

Dialects of English  
Reed College  
Fall 2012  
Kara Becker

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Linguistics 332

T/Th 6:10-7:30

Vollum 120

Office Hours, Vollum 125: Wednesdays, 2-4pm, and by appointment

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### Course Description

This course is an introduction to dialectology—the study of regional variation in language—with an emphasis on the history and description of the varieties of English currently spoken in the United States and across the globe. In this course we work closely with data, integrating hands-on work in class with discussion of theory. Students will acquire practical knowledge of the phonological differences among dialects of English, as well as read and apply theories related to language variation and change, standard language ideology, and enregisterment. We focus primarily on varieties of North American English and that region's dialect history, as well as major sound changes in the North American context, but also devote time to global English dialects. We work actively with dialect data, whether gathered by students through fieldwork or through video and audio clips provided in class. Students will read scholarly articles and complete short assignments throughout the semester, and conduct a data-driven research project to be handed in at the end of the semester. Conference.

Prerequisites: Linguistics 212, or permission of the instructor. Group Applicability: B.

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### Grading

1. Assignments      40%

Four assignments will be assigned throughout the semester (see syllabus for dates).

Assignment 1: Your Vowel Space

Assignment 2: Know your Phonemes

Assignment 3: Summary of North American English Phonology

Assignment 4: Presentations on World English dialects

## 2. Participation 20%

Participation in conference is, as always, critical to the success of the course. Come prepared with thoughts, questions, and comments about our readings, and be an active participant in the work we do, both in discussing readings and in working in-class on data analysis.

## 4. Final Project 40%

Your final project is a sociolinguistic research project on a topic of your choosing. You will select a variable and design a small research project to gather data on the variable. Your final project should include 1) An introduction with an overview of your variable and a question/hypothesis related to it; 2) A review of the literature (use at least 5 primary sources, with at least 2 from outside our syllabus; 3) A presentation of your methodology; 4) A presentation of your findings using quantification and visuals; and 5) A discussion/conclusion that connects your findings to your original question and to the literature. Max 15 pages including figures and bibliography.

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## Course Policies

On Absences: Regular, prepared and disciplined conferencing is intrinsic to this course. Once you have missed two weeks of class – whether or not your absences are excused – you will have missed too much material and will not receive credit for this course. If a condition is chronic, appropriate documentation and reasonable accommodations should be considered in consultation with both me and the Disability Support Services office. A notice from Student Services that you are absent because of an illness or are taking a formal emergency absence does not mean that you are excused from meeting any of the requirements of this course. If you must be absent due to health or an emergency, it is your responsibility to catch up on missed material.

On Accommodations: If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodation for this class, it is your responsibility to contact and register with Disability Support Services and provide them with documentation of your disability, so that they can determine what accommodations are appropriate for your situation. With your permission they will discuss with me those reasonable and appropriate accommodations. To avoid any delay you should contact the DSS office as early as possible in the semester, and contact me for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs in this course. *Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and that reasonable disability accommodations cannot be provided until I have received an accommodation letter from and discussed your case with the DSS office.* You can reach Disability Support Services at (503) 517-7921 or [disability-services@reed.edu](mailto:disability-services@reed.edu)

On Incompletes: I don't give them except in the case of an acute, extreme emergency or health crisis that interrupts what otherwise was good work in this course.

On Late Work/Extensions: Late work drops a full letter grade for every 24 hours past the deadline.

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## Course Readings

All readings will be available on Moodle and/or through the Library's e-journals. We will utilize the *Atlas of North American English* (noted here as ANAE) extensively (Labov, Ash & Boberg 2006).

Online Resources:

Speech Accent Archive: <http://accent.gmu.edu/>

The Audio Archive: [http://alt-usage-english.org/audio\\_archive.shtml](http://alt-usage-english.org/audio_archive.shtml)

IDEA (International Dialects of English Archive): <http://web.ku.edu/~idea/index.htm>

DARE (Dictionary of American Regional English): <http://dare.wisc.edu/?q=node/1>

AusTalk: <http://clas.mq.edu.au/voices/audio-illustrations>

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## Course Schedule

### Week 1

Aug 28

Aug 30: Contextualizing Dialects

1. Milroy, James and Leslie Milroy. 2012. Chapter 1 from *Authority in Language: Prescription and Standardization*. 1-23.

### Week 2

Sep 4: What is Sociolinguistic Dialectology?

1. ANAE pages 3-10
2. Trudgill, Peter. 1974. Linguistic change and diffusion: Description and explanation in sociolinguistic dialect geography. *Language in Society* 3(2): 215-346.

