Sociophonetics (LING 21720/31720)
Winter 2021
Updated 2/20/21

Synchronous Class: Tuesday & Thursday, 9:40–11:10, Central Time

Instructor: Jacob B. Phillips, Lecturer in Linguistics
Email: jbphillips@uchicago.edu  Pronouns: he/him/his

Coffee Hour: Monday, 12:00-1:00  One-on-One Meetings: by appointment

TA: Kat Montemurro, PhD Candidate in Linguistics
Email: kmontemurro@uchicago.edu  Pronouns: she/her/hers

Weekly Clinic: Friday, 12:40–1:30 Central Time

Course Description:

Language varies. And language varies non-randomly. In this class, we will study this structured and predictable language variation through the lens of sociophonetics. We will focus on the relationship between phonetic form and social factors such as speaking style and the background of the speaker. In particular, we will focus on how individuals use phonetic variation to create, perform, and perceive multifaceted identities. Additionally, we will ask how structured variation can lead to the emergence of language change.

In this course, we will build the phonetic and phonological foundation necessary to conduct and interact with sociophonetic research through lectures and practical exercises. Additionally, we will discuss new and innovative sociophonetic research as it connects to the different phonological categories and phenomena that we have introduced. The course will culminate in a term-long research project in which you collect and analyze your own sociophonetic research.

By the end of the quarter, you will be able to:

- transcribe speech narrowly, capturing individual and dialectal variation.
- interpret and critique the motivation, methods, and findings of state-of-the-art research.
- locate and interrogate phonetic variation in its social context.
- collect and interrogate your own sociophonetic data.

Course Structure:

This course will consist of twice weekly synchronous classes. In general, class on Tuesday will introduce background information through brief introductory lectures and open the floor for a discussion of the weekly readings. Class on Thursday will generally focus on technical skills and acoustic analyses. In addition, a weekly clinic will be held on Fridays to reinforce the technical skills covered each week. Students will be assessed through assignments, class presentations, active participation, and a term project.

Course Materials:

There is no required textbook for this course and weekly readings will be posted on Canvas. I
recommend the following guide to sociophonetics and some background readings will be pulled from it:


For this class you will need to familiarize yourself with some tools used in speech processing.

1. Praat, a speech analysis software developed at the University of Amsterdam. You can download Praat for free at: [http://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat/](http://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat/)

2. WebMaus, an online forced alignment platform developed at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. You can access WebMaus for free at: [https://clarin.phonetik.uni-muenchen.de/BASWebServices/interface](https://clarin.phonetik.uni-muenchen.de/BASWebServices/interface)

Please consult the Pages folder on Canvas for additional resources and links.

**Course Components & Grading:**

**Grade distribution:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class preparedness, attendance, and participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online discussion boards</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading presentation and discussion</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Project</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording and transcript</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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**Grade scale:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93.0–100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90.0–92.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.0–89.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83.0–86.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80.0–82.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77.0–79.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73.0–76.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70.0–72.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63.0–69.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>≤ 62.9%</td>
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**Participation:** Come to synchronous class and be prepared to participate in discussion sections or lab practica. This includes completing the relevant readings and installing and familiarizing yourself with any necessary software. Additionally, the participation grade includes the following two components:

- As part of your participation grade you will also be required to lead the class discussion of one of the readings. This includes preparing a brief (≈5 minute) overview to the paper and authors and identifying discussion questions for the class (≈20 minute). Undergraduate and masters students must submit their questions to me in email by Sunday at 11:59pm for a Tuesday discussion or Tuesday at 11:59pm for a Thursday discussion.
• Additionally, each week you will be required to post one thing you learned and one question that remains from each discussion reading on the Canvas discussion board. Your questions can be big or small, philosophical or methodological. I encourage you to respond to each others’ questions or pose your questions in response to others’ questions if you’re inclined. Posts are due by Sunday at 11:59pm for a Tuesday reading or Tuesday at 11:59pm for a Thursday reading.

Assignments: There will be three assignments that are open-resource and you may consult me, Kat, or your classmates. If you work with your peers on the assignment, you must write up your own solutions and acknowledge your collaborators. Assignments are due before the start of class on Thursdays.

Term Project: The class will culminate in a term project where you conduct a sociophonetic analysis on original data. There are five components to this grade, which are described in greater detail in the prompts.

1. The interview: You will conduct sociolinguistic interviews with a native Chicagooan of your choosing. The interviews must be audio-recorded (digitally) and archived (location of the archive TBD). Each interview will last about 30 minutes. The recordings are due Thursday, February 4 (Week 4) at the start of class. (15% of the final grade with the transcript)

2. The transcript: A transcript of the interview(s) and the accompanying forced-aligned textgrids are due Thursday, February 11 (Week 5) at the start of class. (15% of the final grade with the interview)

3. The proposal: A project proposal (1-2 single-spaced pages) on some phonetic aspects of Chicago English, to be negotiated with the instructor, using materials collected by you or other students in class, is due on Thursday, February 25 (Week 7) at the start of class. The proposal should outline the phenomenon to be addressed and why it is interesting, the data you will draw on to investigate it, and a brief description of the analytic approach you will take. The proposal should also include a preliminary reference list. For the proposal, presentation, and final paper, you may work alone or in groups of 2-3, with the scope of the project depending on the number of investigators. If working in a group, you will submit a single proposal. (5% of the final grade)

