

Syllabus

Linguistics 372

(call # 11717-9)

Language and Social Identity in the United States Spring 2004

Place:

Time:

Instructor:

Wes's Office:

Course Webpage:

GEC course: Social Sciences, Individuals and Groups; Social Diversity

Textbooks:

- *Word on the Street: debunking the myth of a "pure" standard English*, by John McWhorter
- *African American English: a linguistic introduction*, by Lisa J. Green
- *Jocks and Burnouts: social categories and identity in the high school*, by Penelope Eckert

Course objective:

The purpose of this course is threefold:

- i. investigating where you stand in the landscape of American language.
- ii. examining what social identity is, and what linguistic behavior has to do with it.
- iii. learning about a distinctive variety of American English known as Black English.

Course requirements:

Attendance: Attendance is not graded, but the readings, sadly, do not contain all of the material you will be responsible for knowing; the assignments may presuppose lecture material. Furthermore, failure to attend class is not an excuse for not knowing the homework assignment; should you miss class, you can always email me, or check the course webpage (see above). I provide office hours as a forum for discussion of material which you find confusing or particularly interesting; they are **not** intended to be a place for people who missed lecture to obtain a summary of what they missed.

Therefore, if you miss class, you had better make friends with someone who did not and takes good notes.

Readings: You will get the most out of the lecture if you do the assigned readings beforehand. By the end of each class meeting, the reading assignment (if any) will be written up on the board. If you miss a class, check the course webpage to see what readings were assigned.

Participation: This is 15% of your grade. The following behaviors on your part count as participation:

- i. asking or answering pertinent questions about the material being discussed.
- ii. coming to office hours to discuss anything in the course material that is interesting or confusing to you.
- iii. emailing me questions about the readings and lecture material.

Emails about the homework are welcome too, but you are encouraged to work out what you can on your own.

Homework: Homeworks are 50% of your grade. They are important.

They will usually be assigned at the end of class.

They will always be due at the beginning of class on the due date.

The purpose of the homeworks is to ensure that you grasp the course material—*not* to see if you are a genius, separate the wheat from the chaff, etc. Each homework will be worth from 1 to 5 points, and each turned in on time will receive a plus, check, or a minus depending on whether it displays a profound amount of understanding and effort, a satisfactory amount of understanding and effort, or neither. A check is full credit, and a minus is half credit. A plus gets you extra credit.

Late homework will be accepted for full credit (i.e. a check) at best, but **only if** you come to office hours, with your completed (late) assignment, and talk with me about it. You can turn in late homework without coming to office hours, but only for half credit at best, and there's no guarantee I'll get your late assignment graded before finals week.

Graffiti Project: As a class, we will undertake an informal survey of bathroom graffiti throughout the quarter. More details will be forthcoming; all that you need to know for now is that your participation will be worth 15% of your grade.

The midterm: There is no midterm exam for this course. I do not like grading midterms, and I'm told that people do not enjoy taking them, either.

The final: There is no sit-down final exam for this course, but there will be a take-home essay assignment worth 20% your course grade. It will be passed out the last week of class, and due near the end of finals week.

Students with Disabilities: Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor to arrange an appointment as soon as possible to discuss the course format, to anticipate needs, and to explore potential accommodations. The instructor relies on the Office of Disability Services for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies. Students who have not previously contacted the Office for Disability Services are encouraged to do so (614-292-3307; www.ods.ohio-state.edu).

Other things you should know:

Movies: Full participation in this course will require that you attend class every day that we meet, and on some of these days we will watch movies. Some of these movies will be rated R. If you happen to be uncomfortable viewing R-rated material, you should set up an appointment to talk with me as soon as possible.

Academic Misconduct: To state the obvious, academic dishonesty is not allowed. Cheating on tests or on other assignments will be reported to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct. The most common form of misconduct is plagiarism. Remember that any time you use the ideas or the materials of another person or persons, you must acknowledge that you have done so in a citation. This includes material that you have found on the Web. The University provides guidelines for research on the Web at <http://gateway.lib.ohio-state.edu/tutor/>.