

LANGUAGE OF NOW - LING 2050-007

Instructor Information

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Course Description, Structure, and Objectives

Materials you'll need for class:

Pen or pencil

Composition book or notebook (we'll use this for when we go analog, and you will occasionally turn in written responses from prompts)

Laptop or tablet (this one is not essential; however, you will need a laptop/tablet if you're presenting in class)

Course Objectives: The Language of Now explores the relationship among pop culture, social media, digital communication, and their effect on language. Language is changing more rapidly than ever, not because of migration or colonization, but because of the rapid growth around social media apps, streaming platforms, online gaming, and more. Research in this course involves collecting and analyzing data from its source—the internet. This includes slang, emojis, memes, fandoms, videos, and music to name a few. Language overlays everything; pop culture, in all its digital splendor, impacts language. This course will take us on a journey of linguistic discovery, zooming in on the language around us—not in a vacuum but where we live.

Questions that we will address and explore this semester:

How is rapidly changing technology, social media, and pop culture affecting contemporary language and slang?

How has the language you speak now changed from 10 years ago?

How are texting, gaming, fandoms, and social media language changing the way we speak, think, and write?

How do world events influence the Language of Now?

How does the slang we use weave connections among our social circles?

What accounts for the generational differences in texting, slang use, emojis, and stylistics?

How do social and political movements influence the Language of Now? Think about the following movements: Black Lives Matter, Me Too movement, 4B movement.

Why do some slang terms have more staying power than others?

What are some slang terms that have shifted in meaning from their historical definition, e.g. "I'm obsessed with this lippy" versus "I'm obsessed with fighting for human rights"

What do emojis do? How and why do we use them?

Why are there generational differences in slang usage, emojis, and punctuation/capitalization (stylistics)? What are some examples?

What is a meme, and how do they spread? How do memes change during their lifespan?

What are "language attitudes" and what influence do they have on us?

What is language variation, dialect, and accent?

How does the slang we use connect us to social groups? How might it exclude us?

What is discriminatory language and where do we find it on the internet? Hint: it's often found in comments, but it can also be coded and only understood by a particular group (dog whistles).

What are some guidelines for monitoring and decreasing discriminatory language on the internet?

Sensitivity Warning: Please be mindful of the slang terms you collect, select, discuss, and analyze. As a class and individually, we want to avoid using terms that have been weaponized to put down, subjugate, or insult an entire group of people.

How to Succeed in this Course

I am happy to answer all other questions via email or at scheduled meetings. If I get many questions about the same topic, I might wait until our next session to answer them for everyone.

The following rules apply in the interaction with me:

When you write an email, I will get back to you within a reasonable time span during business hours (Mo-Fri, 8am to 5pm). I will not respond to any emails outside of these business hours. Meetings with students will be scheduled by appointment only and only over Zoom unless otherwise agreed upon with me. Scheduling a meeting can only be done via email.

Due to scheduling reasons, I might not be able to answer questions after class. If you have questions after class and I inform you that we do not take questions after this particular class, please ask the questions via email or ask for a meeting appointment.

Students are expected to adhere to the UNT policy of conduct (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012/>).

Violations of this policy (e.g. student misconduct or student disruptive behavior) will be reported to the Dean of Students. On academic misconduct see the section plagiarism policy below.

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To request accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) by completing an application for services and providing documentation to verify your eligibility each semester. Once your eligibility is confirmed, you may request your letter of accommodation. ODA will then email your faculty a letter of reasonable accommodation, initiating a private discussion about your specific needs in the course.

You can request accommodations at any time, but it's important to provide ODA notice to your faculty as early as possible in the semester to avoid delays in implementation. Keep in mind that you must obtain a new letter of accommodation for each semester and meet with each faculty member before accommodations can be implemented in each class. You are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding your accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty have the authority to ask you to discuss your letter during their designated office hours to protect your privacy. For more information and to access resources that can support your needs, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access) website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>).

