

ENG 528: Language Change Research Seminar

Fall 2011

Tompkins G115, Monday, 6:00-8:45

Instructor: Erik Thomas

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Lab: 204 Tompkins (ph. 515-3128)

Office Hours: MW 11:00-12:00, and by appointment; if I'm not in my office during office hours, I'll probably be in the lab. I'll be glad to help you any other time that you catch me if time permits.

E-mail: erthomas@gw.ncsu.edu

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It is recommended that students who wish to contact me remotely when I am not holding office hours use e-mail instead of telephoning my office.

SYLLABUS

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students should:

Be able to examine language change using techniques and theories from experimental phonetics.

Be able to apply a spectrograph, a speech synthesizer, and computerized plotting to problems in language change.

Produce a paper on language change that is suitable for an academic conference.

TEXTS

Texts for this course consist of one book, *Sociophonetics: An Introduction* (\$32), available at the bookstore, and a series of articles and chapters from books that are available on electronic reserve at <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/reserves/>.

REQUIREMENTS

The most important requirement for this course is the major paper. Papers may investigate change and/or variation, either historical or contemporary, on any aspect of language covered in this course. It should involve some sort of instrumental phonetic analysis. Projects may involve fieldwork, but they do not have to.

Other requirements include a) a short, informal, preliminary oral presentation on plans for the major paper; b) a twenty-minute formal oral presentation of the major paper, with a question-and-answer period afterward, on the last day of class; c) weekly summaries of the assigned readings, which may be typed or handwritten, with approximately half a page per article or chapter, due at the beginning of the first class during which we discuss them; and d) completion of four exercises that are designed to help students learn to use equipment. Weekly summaries will not be accepted after the class in which they are due unless a proper excuse is provided. Credit may be subtracted if the major paper or the exercises are late. Guests will be invited to hear the oral presentations and are welcome during other classes.

Attendance at all classes is expected and is essential to learning the material that we will cover.

The breakdown of grades is as follows:

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Major Paper:	60%
Weekly Summaries:	14%
Exercises:	16%
Informal Oral Presentation:	1%
Formal Oral Presentation:	9%

Final grades are assigned so that, e.g., 86.7-89.9=B+, 90.0-93.3=A-.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT:

Assignments in this class are intended to assess your individual knowledge and understanding of the subject material addressed in this class. Therefore, cheating or plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated. The work you present must be your own. All individuals involved in an act of academic dishonesty will fail the assignment and/or the course. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic integrity, please refer to the Honor Code in the Code of Student Conduct at the following URL:

http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/student_services/student_discipline/POL11.35.1.php

INCOMPLETES

In this course, an incomplete grade will be assigned in accordance with the official university grading policy, which can be found at

http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic_affairs/pols_regs/REG205.00.13.php

OPEN LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The intention and structure of university level courses are to provide open, thoughtful fora for a wide variety of topics. While discussing these topics, students should not discriminate on the basis of “race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability or veteran status” as outlined in the University’s Unlawful Harassment Policy Statement (http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/campus_environ/non_discrimination/REG04.25.4.php). If you have a concern in this regard, please contact the Equal Opportunity Office at 515-3148, or see or email the instructor.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

Physical or Learning Disabilities: Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653, and present the instructor with a letter indicating what types of accommodations will be required. See NC State's policy on working with students with disabilities: http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/offices/affirm_action/dss. For more information see:

http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic_affairs/courses_undergrad/REG02.20.1.php

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TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE (All dates on this list are subject to change).

8/22: Introduction to the course; review of phonetics; introduction to the spectrograph.

READ: Thomas, *Sociophonetics: An Introduction*, chapter 1.

8/29: Understanding sound; measuring formants and F_0 ; practice with the spectrograph.

READ: Thomas, *Sociophonetics: An Introduction*, chapter 2.

9/5: Labor Day. No classes.

9/12: Perception experiments; use of a speech synthesizer.

READ: Thomas, *Sociophonetics: An Introduction*, chapter 3. Also recommended: Strand, "Uncovering the role of gender stereotypes in speech perception;" Janson and Schulman, "Non-distinctive features and their use."

