> Summary/reflections Due on the readings done so far

**F 3/10 – Class discussion of 3<sup>rd</sup> research practicum: Cross-sex participation to Internet discussions today.**

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**WEEK 6**

**M 3/13 – How do children learn to speak differently according to their sex? The studies on socialization of gendered language.**

Readings: - Jean Berko-Gleason 1987 “Sex differences in parent-child interaction” in Phillips etc. pp. 189-199. 11

- Joan Swann 1998 “Talk Control: An illustration for the classroom of problems in analyzing male dominance of conversation” in LGR pp. 185-195. 11

Optional readings: - Jean Berko Gleason and E. Blank Greif 1983 “Men’s speech to young children” in Thorne, Kramarae & Henley (Eds.) *Language, Gender and Society*. Cambridge: Newbury House Publishers. Pp. 140-149.

**W 3/15 – How do children develop different participation structures in interaction? Is it true that women are more cooperative than males? Are they less interested in matters of right and wrong?**

Readings: - M. H. Goodwin & C. Goodwin 1987 “Children’s arguing” in Phillips etc. pp. 200-248.

**F 3/17 – Do girls use language for cooperation? Or to build hierarchies?**

Readings: - M. H. Goodwin 1999 “Constructing Opposition within Girls’ Games” in Bucholtz etc. pp. 388-405.

4<sup>th</sup> Summary/reflections Due on the readings done so far

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**WEEK 7**

**M 3/20 – Class discussion of 4<sup>th</sup> research practicum: A walk in the world of child rearing. Can you find evidence of different rearing practices leading to different gendered communicative behaviors. Also: What happens in high school?**

**W 3/22 – Problematization of gender categories: Gender as displayed, as constructed identity:**

Readings: - Kira Hall “Lip Service on the Fantasy Line” 1995. In Kira Hall & Mary Bucholtz 1995 *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*. New York and London: Routledge. Pp.183-213.

**F 3/24 – Problematizing categories of “woman” and “man”: If gender is constructed, how do we do it? How do we perform being “men” or “women”? How is heterosexuality constructed and communicated?**

Readings: - Caton 1990 “The poetic construction of Self” In *Peaks of Yemen I summon* pp. 109-126.

- Deborah Cameron 1998 “Performing gender identity: Young men’s talk and the construction of heterosexual masculinity” in LGR pp. 270-283.

- Scott Kiesling 2002 “Playing the straight man: displaying and maintaining male heterosexuality in discourse.” In *Language and Sexuality*, pp. 249-266.

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**WEEK 8**

**- FALL BREAK**

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## WEEK 9

### **M 4/3 –Is there particular linguistic forms that are used exclusively to represent gender?**

#### Readings:

- Ochs, E. 1992. "Indexing Gender." In A. Duranti & C. Goodwin (eds.) *Rethinking Context. Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. pp. 336-355.
- Sara Trechter 1999 "Contextualizing the exotic few: gender dichotomies in Lakota" in Bucholtz etc. pp. 101-117.

### **W 4/5 – Class discussion of 5<sup>th</sup> research practicum: Analysis of gender displays (With transcription).**

### **F 4/7 – NO CLASS**

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## WEEK 10

### **M 4/10 – How do we take into account racial, social class, cultural differences in language vis-à-vis gender distinctions?**

Readings: - Marcy Morgan 1999 "No Woman No Cry: Claiming African American Women's Place" in Bucholtz etc. pp. 27- 42.

- Keith Walters 1999 "Opening the Doors of Paradise a Cubit: Educated Tunisian Women, Embodied Linguistic Practice, and Theories of Language" in Bucholtz etc. pp. 200-215.

5<sup>th</sup> Summary/reflections Due on the readings done so far

### **W 4/12 – Do gay/lesbian people speak differently from heterosexuals?**

Readings: - Rudolph Gaudio 1994. "Properties in the Speech of Gay and Straight Men." *American Speech*, 69:30-57.

- Robin Queen 1997 "In Don't Speak Spritch: Locating Lesbian Language" in Livia etc. pp. 233-255.

### **F 4/14 – What can we learn from comparative studies of GLBT language?**

Readings: - Rudolph Gaudio 1997 "Not Talking Straight in Hausa" in Livia etc. pp. 416-428.

- Tom Boellstorff 2004 "Authentic of Course!: Gay Language in Indonesia and Cultures of Belonging" In Leap & Boellstorff (Eds.) *Speaking in Queer Tongues: Globalization and Gay Language*. Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

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## WEEK 11

### **M 4/17 – What can we learn from comparative studies of GLBT language?**

Readings: - Kira Hall 1997 "Go Suck Your Husband Sugarcane" In Livia and Hall pp. 430-457.

### **W 4/19 – Queer studies turn: Deconstructing sex.**

Readings: - Ian Lucas 1997 "The Color of His eyes: Polari and the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence" in Livia etc. pp. 85-93.

