# LING 3020.001/002 Forensic Linguistics

Section 002 is for Honors College Students

Fall 2025

Instructor: Katie Crowder

Email: [sarah.crowder@unt.edu](mailto:sarah.crowder@unt.edu)

Teaching assistant: Matthew Finegan

Email: MatthewFinegan@my.unt.edu

Meeting time: Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-1:50

Meeting place: Language Bldg. 310

Office hours: Tues/Thurs 11:00-12:20 and by appointment; Language Bldg. 409L

Disclaimer: This syllabus and schedule are subject to change. I will post announcements about any changes I make. I leave room in our schedule for us to study a case occurring in real time.

## Course Description

This course investigates the role that language and linguistics play in legal, oral, and written discourse, specifically in the areas of semantics, pragmatics, discourse analysis and sociolinguistics. We will study how linguistic science can be explored and applied in legal settings. Case studies and practical real-world strategies, including criminal investigations, trial, and judicial procedure will provide an explicit connection between theory and practice.

The following questions will be addressed throughout the semester:

* What do forensic linguists do?
* What are the tools that forensic linguists employ and how do they use them?
* What kinds of crimes involve language evidence?
* What is the primary role of the forensic linguist in the criminal justice system?
* How do linguists apply their understanding of accent, dialect, and idiolect to forensic linguistics work?
* How have social media platforms, texting, and other forms of digital communication contributed to analysis in forensic linguistics?
* How do forensic linguists determine authorship and plagiarism?
* What is language ideology and how is it relevant to the work of forensic linguists?
* What is a linguistic fingerprint and how can you create one?
* What is the role of linguistic power and lack of power by attorneys, judges, plaintiffs, and jury members in the courtroom?
* What is the difference between a civil case and a criminal case and how does this impact the work for forensic linguists?
* How does forensic linguistics contribute to evidence gathering and interpretation?
* What is the relationship between forensic linguistics, social justice, and linguistic profiling?
* What role does AI play in forensic linguistics?

**Textbooks:**

**Recommended; available in UNT Library**

Olsson, John (2018) *More* *Wordcrime: Solving Crime with Linguistics.* Bloomsbury Academic.

Note: You do not need to order a textbook for this class. I have most of the textbooks we’ll use in our library as e-books. I will provide assigned readings here in Canvas, but you will also access online journals, databases, and texts through UNT libraries.

**Prerequisites:** There is no prerequisite for this course.

**Note:** This schedule is subject to change.

## Course Topics (Schedule)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week | Topic | Reading | Assignment |
| Week 1: Aug. 19 & 21 | Course overview; What do Forensic Linguists do? FL toolkit | Week 1 Readings  RWS Forensic Linguistics | Quiz 1  Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 2: Aug. 26 & 28 | Linguistic Fingerprint of the Unabomber Pragmatics-Speech Acts | Week 2 Readings and | Discussion post due Sunday by 11:59 pm |
| Week 3: Sept. 2 & 4 | Gricean Maxims; indirect language; politeness | Week 3 Readings | “Caught by His Commas” Quiz 2  Due Sunday by 11:59 pm |
| Week 4: Sept. 9 & 11 | Conversational Maxims; Conversational Strategies Used to Create Crimes | Week 4 Readings | Discussion post: video violating conversational maxims due by Sunday, 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 5: Sept. 16 & 18 | Ransom Notes  Ling Lab: JonBenet ransom note analysis | Week 5 Readings | Homework Assignment: Create a ransom note. Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.. |
| Week 6: Sept. 23 & 25 | Trademark Infringement | Week 6 Readings | Homework assignment: Trademark Dispute due Sunday by 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 7: Sept. 30 & Oct. 2 | Product Liability and Plain Language; bring a product label or picture of one to class on Tuesday. | Week 7 Readings | Project 1-Product Liability assigned; Discussion post: due Sunday by 11:59 pm |
| Week 8: Oct. 7 & 9 | Standard Language Ideology, Accent discrimination, court cases | “Accent, Standard Language Ideology, and Discriminatory Pretext in the Courts.” Rosina Lippi-Green | Quiz 3: Standard Language Ideology  due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.  Project 1 – Product Liability due Sunday by 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 9: Oct. 14 & 16 | Linguistic Evidence; transcription | Week 9 audio files | No homework this week |
| Week 10: Oct. 21 & 23 | Misconceptions about Language and Law | Week 10 reading: Shuy chapter | Homework assmt: Find an article, due Sunday by 11:59 pm |
| Week 11: Oct. 28 & 30 | Language and Power in legal contexts | Week 11 readings | Quiz 4 due Sunday by 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 12: Nov. 4 & 6 | Case Studies | *Wordcrime, More Wordcrime* John Ollson | Discussion post due Sunday by 11:59 p.m. |
| Week 13: Nov. 11 & 13 | Scambusters | PPT and “Fraud in Judicial System” as a language crime | Weekly assmt to be determined |
| Week 14: Nov. 18 & 20 | Planning final paper, selecting topics |  | No homework |
| Week 15: Nov. 24-28 | Thanksgiving break | No class or assignments |  |
| Week 16: Dec. 2 & 4 | Final paper rough draft workshop |  | Final project due Dec 8 by 11:59 p.m.  Honor’s paper due Thursday, Dec. 7 by 11:59 p.m. |
| Final Exams: Dec. 8-12 | Finals week; we don’t meet; no final exam | No final exam |  |

