

Linguistics 2050: The Language of Now: Pop Culture, Technology, and Society

Spring 2026

Instructor: Konstantia Kapetangianni

Email: Konstantia.Kapetangianni@unt.edu

Meeting Days/Time: Mon/Wed 11:00 - 12:20

Meeting Place: Language Bldg 323

Office Hours: Wednesday 4:00pm - 5:00pm on Zoom and in person by appointment

Course Description & 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.

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.

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; please **don’t use** your laptop/tablet in class unless you are taking notes or doing assigned classwork—for this class.)

Grade Breakdown

| Assessment Type | Number of 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.

Weekly Schedule

| Week | Topic | Reading | Assignment, quiz, discussion, or project |
|----------------------|---|--|--|
| Week 1: Jan 13 & 15 | 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: Jan. 20 & 22 | 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: Jan. 27 & 29 | 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: Feb. 3 & 5 | Word formation processes; Select | Readings week 4 | Discussion post forum in canvas; |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | topics for Project 1: A Lexical Analysis | | Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 5: Feb. 10 & 12 | 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 |
| Week 6: Feb. 17 & 19 | 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: Feb. 24 & 26 | Project 1 workshop and poster presentations | Rough drafts in class | Project 1 Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 8: Mar. 3 & 5 | 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. |
| Week 9: Mar. 10 & 12 | Spring Break | Spring Break | Spring Break |
| Week 10: Mar. 17 & 19 | Language Attitudes in the Language of Now | Readings in Module | Project 2 assigned; discussion forum due Sunday by 11:59 |
| Week 11: Mar. 24 & 26 | Social groups and generational differences; interview questions; Project 2 workshop | Readings in Module | Discussion forum due Sunday by 11:59 pm |
| Week 12: Mar. 31 & Apr. 2 | 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 13: Apr. 7 & 9 | Gricean Maxims (rules of conversation); Speech Acts | Readings in module | Discussion forum due Sunday by 11:59 pm |
| Week 14: Apr. 14 | Discriminatory | Readings and presentation | Project 2 due |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|--|
| & 16 | language and Microaggressions | in module with loads of optional reading | Sunday by 11:59. Discussion forum due Sunday by 11:59 pm; Final paper assigned |
| Week 15: Apr. 21 & 23 | Discriminatory language | Readings and content in modules | Topic 1: Quiz 4 due Sunday by 11:59 pm |
| Week 16: Apr. 28 & 30 | Discriminatory language continued; Rough draft workshop; last week of class | Readings in Module; rough draft workshop | No homework |
| May 5 & 7 | No final exam in this class; we won't meet during finals week. | | Final paper (project 3) due in canvas Tuesday, May 5 by 11:59 p.m. |

This syllabus 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.

Class attendance: Attendance is required since our classroom is our laboratory. Over 4 absences may affect your final grade. I will take roll each class period. Please stay home if you are sick.

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.

[Discussion Grading Rubric](#)

| 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.

Signature Assignment 1: Lexical Analysis in the Language of Now

Objectives: Critical Thinking and Communication

[UNT core rubrics](#)

1. Students will collect 4 samples of language from one general source, either social media or gaming.
2. Students will provide contextualized samples to support their analysis.
3. Students will analyze above samples from a historical and linguistic perspective:
 - A. Historical: When was the first usage? How has the meaning changed and evolved over time?
 - B. Linguistic analysis
 1. Phonological: Analyze the sounds, pattern of sounds in the lexical item or phrase
 2. Morphological: Analyze the word formation process/processes
 3. Syntactic: analyze the lexical category (parts of speech: noun, verb, adjective, adverb) and include information about any change occurring in this area, e.g. "favorite" can be used as a verb, but historically, it has been a noun.
 4. Has the word undergone semantic shift? If so, what kind? Describe in detail.
 5. Is this lexical item/phrase only written? If so, describe.
Is it written and spoken? If so, describe.
Has the pronunciation changed, e.g. lol can be pronounced as a word, lol'
 - C. Include a glossary with multiple definitions of each lexical item.