UNT strives to offer a high-quality education in a supportive environment where you can learn, grow, and thrive. As a faculty member, I am committed to supporting you, and I want to remind you that UNT offers a range of mental health and wellness services to help maintain balance and well-being. Utilizing these resources is a proactive way to support your academic and personal success. To explore campus resources designed to support you, check out mental health services (<https://clear.unt.edu/student-support-services-policies>), visit unt.edu/success, and explore unt.edu/wellness. To get all your enrollment and student financial-related questions answered, go to scrappysays.unt.edu.

Supporting Your Success and Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

Every student in this class should have the right to learn and engage within an environment of respect and courtesy from others. We will discuss our classroom's habits of engagement and I also encourage you to review UNT's student code of conduct so that we can all start with the same baseline civility understanding (Code of Student Conduct) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012/>).

Required/Recommended Materials

This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System. If circumstances change, you will be informed of other technical needs to access course content. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at [Learn Anywhere \(https://online.unt.edu/learn\)](https://online.unt.edu/learn).

Recommended text: *Because Internet* by Gretchen McCulloch. UNT library has a digital copy of this text, so you will be able to complete assigned readings without buying the text. I also have other texts I'll use for this class, but they will also be digital copies in our library.

Course Requirements/Schedule

Course schedule:

Week	Topic	Reading	Assignment, quiz, discussion, or project
Week 1:	Course introduction; Intro lecture; What is linguistics?	Read article, "Gen-Z Slang Is Revolutionizing Work Jargon"	Quiz 1 in canvas over assigned article; Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 2:	Components of language, review; Analysis of language data from last class— put in categories	Reading week 2: "Why Slang is more revealing than you may realize"	Quiz 2 in canvas over assigned article; Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 3:	Semantic Shift: amelioration, pejoration, broadening, narrowing, weakening	Readings week 3: in materials; Semantic shift.	Weekly Assignment in canvas; Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 4:	Word formation processes; Select topics for Project 1: A Lexical Analysis	Readings week 4	Discussion post forum in canvas; Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 5:	Lexical Categories: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs; open and closed classes of words; grammaticalization in LON	Materials in Canvas and Practice Quiz (not for a grade).	Test 1 in canvas Opens Feb. 12; closes Feb. 15 at 11:59 p.m. The practice test will be open from Feb. 9-12, closing 1 minute before the Test opens.
Week 6:	Lexical analysis of LON terms; use spreadsheet	Sample projects from past semesters-evaluate; rough draft workshop	Discussion forum due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 7:	Project 1 workshop and poster presentations	Rough drafts in class	Project 1 Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.

Week 8:	Language Variation	Reading: <i>English with an Accent</i> by Rosina Lippi-Green, C. 1; take terminology practice quiz	Quiz 3 Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
SpringBreakWeek:	Spring Break	No class, no assignments	
Week 9:	Language Attitudes in the Language of Now	Readings in Module	
Week 10:	Social groups and generational differences; interview questions; Project 2 workshop	Readings in Module	Project 2 assigned; discussion forum due Sunday by 11:59
Week 11:	Memes and emojis: linguistic traits	<i>Because Internet</i> by Gretchen McCulloch, Chapter 5; digital resources UNT library catalog https://library.unt.edu/	Discussion forum due Sunday by 11:59 pm
Week 12:	Gricean Maxims (rules of conversation); Speech Acts	Readings in module	Project 2 due Sunday by 11:59. Project 3 assigned; Discussion forum due Sunday by 11:59 pm
Week 13:	AI and Language	Readings and presentation in module with loads of optional reading	Discussion forum due Sunday by 11:59 pm
Week 14:	Two topics: 1AI language vs human language	Readings and content in modules; there are two. Note: you are responsible for covering both topics; however, you are only required to complete one weekly assignment.	Discussion forum due Sunday by 11:59 pm
Week 15:	Discriminatory language continued and AI language continued; Rough draft workshop; last week of class	Readings in Module 14	Topic 1: Quiz 4 due Sunday by 11:59 pm Topic 2: Weekly assignment due Sunday by 11:59 pm
Final Exams:	No final exam in this class; we won't meet during finals week.		Final project (project 3) due in canvas Monday, May 4 by 11:59 p.m.

