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 world. Students will acquire a practical knowledge of major linguistics differences among dialects of English, and will gain hands-on experience in collecting linguistic data from varieties of non-standard English. Forms of English to be discussed include varieties of American English (Boston, New York, Southern, etc.) and other global English dialects. Other topics include language attitudes, the rise and of "standard" English and its implications, English-based pidgins and creoles, and language variation and change. Students will actively collect data on dialects from family, friends, and the media, to be accompanied by audiovisual material in class, including video clips and songs. 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.

Grading

1. Weekly Dialect Artifacts 20%

Studying language in social context means opening your eyes and ears both in and outside of class. Each Thursday, please come with an artifact related to class—either the topic for the week or dialects more generally. These artifacts can be a newspaper article, a song, a youtube video, a written observation of
some linguistic interaction, a recording of a relative or friend, etc., etc., etc. We will use these as discussion points in class, and create an archive of artifacts from this class by the end of the semester.

2. Assignments 30%

In addition to your weekly assignment to provide a dialect “artifact,” four to five times throughout the semester I will assign an additional task related to the archive of artifacts we will compile. This may be a problem set asking you to identity dialect features in a particular video, song, etc.; it may be critical analysis task asking you to relate concepts from class to a real-world example; it may be something else. I will assign these with a week’s notice, and explain in class the criteria by which I will evaluate them.

3. Participation 20%

Participation in this conference is obligatory and crucial to your grade. This does not mean you should dominate our class discussions, but that you should find a way to participate in class and let me know that you are reading and thinking critically. If you are not a class talker, come talk to me.

4. Final Project 30%

This final project should be in the range of ten pages. That means six pages is too short, but also that fifteen pages is too long. Your project should be completed in at least four parts:
1) identification of a topic (most important – choosing a dialect variable)
2) review of the literature (as your final write-up must include at least 5 primary sources; this means you will need to supplement what we read in class with additional references)
3) collection of data (depending on the variable this will range from 25 to 75 or so instances)
4) write-up of findings (see above – ten or so pages)

There are due dates noted on the syllabus for each of these four parts except data collection – I will not check your data unless you ask me to do so. As mentioned in 2), these papers must utilize references, which should be cited in-text and in a bibliography (which does not count as part of the total page length). I will be happy to provide suggestions for additional readings pertaining to your topic.
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* (hereafter the ANAE or Atlas) extensively (Labov, Ash & Boberg 2006).

The readings listed under a particular day or week or due *that day*, not assigned that day.

Online Resources:
Speech Accent Archive: [http://accent.gmu.edu/](http://accent.gmu.edu/)
IDEA (International Dialects of English Archive): [http://web.ku.edu/~idea/index.htm](http://web.ku.edu/~idea/index.htm)
DARE (Dictionary of American Regional English): [http://dare.wisc.edu/?q=node/1](http://dare.wisc.edu/?q=node/1)

Course Schedule

**Week 1**

Tuesday, August 31 – Introduction: Language Changes

Thursday, September 2 – The Standard (?)

**Week 2**

Tuesday, September 7 – A brief history of Dialectology

Thursday, September 9 – Levels of Dialect Difference; Review of IPA symbols
Week 3

Tuesday, September 14 – More on regional dialect formation
To Read:

Thursday, September 16 – Variation in dialects
Due: Final Project Topic Choice

Week 4

Tuesday, September 21 – American Regional Dialects. Part 1: The Northeast, the Midatlantic
To Read: 

Thursday, September 23 – American Regional Dialects. Part 2: The South

Week 5

Tuesday, September 28 – American Regional Dialects. Part 3: The Northern Cities

Thursday, September 30 - American Regional Dialects. Part 4: The West (?)
Due: Final Project Literature Review

Week 6

Tuesday, October 5 – Global English Dialects
To Read:

Thursday, October 7
To Read:

Week 7

Tuesday, October 12 –
To Read:

Thursday, October 14 –
To Read:
October 19, 21: Fall Break

Week 8

Tuesday, October 26 – Dialects: Just for white people?

Thursday, October 28 –
To Read:

Week 9

Tuesday, November 2: Vernacular, Ethnicity, Identity, Borders

Thursday, November 4
To Read:

Week 10

Tuesday, November 9 Performativity and Style
Thursday, November 11

Week 11

Tuesday, November 16 –
To Read:

Thursday, November 18

Week 12 – Local Identifications
To Read:  - Labov, William. Martha’s Vineyard
          - Johnstone, Barbara, Neeta Bhasin, and Denise Wittkofski. 2002.
            “Dahntan” Pittsburg: Monophthongal /aw/ and representations of
            localness in southwestern Pennsylvania. American Speech 77 (2):
            148-166.

Tuesday, November 23 – From localness to enregisterment
To Read:  - Agha, Asif. 2003. The social life of cultural value.
          - Remlinger, Kathryn.

Thursday, November 25: Thanksgiving

Week 13

Tuesday, November 30
To Read:

Thursday, December 2 – Applications
          Smitherman, Arthena F. Ball, and

Week 14

Tuesday, December 7: Last Day of Class
Due: Final Project Write-Up

Intro:
Fact: Language Changes. Play OE and ME clips

History: NORM, Lexical Atases – To read?
Read W&SE Overview of Dialects – review phonology and IPA

More on regional dialects – read from the ANAE; Boberg article; Rhenish Fan
American Regional Dialects

Dialect variation

Perceptions and Ideologies. Niedzelski Coupland? Agha?

Dialects – just white people?

Do you Speak American?

What counts as a Variety (dialect?)
Pidgins and Creoles, Codeswitching, Ethnolect?

Assignment using Speech Accent Archive