You should have at least 3 definitions, possibly more:

1. old meaning
2. current meaning

3. your meaning

4. Students will draw conclusions about the current usage of their samples as well as the change that is occurring now. Make predictions about how this lexical item might change next. Further, include discussion about what is propelling the change.

5. Students will submit their projects on Canvas. Projects can be in the following forms: PPT or Prezi presentation. You may include videos, GIFs, mp3 files, and screenshots in your project.

6. Be sure to redact names and photos.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend class meetings regularly and to abide by the attendance policy established for the course. It is important that you communicate with the professor and the instructional team prior to being absent, so you, the professor, and the instructional team can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals. Please inform the professor and instructional team if you are unable to attend class meetings because you are ill, in mindfulness of the health and safety of everyone in our community.

Technical Requirements & Skills

Minimum Technology Requirements

The following are minimum technology requirements for students to attend the course and communicate with the instructor:

- Computer
- Reliable internet access
- Microsoft Office Suite
- [Canvas Technical Requirements](https://clear.unt.edu/supported-technologies/canvas/requirements) (<https://clear.unt.edu/supported-technologies/canvas/requirements>)

Computer Skills & Digital Literacy

Course-specific technical skills learners must have to succeed in the course include:

- Using Canvas
- Using email with attachments

Rules of Engagement

Rules of engagement refer to the way students are expected to interact with each other and with their instructors online. Here are some general guidelines:

- Treat your instructor and classmates with respect in email or any other communication.
- Always use your professors' proper title: Dr. or Prof., or if in doubt use Mr. or Ms.
- Unless specifically invited, do not refer to your instructor by first name.
- Use clear and concise language.
- Remember that all college level communication should have appropriate language (this includes discussion boards).
- Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm as tone is sometimes lost in an email or discussion post and your message might be taken seriously or sound offensive.
- Be careful with personal information (both yours and others).
- Do not send confidential information via e-mail

Getting Help

Technical Assistance

Part of working in the online environment involves dealing with the inconveniences and frustration that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as expected. Here at UNT we have a Student Help Desk that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues.

UNT IT Help Desk

Email: helpdesk@unt.edu

Live Chat:

<https://it.unt.edu/helpdesk/chatsupport>

Phone: 940-565-2324

In Person: Sage Hall, Room 330

Hours and Availability: Visit <https://it.unt.edu/helpdesk> for up-to-date hours and availability

For additional support, visit [Canvas Technical Help](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328) (<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328>)

Student Support Services

UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

- [Student Health and Wellness Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center>)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)

- [UNT Care Team](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care>)
- [UNT Psychiatric Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry>)
- [Individual Counseling](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling>)

Other student support services offered by UNT include

- [Registrar](https://registrar.unt.edu/registration) (<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration>)
- [Financial Aid](https://financialaid.unt.edu/) (<https://financialaid.unt.edu/>)
- [Student Legal Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services>)
- [Career Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center>)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- [UNT Food Pantry](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry) (<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry>)

Academic Support Services

- [Academic Resource Center](https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources) (<https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources>)
- [Academic Success Center](https://success.unt.edu/asc) (<https://success.unt.edu/asc>)
- [UNT Libraries](https://library.unt.edu/) (<https://library.unt.edu/>)
- [Writing Lab](http://writingcenter.unt.edu/) (<http://writingcenter.unt.edu/>)
- [MathLab](https://math.unt.edu/mathlab) (<https://math.unt.edu/mathlab>)

UNT Policies

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

ADA Policy

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA is now AIM) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for

every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the [ODA website](https://disability.unt.edu/) (https://disability.unt.edu/).

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Blackboard for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via in Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. Visit UNT's [Code of Student Conduct](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct) (https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct) to learn more.

