English 404: Language, Power, & Identity
Fall 2021

Instructor: Patricia Mayes
Meeting Time and Place: MW 5-6:15, CRT 124
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Course Description

English 404 is an introductory sociolinguistics course, designed to provide students with a broad understanding of the relationship between language and society. In investigating this relationship, we will study how the field has developed from a narrow focus, primarily on language and processes of language change to a broad, interdisciplinary focus that highlights the role that social groupings and structures play in affecting language and language use. Not only will we examine how individuals create social identities through *styling* language, we will also come to understand the important role played by society's understanding of constructs such as class, ethnicity and race, and gender, as well as how language use in institutional contexts is implicated in identity and power relations. The approach taken is both descriptive and critical in that we will examine how language is implicated in creating and maintaining power for certain groups through constructs such as "standard" varieties and more broadly through public policies. This course contains linguistic content, which will be studied throughout the semester, but students do not need to have already taken a linguistics course.

Required Readings and Materials

The required materials will be posted in the weekly folders on the Canvas site for our course, including:

- Required articles
- PowerPoint slides
- Handouts
- Supplementary materials such as video or audio files

Course Learning Outcomes

Successful students will be able to

1. Articulate how language is structured as a system
2. Explain and discuss the fact that structural change is inherent in language
3. Articulate the importance of language change and variation for our daily social realities
4. Explain and discuss constructs such as language standards
5. Understand the relation between attitudes toward language and linguistic variation
6. Analyze the implications of language attitudes toward social groupings
7. Be able to understand and evaluate transcribed examples of social interaction
8. Explain and analyze the relation between linguistic variation, race, ethnicity, and gender
9. Explain the relation between language standardization and power structures
10. Discuss and analyze the relation between language use and identity
11. Discuss and analyze the relation between language use and social institutions
12. Apply our understanding of linguistic structure to varied contexts of language use

Please contact Pat Mayes (mayes@uwm.edu) if you have questions or would like additional information before the syllabus is ready.