Sep 6: Getting our Phonemes Down

1. ANAE pages 11-15  
**Assignment 1 due**

### **Week 3**

#### Sep 11: Dialects Change, Dialects Vary

1. Wolfram, Walt and Natalie Schilling-Estes. Chapter 2 from *American English*.
2. Labov, William. 1972. The Social Stratification of (r) in New York City Department Stores. *Sociolinguistic Patterns*.

#### Sep 13: Dialects Vary

1. Trudgill, Peter. 1972. Sex, covert prestige, and linguistic change in the Urban British English of Norwich. *Language in Society* 1 (2): 179-195.

#### **Assignment 2 due**

### **Week 4**

#### Sep 18: Mergers

1. ANAE pages 58-73
2. Hazen, Kirk. 2005. Mergers in the mountains: West Virginia division and unification. *English World-Wide* 26: 2: 199-221.

#### Sep 20:

1. Dinkin, Aaron J. 2011. Weakening resistance: Progress toward the low back merger in New York State. *Language Variation and Change* 23: 315-345.

### **Week 5**

#### Sep 25: Chain Shifts

1. ANAE pages 16-20
2. ANAE Chapter 14

#### Sep 27: Spotlight: Northern Cities Shift

1. Eckert, Penelope. 1988. Adolescent social structure and the spread of linguistic change. *Language in Society* 17: 183-207.

### **Week 6**

#### Oct 2: The curious case of the West

1. ANAE Chapter 20
2. Kennedy, Robert and James Grama. 2012. Chain shifting and centralization in California vowels: An acoustic analysis. *American Speech* 87 (1): 39-56.

#### Oct 4: Spotlight: Southern Vowel Shift

1. ANAE Chapter 18
2. Thomas, Erik R. 2003. Secrets revealed by Southern Vowel Shifting. *American Speech* 78 (2): 150-170.

### **Week 7** Reminder: Dialects are more than accents

#### Oct 9

1. Dubois, Sylvie and Barbara M. Horvath. 2003. Verbal morphology in Cajun Vernacular English: A comparison with other varieties of Southern English. *Journal of English Linguistics* 31(1): 34-59.

2. Hazen, Kirk, Sarah Hamilton and Sarah Vacovsky. 2011. The fall of demonstrative *them*: Evidence from Appalachia. *English World-Wide* 32 (1): 74-103.

Oct 11

1. Corrigan, K.P. 2000. "What bees to be maun be": Aspects of deontic and epistemic modality in a northern dialect of Irish English. *English World-Wide* 21 (1): 25-62.

***Assignment 3 is due***

## **Week 8: Fall Break**

### **Week 9** Dialects and Ethnicity

Oct 23: African American English

1. ANAE Chapter 22
2. Thomas, Erik R. 2007. Phonological and Phonetic Characteristics of African American Vernacular English. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 1 (5): 450-75.

Oct 25

*Collaboration on Assignment 4*

## **Week 10**

Oct 30

1. Starks, Donna. 2008. National and ethnic identity markers: New Zealand short front vowels in New Zealand Maori English and Pasifika Englishes. *English World-Wide* 29 (2): 176-193.

Nov 1: Your presentations

## **Week 11: Dialects of English outside of North America**

Nov 6: Your Presentations (Assignment 4)

Nov 8: Your Presentations (Assignment 4)

## **Week 12** Enregisterment

Nov 13

1. Agha, Asif. 2003. The social life of cultural value. *Language and Communication* 23: 231-273.
2. Remlinger, Kathryn. 2009. Everyone up here: Enregisterment and identity in Michigan's Keweenaw peninsula. *American Speech* 84(2): 118-137.

Nov 15: Spotlight on Pittsburgh

1. ANAE Chapter 19
2. Johnstone, Barbara. 2009. Pittsburghese shirts: Commodification and the enregisterment of an urban dialect. *American Speech* 84 (2): 157-189.

### **Week 13**

Nov 20: Attitudes and Identity

1. Labov, William. 1963. The social motivation of a sound change. *Word* 19: 273-309.

Nov 22: Turkey Day

### **Week 14**

Nov 27

1. Niedzielski, Nancy. 2002. Attitudes towards Midwestern American English. In eds. D. Long and D.R. Preston, *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology* (vol. 2). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 321-327.
2. Hartley, Laura C. 1999. A view from the west: Perceptions of U.S. Dialects by Oregon residents. In ed. D.R. Preston, *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 315-332.

Nov 29

1. Hay, Jennifer and Katie Drager. 2010. Stuffed Toys and Speech Perception. *Linguistics* 48 (4): 865-892.
2. Clopper, Cynthia G. and David B. Pisoni. 2007. Free classification of regional dialects of American English. *Journal of Phonetics* 35 (3): 421-438.

### **Week 15**

Dec 4: Last Day of Class

Final work is due Wednesday, December 12, at 5pm