- Rusty Barrett 1997 "The Homo-Genious Speech Community" in Livia etc. pp. 181-198. 18

### **F 4/21 – Class discussion of 6<sup>th</sup> research practicum: topic open.**

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## WEEK 12

### **M 4/24 – Can we perform more than one gender? The multiplication of ways of doing being female or male: subaltern and hegemonic masculinities/femininities.**

Draft of Final Project Due on Blackboard

Readings: - Jennifer Coates 1998 “Thanks God I’m a woman: the construction of differing femininities” in Cameron pp. 295-320.

**W 4/26 – The multiplication of ways of doing being female or male: subaltern and hegemonic masculinities/femininities.**

Readings: - Bonnie McElhinny 1995 “Challenging Hegemonic masculinities” female and male police officers handling domestic violence” in Kira Hall & Mary Bucholtz 1995 *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*. New York and London: Routledge. Pp. 217-240.

6<sup>th</sup> Summary/reflections Due on the readings done so far

Optional readings: - Bonnie McElhinny 1998 “I Don’t Smile Much Anymore: Affect, Gender and Discourse of Pittsburgh Police Officers” in LGR pp. 309-325.

**F 4/28 -- Class discussion of 7<sup>th</sup> research practicum: participant observation, recording and transcription: doing being a “woman” “men” “heterosexual” “homosexual” is not done in the same way by everybody. What are some of the differences that you can see?**

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### WEEK 13

**M 5/1 – Why do we believe than men and women talk in particular ways? When we find differences, are they really there or are we just being influenced by our own linguistic ideologies? Where do these linguistic ideologies come from?**

Readings: - Inoue, 2002, “Gender and Linguistic Modernity: Towards an Effective History of Japanese Women’s Language.” *American ethnologist* 29 (2) :392-422.

**W 5/3 – Linguistic ideologies of gendered language: continued. How does what counts as female/male language change through time?**

Readings: - Norma Mendoza-Denton “Muy Macha: Gender and Ideology in Gang’s Girls Discourse about Makeup” *Ethos: Journal of anthropology*, 61:47-63.

- Briggs 1992 “Since I Am a Woman I Will Chastise My Relatives” *American Ethnologist* 19:337-361.

- Shigeko Okamoto 1995 “ ‘Tasteless’ Japanese: Less ‘Feminine’ Speech among Young Japanese Women” in Kira Hall & Mary Bucholtz 1995 *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*. New York and London: Routledge. Pp. 297-321.

7<sup>th</sup> Summary/reflections Due on the readings done so far

**F 5/5 – What questions are we asking today? Which of the old paradigms are still producing research? How has research changed?**

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### WEEK 14

**M 5/8 – Open Discussion of Students’ final projects.**

**W 5/10 – Open Discussion of Students’ final projects.**

**F 5/12 – NO CLASS**

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### FINALS’ WEEK

**Final Paper Due: Wednesday May 17, 9am**

**Course Policies:**

**Code of honor**

The Oberlin College Students' Code of Honor applies to the course, please familiarize yourself with it: [http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student\\_pages/honor\\_code.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html)

**Readings** should be completed by the day they are listed on the syllabus; this will help you follow lectures and prepare for lectures and section.

**Summaries/reflections** are due at the beginning of the class session. They must touch on all the readings done. They must be typed. They will be graded down 1 point for each day that they are late. Each summary is graded on a scale of 1 to 10 and it is worth 5% of the final grade.

**Research Practica** All students will be required to participate in the first 2 research practica. Then each student/group will participate in 2 additional research practica, depending on their final research project. All the results will be presented and discussed in class at the appointed times. Each research practicum will be worth 5% of the final grade.

**Research Project and Final Paper:** Two of your practica, your presentation to the class and your final paper will be based on an independent research project that you will carry on during the semester. You can do it alone or in a pair together with another student. The project will have to use one (or more) of the following methods: Conversation Analysis, Discourse Analysis, any kind of structural linguistics analysis (phonemic, morphemic, etc.), analysis of metaphors (Lakoff's style). If you are not trained in any of these methods, don't worry, you will be taught how to use them during the course.

**Participation to class Discussions** is fundamental. Everybody is expected to participate actively to class discussion every time the class meets and as time allows. "Active participation," means speaking during discussions (at least most of the time), having questions prepared for potential discussion for every class, and getting to know your fellow classmates by name, major, etc. Merely attending class does not constitute active in class participation.

**Presence in class** is expected, and I will take the roll at the beginning of each class. Students present at the roll will receive 1 point. Students who are late may not be recorded and will receive half point.

**Grades:**

Summaries	35% of the grade
Research Practica	20 %
Presentation to class	10%
Final paper	15 %
Presence in class and Participation	20 %
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	100 %

A+ = 96% of grade; A = 93%; A- = 90%, B+ = 86%; B = 82%; B- = 78%; C+ = 74%; C = 70%; C- = 60%; NE = Less than 60%; D = 55%; F = Less than 55%.

**Final Note:** Although the syllabus will be followed as much as possible, it is intended as a guideline and circumstances may require a change to the schedule. Students are responsible for any changes announced in class.