4. The presentation: In the final week of class (Week 9), you will present your term project to the class. You should plan on 10 minutes (plus an additional 5 minutes for each additional group member, i.e. 15 minutes for a group of 2 or 20 minutes for a group of 3) plus 5 minutes to field questions from your peers. You should have slides to share that illustrate your question, methods, and findings. (10% of the final grade)

5. The paper: The written report should be no longer than 10 single-spaced pages (excluding references) and submitted in PDF format by 11:59pm on Thursday, March 18. If working in a group, you should submit a single group paper and collaboration rubric. (20% of final grade)

Course Policies:

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, will not be tolerated in this course. While collaboration and consultation is encouraged, you must cite and acknowledge any materials you consult or aid you receive on assignments or projects, including the names
of peers with whom you collaborate on the assignments. Any suspected violations of academic integrity will be referred to the appropriate administrative body for adjudication.

**Accessibility:** I am committed to providing any accommodations recommended by Student Disability Services (SDS). Please contact me as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements and accommodations. However, please note that you do not need to be registered with an accessibility office to discuss possible accommodations or exceptions with me. This course is not more important than your physical or mental health, especially in a remote classroom during a pandemic.

**Climate:** My goal for this course is that it be a space that is safe for and respectful toward all participants regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, size, socioeconomic background, religion, physical or mental ability, or any other aspect of our identities. I view this as a mutual responsibility we have to each other. I am always open to correction and criticism in this area. If you do not feel comfortable speaking with me directly, you may speak with our TA Kat, the Director of Undergraduate Studies Professor Amy Dahlstrom, or the Director of Graduate Studies Professor Karlos Arregi.

**Technology:** During this period of remote learning, it is essential that you have the necessary technological tools to succeed. Specifically, this course is designed with the assumption that you will have a personal computer with video and streaming capabilities and the ability to download freely available software. If you require any assistance, you may contact the Bursar’s Office or you may contact me directly. If we are unable to equip you with the necessary equipment, Kat and I will work directly with you to make the necessary accommodations and adjustments.

**Land acknowledgement:** We acknowledge with respect the Myaamia, Illinois, and Potawatomi people on whose traditional, ancestral, and unceded land we work and whose historical relationships with that land continue to this day.

**Course Outline:**

This outline is living, breathing plan and may change throughout the quarter. Please check Canvas to see an up-to-date syllabus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic &amp; Assignment</th>
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| **Week 1** | **Tuesday, January 12:** What is sociophonetics  
  *Background reading:* Baranowski (2013) |
| | **Thursday, January 14:** Conducting a sociolinguistic interview |
| **Week 2** | **Tuesday, January 19:** Production – stop variation  
  *Background reading:* Foulkes et al. (2010) (Chapter 6 of textbook)  
  *Discussion reading:* Foulkes et al. (2005), Scobbie (2006) |
| | **Thursday, January 21:** Analyzing variation  
  *Assignment:* Assignment 1 due before start of class |
| **Week 3** | **Tuesday, January 26:** Production – fricative variation  
  *Discussion reading:* Stuart-Smith (2007), Zimman (2017) |
| | **Thursday, January 28:** Analyzing fricatives  
  *Assignment:* Assignment 2 due before start of class |
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic &amp; Assignment</th>
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| Week 4 | **Tuesday, February 2: Production – vowel basics**  
*Background readings:* Di Paolo et al. (2010) (Chapter 8 of textbook)  
*Discussion reading:* Hall-Lew et al. (2010) |
|        | **Thursday, February 4: Normalizing vowels**  
*Background reading:* Watt et al. (2010) (Chapter 9 of textbook) |
|        | **Tuesday, February 9: Production – vowel mergers and shifts**  
*Discussion reading:* Podesva et al. (2015), Wassink (2001) |
| Week 5 | **Thursday, February 11: TBD**  
*Assignment:* Term Project recording due before start of class |
| Week 6 | **Tuesday, February 16: Production – intonation and rhythm**  
*Background reading:* Yaeger-Dror and Fagyal (2010) (Chapter 10 of textbook)  
*Discussion readings:* Burdin et al. (2018), Newmark et al. (2016) |
|        | **Thursday, February 18: Production – voice quality and phonation**  
*Background reading:* Esling and Edmondson (2010) (Chapter 11 of textbook)  
*Discussion readings:* Podesva (2007), Yuasa (2010)  
*Assignment:* Term Project transcript due before start of class |
| Week 7 | **Tuesday, February 23: Perception – listener expectations**  
*Background reading:* Campbell-Kibler (2010)  
*Discussion reading:* Hay and Drager (2010)  
*Optional reading:* Nieldielzki (1999)  
*Thursday, February 25: Perception – context and social meaning**  
*Discussion readings:* Levon (2014), Pharao et al. (2014)  
*Assignment:* Term project proposal due at 11:59pm. |
| Week 8 | **Tuesday, March 2: Perception & Production: short-term accommodation**  
*Discussion reading:* Pardo et al. (2012)  
*Optional reading:* Babel (2012)  
*Thursday, March 4: Perception & Production: long-term changes**  
*Discussion reading:* Harrington et al. (2000)  
*Optional reading:* Sonderegger et al. (2017) |
| Week 9 | **Tuesday, March 9: Presentations**  
**Thursday, March 11: Presentations** |
| Week 10| **Thursday, March 18: Final paper** due at 11:59pm |
References