Access to Information - Eagle Connect

Students' access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: my.unt.edu. All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student's Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward e-mail [Eagle Connect](https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect) (https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect).

Student Evaluation Administration Dates

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available during weeks 13, 14 and 15 [insert administration dates] of the long semesters to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey, they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the [SPOT website](http://spot.unt.edu/) (<http://spot.unt.edu/>) or email spot@unt.edu.

Sexual Assault Prevention

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, and therefore prohibit sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking, and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. UNT's Survivor Advocates can assist a student who has been impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change where appropriate, and connecting students to other resources available both on and off campus. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565- 2648. Additionally, alleged sexual misconduct can be non-confidentially reported to the Title IX Coordinator at oeo@unt.edu or at (940) 565 2759.

Important Notice for F-1 Students taking Distance Education Courses

Federal Regulation

To read detailed Immigration and Customs Enforcement regulations for F-1 students taking online courses, please go to the [Electronic Code of Federal Regulations website](http://www.ecfr.gov/) (<http://www.ecfr.gov/>). The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G).

The paragraph reads:

(G) For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken on-line or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes,

examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An on-line or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing. If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no on-line or distance education classes may be considered to count toward a student's full course of study requirement.

University of North Texas Compliance

To comply with immigration regulations, an F-1 visa holder within the United States may need to engage in an on-campus experiential component for this course. This component (which must be approved in advance by the instructor) can include activities such as taking an on-campus exam, participating in an on-campus lecture or lab activity, or other on-campus experience integral to the completion of this course.

If such an on-campus activity is required, it is the student's responsibility to do the following:

- (1) Submit a written request to the instructor for an on-campus experiential component within one week of the start of the course.
- (2) Ensure that the activity on campus takes place and the instructor documents it in writing with a notice sent to the International Student and Scholar Services Office. ISSS has a form available that you may use for this purpose.

Because the decision may have serious immigration consequences, if an F-1 student is unsure about his or her need to participate in an on-campus experiential component for this course, s/he should contact the UNT International Student and Scholar Services Office (telephone 940-565-2195 or email internationaladvising@unt.edu) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.

Student Verification

UNT takes measures to protect the integrity of educational credentials awarded to students enrolled in distance education courses by verifying student identity, protecting student privacy, and notifying students of any special meeting times/locations or additional charges associated with student identity verification in distance education courses.

See [UNT Policy 07-002 Student Identity Verification, Privacy, and Notification and Distance Education Courses](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-002) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-002>).

Use of Student Work

A student owns the copyright for all work (e.g. software, photographs, reports, presentations, and email postings) he or she creates within a class, and the University is not entitled to use any student work without the student's permission unless all of the following criteria are met:

- The work is used only once.
- The work is not used in its entirety.
- Use of the work does not affect any potential profits from the work.
- The student is not identified.
- The work is identified as student work.

If the use of the work does not meet all of the above criteria, then the University office or department using the work must obtain the student's written permission.

Download the UNT System Permission, Waiver and Release Form

Transmission and Recording of Student Images in Electronically-Delivered Courses

1. No permission is needed from a student for his or her image or voice to be transmitted live via videoconference or streaming media, but all students should be informed when courses are to be conducted using either method of delivery.
2. In the event an instructor records student presentations, he or she must obtain permission from the student using a signed release in order to use the recording for future classes in accordance with the Use of Student-Created Work guidelines above.
3. Instructors who video-record their class lectures with the intention of re-using some or all of recordings for future class offerings must notify students on the course syllabus if students' images may appear on video. Instructors are also advised to provide accommodation for students who do not wish to appear in class recordings.

Example: This course employs lecture capture technology to record class sessions. Students may occasionally appear on video. The lecture recordings will be available to you for study purposes and may also be reused in future course offerings.

No notification is needed if only audio and slide capture is used or if the video only records the instructor's image. However, the instructor is encouraged to let students know the recordings will be available to them for study purposes.