

LING-UA 102: Research Seminar
Morphosyntactic Variation
Course Information and Policies

1. Course & instructor logistics

Time & place Tue./Thu. 9:30am–10:45pm, 10 Washington Pl., Rm. 104 and virtually over Zoom

Instructors	Dr. Laurel MacKenzie laurel.mackenzie@nyu.edu	Dr. Gary Thoms gst1@nyu.edu
Office hours	By appointment via https://calendly.com/laurel-mackenzie	By appointment (email)

2. Course description and goals

In this seminar, we'll study morphosyntactic variation, with a focus on varieties of English. Questions we'll investigate include: Which morphosyntactic phenomena are currently variable in the Englishes spoken today? Are any of them involved in change over time? Which linguistic and social factors shape morphosyntactic variation and change? How and why do different English-speaking communities differ in their production of morphosyntactic variation? Students will carry out their own study of morphosyntactic variation in one or more varieties of English (or some other language if appropriate resources are available), using existing corpora or data they collect themselves, and connect their findings to topics discussed in the course. To this end, students will learn basic techniques for the collection and analysis of sociolinguistic data, and will receive guidance on the research process.

This course is designed to equip you with the skills needed to carry out research into morphosyntactic variation. Through successfully completing this course, you will:

- gain exposure to cutting-edge research and debates in sociolinguistics and morphosyntax.
- develop skills in critically reading and writing about academic literature.
- learn how to develop and test linguistic hypotheses.
- gain currency with state-of-the-art technological tools for linguistic data collection and analysis.
- learn how to structure and present a rigorous linguistic argument supported with empirical data.

3. Course format

This is a seminar class, in which we will learn from each other through discussion of the papers we read and the issues they raise. Lecturing will be kept to a minimum.

- For this reason, participation in in-class discussion is essential. You'll be expected to ask, and answer, questions in class. If you are shy, meet with your professors outside of class to strategize about how you can participate in class in a way that you're comfortable with. If you are the

opposite of shy, please be mindful of your fellow students: if you've already spoken, wait a minute to give someone else a turn.

The majority of sessions for this class will be divided into two types:

- **Paper discussions**, for which you will be expected to come prepared having read an academic article and answered questions about it. Your answers to these questions must be submitted before class (ideally, by the end of the day before the discussion) and will be graded to comprise your homework grade.
- **In-class guided work sessions**, which are intended to give you the skills you need to complete the independent research project due at the end of the semester (on which see below). These sessions will cover a variety of topics: research methods in linguistics; hands-on tutorials with particular software, data sources, and analysis tools; reports on your project progress; general discussion and trouble-shooting. You will not be required to prepare anything to be graded for these sessions, though you may be asked to download or install software on your computer ahead of class.

Course materials (PDF readings, homework assignments, class plans) will be kept in a Google Drive folder which will be shared with enrolled students at the beginning of the semester.

4. Assignments & grades

Your grade for this course will be based on a combination of factors. The relative weight assigned in course evaluation is (approximately) as follows:

Class participation & attendance	20%
Homework assignments	40%
Presentation	10%
Final paper	30%

Instructions and deadlines for the presentation and final paper are available on Google Drive.

5. Course policies

5.1. Assignment submission, deadlines & extensions

Submit assignments via email to both Laurel and Gary. Assignments are due before class begins. Submission on the morning of the deadline is permitted, but we really recommend getting your work in the day before. It gives us a chance to read it before class, which enables us to incorporate your contributions into our plan for the class discussion. Additionally, sleep is important to your health and mental well-being, and this class probably isn't worth staying up all night for.

We are prepared to be flexible about deadlines and workload, given the extraordinary circumstances that we are all experiencing. If you're going to be late submitting an assignment, please email one or both of us to set up a meeting to work out a plan for completion. Some deadlines can't be extended because we'll discuss the answers to the assignment in class, so we'll either give you a make-up assignment, or calculate your grade without that assignment.

Expect the homework assignments for this class to take a few hours. Allow yourself plenty of time to work on them! Please plan ahead, comparing the syllabi for your courses now, to see when you have conflicting deadlines or difficult weeks. If things look impossible, please talk to Laurel and Gary with plenty of advance notice.

The very last day on which work for this course will be accepted is Friday, May 14. No extensions that go past this date will be granted in any circumstances.

5.2. Incompletes

A grade of Incomplete will only be granted in extraordinary circumstances, and never to a student who has completed less than 50% of the coursework by semester's end. A grade of Incomplete requires documentation. Medical documentation must be submitted through the Moses Center; it cannot be submitted directly to the professor.

5.3. Collaboration

You are welcome to discuss the homework assignments with other students, but you must each write up your submissions separately and in your own words, and you must indicate who you have collaborated with in the assignment. Collaboration on the final paper is not allowed.

5.4. Academic honesty

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated, and may result in a zero on an assignment. If you use any resource as you prepare your homework assignments or project, you must provide a scholarly citation for the resource.

5.5. Academic accommodations for students with disabilities

Please don't hesitate to talk to Laurel and/or Gary if there's anything we can do differently to better accommodate your learning needs.

Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, or learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities over the phone at 212-998-4980, in person at 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, or online at www.nyu.edu/csd.

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Syllabus

The syllabus is tentative. We may speed up, slow down, or move/change things as needed. However, the timing of the paper discussion days (and hence the homework due dates) is not likely to change, so you can put those dates in your calendar now.

Wk	Class	Assignment
1	Jan. 28: Introduction & background	HW1: Studying morphosyntactic variation (due 2/4)
2	Feb. 2: Studying linguistic variation Feb. 4: Studying morphosyntactic variation	HW2: Tagliamonte & Smith 2002 (due 2/11)
3	Feb. 9: Work session: AntConc, Buckeye Corpus Feb. 11: Paper discussion: Tagliamonte & Smith 2002	
4	Feb. 16: Work session: Scots Syntax Atlas Feb. 18: No class (Legislative Day: classes meet on a Monday schedule)	HW3: Jamieson 2020 (due 2/23)
5	Feb. 23: Paper discussion: Jamieson 2020 Feb. 25: Project progress reports & SCOSYA	
6	Mar. 2: Work session: progress reports, SCOSYA Mar. 4: Work session: Data analysis	HW4: Fisher 2018 (due 3/9)
7	Mar. 9: Paper discussion: Fisher 2018 Mar. 11: Work session: Data analysis, cont'd	
8	Mar. 16: Project work session Mar. 18: Project progress reports	
9	Mar. 23: Syntax interlude Mar. 25: Syntax interlude	HW5: Ecay & Tamminga 2018 (due 3/30)
10	Mar. 30: Paper discussion: Ecay & Tamminga 2017 Apr. 1: Project work session	

11	Apr. 6: Project work session Apr. 8: Data coding & analysis workshop	HW6: Smith & Holmes-Elliott to appear (due 4/13)
12	Apr. 13: Paper discussion: Smith & Holmes-Elliott to appear Apr. 15: Project progress reports	
13	Apr. 20: Data coding & analysis workshop Apr. 22: Stats workshop	HW7: Summarize & present on a paper relevant to your project (due 4/27)
14	Apr. 27: Student presentations Apr. 29: Project work session	
15	May 4: Project work session May 6: Student presentations	
16	(Exam period)	Final paper: due 5/13