## Grade Breakdown

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Assessment Type | Number of Assignments | Grade Weight |
| Weekly Homework: Quizzes, Discussions Posts, & Assignments | 11-12 weekly assignments | 60% |
| Projects | 2 | 40% |

# Course Guidelines for Ethical Use of AI

### Part 1: Rationale

Generative AI tools are here to stay—they have enormous potential as learning tools and equal potential for harm, which is why we must use them thoughtfully, responsibly, and ethically. Denying AI’s utility, punishing or banning its usage, and attempting to eliminate it from academia serves no one. It is unrealistic, and even if that were possible, it would be a missed opportunity. The complexity and sophistication of AI is growing exponentially, its abilities expanding into a multitude of arenas. With knowledge, awareness, and skill, we can harness the potential that AI offers to augment learning while using our human brains to discern *when* and *how* to use it. This is the *why.*

### Part 2: Guidelines for responsible use of AI at UNT and in this class; AI tools overview

* UNT Libraries creates user guides and information on a variety of topics. This is an excellent overview of the AI chat tools that are available as well as guidance for using these tools.

[Academic Integrity and AI](https://guides.library.unt.edu/artificial-intelligence/AIstudents)

[AI tools overview](https://guides.library.unt.edu/artificial-intelligence/tools)

* In general, you can use AI for:
  + brainstorming
  + organizing new information
  + finding current and relevant events/examples that illustrate concepts we are learning
  + breaking down complex topics
  + cross-referencing course content using AI, only after you have engaged with the content
  + research and information (with limits)
* **You may not use AI for creating your projects/writing papers, responding to essay and discussion prompts, drawing conclusions, or problem solving.**
* You will critically evaluate AI’s output, checking its accuracy and utility. (for this I will create a rubric)
* You will evaluate its contribution or lack thereof to your learning.
* When using AI, you will openly disclose not only your use of it but also its efficacy, appropriateness, and limitations.
* For some assignments, you may provide an acknowledgement, e.g. “Some ideas and examples in this assignment were created by Chat-GPT.”
* For major projects, you will cite your source formally. Citation guide: [APA style](https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt)

### Part 3: Violations and unethical use of AI

I believe that students must have agency but also **accountability**; therefore, I have a process for addressing the misuse of AI. Upon identifying student work that appears AI generated beyond the guidelines of this class, I will meet one-on-one with the student, and together we will work towards restoration by:

* Addressing the root cause of the violation.
* Recognizing the harm (to academic integrity, the student, and our community of learners).
* Take responsibility.
* Make a plan for reparations.
* Take measures to adhere to AI usage guidelines more responsibly and ethically moving forward.
* *When I suspect your writing is not in your voice, I will provide you with feedback letting you know precisely that.*

### Part 4: Potential harms with AI usage

* Inaccuracy, unreliability, ineffectiveness, misinformation, hallucinations
* Reduced information integrity
* Safety and security concerns
* Negative environmental impact
* Biased and discriminatory information
* Improper disclosure of personal and proprietary information.

## Welcome to UNT!

As members of the UNT community, we have all made a commitment to be part of an institution that respects and values the identities of the students and employees with whom we interact. UNT does not tolerate identity-based discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. UNT’s full Non-Discrimination Policy can be found in the UNT Policies section of the syllabus.

### 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
* Speakers
* Microphone
* Plug-ins
* 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. Here are some general guidelines:

* While the freedom to express yourself is a fundamental human right, any communication that utilizes cruel and derogatory language on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law will not be tolerated.
* Treat your instructor and classmates with respect in any communication online or face-to-face, even when their opinion differs from your own.
* Ask for and use the correct name and pronouns for your instructor and classmates.
* Speak from personal experiences. Use “I” statements to share thoughts and feelings. Try not to speak on behalf of groups or other individual’s experiences.
* Use your critical thinking skills to challenge other people’s ideas, instead of attacking individuals.
* Avoid using all caps while communicating digitally. This may be interpreted as “YELLING!”
* Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm in emails or discussion posts as tone can be difficult to interpret digitally.
* Avoid using “text-talk” unless explicitly permitted by your instructor.
* Proofread and fact-check your sources.
* Keep in mind that online posts can be permanent, so think first before you type.

See these [Engagement Guidelines](https://clear.unt.edu/online-communication-tips) (https://clear.unt.edu/online-communication-tips) for more information.

## 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](mailto: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](file:///C:\Users\jdl0126\AppData\Local\Temp\OneNote\16.0\NT\0\Registrar) (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)
* [Multicultural Center](https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center) (https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center)
* [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
* [Pride Alliance](https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance) (https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance)
* [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) 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 the Blackboard 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](https://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](file:///C:\Users\jdl0126\AppData\Local\Temp\OneNote\16.0\NT\0\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](file:///C:\Users\jdl0126\AppData\Local\Temp\OneNote\16.0\NT\0\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](file:///C:\Users\jdl0126\AppData\Local\Temp\OneNote\16.0\NT\0\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](file:///C:\Users\jdl0126\AppData\Local\Temp\OneNote\16.0\NT\0\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, or 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](mailto: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.