

LING 2050 — Language of Now

Fall 2026 Syllabus

Instructor	Matthew W. Finegan
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Class Days	Monday & Wednesday
Class Time	2:25 PM – 3:45 PM
Location	WH 115
Office Hours	MW 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM LANG 220 Online: by appointment

Course Description

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.

Materials

This course will make use of some online materials and features of Canvas, so please ensure you have access to a computer and internet connection outside of class (you can use the library computers).

Recommended Reading: *Because Internet* by Gretchen McCulloch. [This text is available online through the UNT library](#), so you do not need to purchase a hard copy.

Additional readings will be posted on the course Canvas site.

Contact

The best way to reach me outside of class is via **email**, though I also check my Canvas inbox. I attempt to respond to all emails by the end of the following business day (so if you email me on a Friday night, you might not get a response until Monday).

Evaluation

10 pts — Attendance & Participation

30 pts — In-Class Assignments

60 pts — Major Projects

Total: 100 points + up to 5 pts extra credit

Course Grades

A	≥ 90 pts
B	80 – 89 pts
C	70 – 79 pts
D	60 – 69 pts
F	≤ 59 pts

Attendance and Participation

Please make an attempt to attend class regularly and participate in class discussions and activities, and communicate with me in a timely manner if you need to miss class for any reason (illness, emergency, etc.). **Email** is preferred so that I have it on written record.

You will be allowed up to **three unexcused absences** without penalty. One point will be deducted from your participation grade for each additional unexcused absence.

If you need to miss class for religious observation, military service, university events, or other reasons outlined by [UNT Policy 06.039](#), these will be excused, but please give me advanced notice if possible.

In-Class Assignments

There will be **seven in-class assignments** given throughout the course of the semester. These will be conducted **on paper in-class** and worth **5 points** each. If you complete all seven, the last one will count as **extra credit**.

If you fail to attend class on the day an assignment is due, you will receive a **zero** on that assignment. I will allow **two "freebees"** to do it as homework and turn it in one week past the due date for no penalty. Other than this, I will not typically accept late work.

If the date of an assignment changes for any reason, an announcement will be given in class and posted on Canvas.

Major Projects

There will be **two major projects** assigned for this course, one due towards the middle of the semester and the other due at the end of the semester. There are no exams in this course; these projects will count as your mid-term and final and are each worth **30 points** towards your total grade. We will discuss the projects more in-depth closer to when they are due.

Projects will be turned in online on the night of their assigned due-date. I will allow submissions until 8AM the following morning. I may accept reasonable requests for extensions on a case-by-case basis. Please use [APA format](#) for your citations.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1 08/17 – 08/23	Syllabus & course introduction
Week 2 08/24 – 08/30	Slang Wednesday 08/26 (in class): Assignment 1
Week 3 08/31 – 09/06	Semantic shift
Week 4 09/07 – 09/13	Word & phrase construction <i>Monday 09/07: Labor day, no class</i>
Week 5 09/14 – 09/20	Word & phrase construction (cont.) Wednesday 09/16 (in class): Assignment 2
Week 6 09/21 – 09/27	Communication in the digital age + introduce mid-term project Wednesday 09/23 (in class): Assignment 3
Week 7 09/28 – 10/04	Social groups & generational differences
Week 8 10/05 – 10/11	Memes & emoji Wednesday 10/07 (in class): Assignment 4
Week 9 10/12 – 10/18	Mid-term project workshop & presentations Tuesday 10/13 (night): Mid-Term Project Due
Week 10 10/19 – 10/25	Mid-term project presentations (cont.)

Week 11 10/26 – 11/01	Language variation Wednesday 10/28 (in class): Assignment 5
Week 12 11/02 – 11/08	Language attitudes
Week 13 11/09 – 11-15	Language discrimination + introduce final project Wednesday 11/11 (in class): Assignment 6
Week 14 11/16 – 11/22	Flex week / catchup Wednesday 11/18 (in class): Assignment 7
Week 15 11/23 – 11/29	<i>Fall Break, no class</i>
Week 16 11/30 – 12/06	Full course review & final project workshop
Finals Week 12/07 – 12/13	Tuesday 12/08 (night): Final Project Due

Academic Integrity

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. For more information on the university's policy on academic dishonesty please consult the [UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

AI Policy

The use of generative AI tools / large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Claude, etc. on any assignment is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to using it to assist with writing and research assignments. Use of AI will result in a failing grade on the assignment in question.

No matter what a tech company will try to sell you, LLMs are predictive text generators, not knowledge bases or search engines. They output the most statistically likely string of words to respond to a prompt based on their training data, which means they cannot *reliably* produce accurate information or provide adequate citations. Outsourcing your work to an LLM means that not only are you compromising your academic integrity, but you are also missing out on the opportunity to develop your own writing, research, and critical thinking skills.

ADA Policy

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students needing a reasonable academic accommodations must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the student will request their letter of accommodation. ODA will provide faculty with a reasonable accommodation letter via email to begin a private discussion regarding a student's specific needs in a course. Students may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable 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 reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding their accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access website](#).

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.

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 Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Student Resources

- [Student Health and Wellness Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center)
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- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
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- [UNT Care Team](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care)
- [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)
- [UNT Food Pantry](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry) (https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry)
- [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)