9/19: Acoustics of consonants.

READ: Thomas, *Sociophonetics: An Introduction*, chapter 4.

DUE: Vowel formant exercise # 1 (measuring your own voice, normal and yawning).

9/26: Consonantal variation, a factor that American sociophoneticians have mostly ignored; language contact and consonantal variation.

READ: Docherty & Foulkes, "Derby and Newcastle: Instrumental phonetics and variationist studies" (in Foulkes & Docherty, *Urban Voices*); Fourakis & Port, "Stop epenthesis in English." SKIM: Thomason & Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*, chapter 3 (Contact-induced language change: An analytic framework).

10/3: Acoustics of vowels; vowel normalization.

READ: Thomas, *Sociophonetics: An Introduction*, chapter 5. Also read Clopper, "Computational methods for normalizing acoustic vowel data for talker differences." Optional: Adank, Smits, and van Hout, "A comparison of vowel normalization procedures for language variation research."

DUE: Vowel synthesis exercise.

10/10: Effects of duration on speech production and sound change; plotting data with Origin.

READ: Lindblom, "Spectrographic study of vowel reduction" (don't worry about the mathematical formulas); pp. 50-55 of Thomas, *An Acoustic Analysis of Vowel Variation in New World English*.

10/17: Rhythm; Intonation.

READ: Thomas, *Sociophonetics: An Introduction*, chapter 6, pp. 184-199; Low, Grabe, & Nolan, "Quantitative characterizations of speech rhythm: syllable-timing in Singapore English" (read pp. 377-85, skim the rest); Ramus, Nespors, & Mehler, "Correlates of linguistic rhythm in the speech signal," pp. 265-275; Fought & Fought, "Prosodic rhythm patterns in Chicano English."

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- DUE: Proposals for major papers.
- 10/24: Intonation; pitch tracking.
READ: Thomas, *Sociophonetics: An Introduction*, chapter 6, pp. 200-223, and re-read chapter 2, pp. 37-40; Beckman and Elam, "Guidelines for ToBI Labeling;" selections from Cruttenden, *Intonation* (read pp. 128-38, skim the rest); Tarone, "Aspects of intonation in Black English."
DUE: Vowel formant exercise #2 (plotting duration vs. formant values).
- 10/31: Finish intonation if necessary; voice quality.
READ: Thomas, *Sociophonetics: An Introduction*, chapters 7 and 8.
- 11/7: Progress reports on major papers (prepare a 5-10 minute informal presentation); phonetics and phonology.
READ: *Sociophonetics: An Introduction*, chapter 9; Ohala, "The costs and benefits of phonological analysis;" Johnson, "Speech perception without speaker normalization;" Foulkes & Docherty, "The social life of phonetics and phonology" (read §4, pp. 425-432, skim the rest); Pierrehumbert, "The next toolkit." Optional: Coleman, "Phonetic representations in the mental lexicon" (in Durand & Laks, *Phonetics, Phonology, and Cognition*).
- 11/14: Finish phonetics and phonology; vowel space and its relationship with vowel change; perception vs. production as sources of sound change.
READ: *Sociophonetics: An Introduction*, chapter 10; Martinet, "Function, structure, and sound change;" Lindblom, "Phonetic universals in vowel systems;" Ohala, "The phonetics of sound change;" Lindblom et al, "Is sound change adaptive?"
DUE: Intonation exercise.
- 11/21: Labovian approaches to sound change; social aspects of linguistic change.
READ: *Sociophonetics: An Introduction*, chapter 11; Labov, "The three dialects of English;" Thomas, *An Acoustic Analysis of Vowel Variation in New World English*, chaps. 4 and 6 and pp. 50-58 (skim the rest of chapter 2).
- 12/28: Social aspects of linguistic change; the lateral transfer model.
READ: *Sociophonetics: An Introduction*, chapter 12; Thomas, "Sociolinguistic variables and cognition;" Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog, "Empirical foundations for a theory of language change" (pay particular attention to the earlier sections, especially pp. 101-02; later sections can be skimmed).
- 12/12 (Monday): Formal oral presentations.
DUE: Major paper.