

Course syllabus



Linguistics 2050.006

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

Fall 2025

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Meeting Days/Time: Tuesday/Thursday 11:00 -- 12:20

Meeting Place: Language Bldg 114

Office Hours: T/TH 9-10:30 and by appointment; Lang. bldg. 409L

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)

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.

Grades:

Assessment Type	Number	Grade Weight
Weekly Homework • Assignments • Discussions Posts • Quizzes	13	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.*

Week	Topic	Reading	Due
Week 1 Aug. 19 & 21	Course introduction; Intro lecture; What is linguistics?	Read article, “Gen-Z Slang Is Revolutionizing Work Jargon”	Quiz 1 Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.

Week 2 Aug. 26 & 28	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 Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 3 Sept. 2 & 4	Semantic Shift: amelioration, pejoration, broadening, narrowing, weakening	Readings week 3 (in Materials): Semantic shift.	Weekly Assignment Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 4 Sept. 9 & 11	Word formation processes; Select topics for Project 1: A Lexical Analysis	Readings week 4	Discussion post Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 5 Sept. 16 & 18	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 Opens Sept. 18 Closes Sept. 21 at 11:59 p.m. The practice test will be open Sept. 15-18, closing 1 minute before the Test opens.
Week 6 Sept. 23 & 25	Lexical analysis of LON terms; use spreadsheet	Sample projects from past semesters-evaluate; rough draft workshop	Discussion post Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 7 Sept. 30 & Oct. 2	Project 1 workshop and poster presentations	Rough drafts in class	Project 1 Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.

Week 8 Oct. 7 & 9	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 Oct. 14 & 16	Language Attitudes in the Language of Now	Readings in Module	(Project 2 assigned) Discussion post Due Sunday by 11:59
Week 10 Oct. 21 & 23	Social groups and generational differences; interview questions; Project 2 workshop	Readings in Module	Discussion post Due Sunday by 11:59 pm.
Week 11 Oct. 28 & 30	Memes and emojis: linguistic traits	<i>Because Internet</i> by Gretchen McCulloch, Chapter 5; digital resources UNT library catalog https://library.unt.edu/  (https://library.unt.edu/)	(Project 3 assigned) Project 2 Due Sunday by 11:59. Discussion post Due Sunday by 11:59 pm.
Week 12 Nov. 4 & 6	Gricean Maxims (rules of conversation); Speech Acts	Readings in module	Discussion post Due Sunday by 11:59 pm.

Week 13 Nov. 11 & 13	Discriminatory language and Microaggressions	Readings and presentation in module with loads of optional reading	Discussion post Due Sunday by 11:59 pm
Week 14 Nov. 18 & 20	Two topics: 1. Discriminatory language; 2. AI 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.	Topic 1: Quiz 4 Topic 2: Weekly assignment Due Sunday by 11:59 pm
Week 15 Nov. 24-28	Thanksgiving week	No class	No homework
Week 16 Dec. 2 & 4	Discriminatory language continued; Rough draft workshop; last week of class	Readings in Module 14	No homework
Finals week Dec. 8-12	No class		Project 3 Due Tuesday, Dec. 9 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 (<https://unt.instructure.com/courses/132963/files/33909658?wrap=1>)

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 Or original post only.	10 pts

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.