Note that this schedule is subject to change.

Canvas: We will use Canvas for accessing course information, content, grades, schedules, quizzes, discussion forums, the one test, and project submissions. Everything you need to reference for the course is in Canvas; all submissions will go into a portal in Canvas.

Tests: You will have one test. It will cover the class lectures and assigned readings. It is objective and straightforward. If you attend class regularly, take notes, and read all assigned articles, you will likely do fine on the test. The test is online, in Canvas.

Projects: You will complete three projects this semester. These projects will be based on the exploratory research you conduct. I will provide you with detailed requirements and rubrics for all projects, and we'll spend some class time working on the projects.

Quizzes and Assignments: You will have quizzes throughout the semester. Most of them will be based on the articles you read. You will also have one or two weekly assignments. I'll provide you with details on all these items in advance.

Discussion Forums: You will have assigned discussion forums. For these, you will follow the prompt and use the grading rubric as a guideline. Weekly discussion forums will open on Tuesday and close on Sunday night.

Rubric Qualifications for Discussion posts	points
Original post with relevant, cogent examples and commentary; two responses to other posts (your peers in the discussion board). Responses address content in the post, engaging and extending the discussion	20 pts
Original post with examples; two responses to other posts. Responses relate to the post and extend discussion.	18 pts
Original post with no examples; two responses to other posts	16 pts
Original post; one response to other posts	14 pts
No original post; two responses to other posts	10 pts
Or original post only.	

LING 2050 The Language of Now is in the core curriculum. The following are the signature assignments and corresponding rubrics:

Signature Assignments aligned with LPC

4 Objectives: Critical Thinking, Communication, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility. Assignments will be assessed using the rubric developed by the Faculty Senate.

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policies during all examinations. This includes refraining from unauthorized assistance, plagiarism, or any behavior that could be construed as cheating. Students found violating these policies will face serious consequences, as outlined in the Academic Integrity Policy (see below).

Exceptions from this requirement may only be granted at the instructor's discretion on an individual basis.

Students will be notified by Eagle Alert if there is a campus closing that will impact a class - the calendar is subject to change: [Campus Closures Policy \(https://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-006\)](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-006).

Assessing Your Work

Grades:

Assessment Type	Number of Weekly Grades	Grade Weight
Weekly Homework: Assignment, Discussions Posts, & Quizzes	11	50%
Projects	3	45%
Test	1	5%

Note: I will drop one or two weekly grades. This will allow you to miss at least one quiz, assignment, or discussion.

Every student in my class can improve by doing their own work and trying their hardest with access to appropriate resources. Students who use other people's work without citations will be violating UNT's Academic Integrity Policy. Please read and follow this important set of guidelines for your academic success (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>). If you have questions about this, or any UNT policy, please email me or come discuss this with me during my office hours.

Grading scale:

A = 90%-100%

B = 80%-89%

C = 70%-79%

D = 60%-69%

F = 0%-59%

AI Policy:

In this course, I want you to engage deeply with the materials and develop your own critical thinking and writing skills. For this reason, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools like [insert tool(s) here, e.g., Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini] is not permitted unless otherwise instructed. Whenever we engage with language AI, the tasks given to you will explicitly state when and how to use these tools to complete the task objective. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of an assignment, exam, or coursework will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the Student Academic Integrity policy (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>).

Attendance and Participation

Research has shown that students who attend class are more likely to be successful. You should attend every class unless you have a university excused absence such as active military service, a religious holy day, or an official university function as stated in the Student Attendance and Authorized Absences Policy (PDF) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-039>). If you cannot attend a class due to an emergency, please let me know.

Your safety and well-being are important to me. Over 4 absences may affect your final grade. I will take roll each class period. Please stay home if you are sick.

Being punctual indicates our respect for others. Please arrive before class begins to find a seat, prepare your materials, and connect with your peers. The beginning of class is especially critical—just like the beginning of a movie or book. Being late to class is sometimes inevitable. If you are late, know that you are welcome to join the class, but please do so without distracting others.