

LING 3475-090/290: Language Myths (Online)

Fall 2023 / 3 credit hours

Teaching Team

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When & Where

This is a semester-long asynchronous online course, which does not have a specific in-person meeting time or location. It is *not* a self-paced course, and it is crucial that students plan and manage their schedules effectively to keep up with the course materials and due dates.

Course Description

This course investigates popular beliefs about language and discusses empirical studies concerning those beliefs. Students will learn to evaluate social science experiments, interpret quantitative data, and understand basic statistical concepts like hypothesis testing and statistical significance.

Overview

The goal of this course is twofold. First, we will examine the factual basis of many popular beliefs about language to see whether they are actually supported by empirical research. Second, we will learn to critically evaluate empirical findings from experiments conducted by linguists and other social scientists. Importantly, we will learn to interpret quantitative data and understand basic statistical concepts like hypothesis testing and statistical significance. Along the way, we will attempt to answer questions such as 'Do women talk more than men?' and 'Does texting make you a bad speller?' Assignments include exercises on data collection and statistical analysis. For the final project, students will conduct a small-scale empirical research project.

Prerequisites

The course does not have a prerequisite. All students are welcome, but the intended audience for this course is juniors and seniors in both linguistics and non-linguistics majors.

General Education and Bachelor Degree Requirement Designation

This course meets the **Social & Behavioral Science (BF)** requirement and the **Quantitative Reasoning B (QB)** requirement.

Required Textbook

- Kaplan, A. (2016). **Women Talk More than Men... And Other Myths about Language Explained**. Cambridge University Press (ISBN 978-1-107-44690-8).
- This textbook is available through the university's **Inclusive Access** program. On the Canvas course page, find the "**Bookshelf**" tab and you will be able to access an e-book version of the textbook. If you have questions about the Inclusive Access program, please reach out to inclusiveaccess@campusstore.utah.edu.

Required Technology

- You need a laptop or desktop computer with internet access in order to participate in this course. (A tablet computer is probably *not* sufficient to fully participate in the course.)
- For some assignments and the final project, students will need to use **Microsoft Excel**. Through the University of Utah, students have access to Microsoft Office products including Excel. Please visit <https://o365cloud.utah.edu/index.php> to install it on your laptop or computer.
- For virtual office hours, a webcam and microphone will be needed.

Course Goals

- Discuss the truth or falseness of several popular beliefs about language
- Describe the current state of our knowledge about language in several domains
- Understand basic statistical concepts like hypothesis testing and statistical significance
- Interpret tables and figures in published papers in social science
- Critically evaluate and interpret social science experiments in terms of study designs and findings
- Perform basic statistical analyses
- Present quantitative data succinctly and accurately
- Practice and improve data literacy skills

Course Details

Course Structure

- The course is organized into several modules. Each module focuses on one topic, and we will spend 1-2 weeks on each module. To keep the pace of the course steady, modules will become available incrementally throughout the semester.
- Please keep in mind that not all modules are created equal in terms of workload. Some may require more time and effort than others.
- Modules will typically consist of (a subset of) readings, videos, quizzes, discussion board activities, data collection and analysis assignments.
- Otherwise indicated, you should complete readings first, then watch videos, and then work on other learning activities.

Readings & Videos

- Readings will be mostly from the textbook
- Videos include mini-lectures and other online resources.
- Readings and videos are not officially assigned as assignments and are not attached with due dates, as they are not graded. Therefore, they do not show up on your Canvas to-do list.
- Nonetheless, you should make sure to complete these before doing other assignments. Set due dates for readings and videos for yourself. Readings and videos will help you successfully complete other assignments.

Discussion Board Activities

- You will be assigned to a discussion group of 5 to 8 students, and this discussion group will remain the same throughout the semester.
- Each module will have one or more discussion board activities, and grading may include both individual and group components depending on the activity.
- For each discussion board activity, you will need to write **a main post and at least two replies**. Replies are usually due one week after the main post. Note that **discussion replies do not show up on your Canvas to-do list**. It is your responsibility to keep track of the due dates for them.

- In order to successfully complete discussion board activities, read instructions carefully in terms of what the prompt is, how long your main post should be, and how (and when) to leave replies.
- Two missing (or the lowest scored) discussion board activities will be dropped from your final grade.

Reading Quizzes

- Each module will have one or more reading quizzes, and the questions are drawn from the readings and videos.
- You will be able to take each reading quiz twice, and the higher score will be recorded.

Interpreting Quantitative Results Quizzes (IQR Quizzes)

- Almost every module includes an IQR quiz. Here, you will interpret the results of linguistics experiments. The goal is to assess your ability to interpret tables, graphs, statistical significance, etc. and to evaluate study designs.
- Unlike reading quizzes, IQR quizzes do not allow multiple attempts. However, for each IQR quiz, you will have an opportunity to earn back points for the questions you missed by demonstrating your understanding of the materials.

Data Collection and Analysis (Data C&A)

- There will be five Data C&A assignments throughout the semester where you will be guided to collect language-related data and conduct basic statistical analyses.
- Each Data C&A includes two parts. In Part 1, you will do a data collection task; in Part 2, you will perform basic statistical analyses on the collected dataset and write-up your findings.
- **This group of assignments, especially Part 2 assignments, is crucial for your success in the course.** It takes up the largest portion of your final grade, and it will help you prepare for the final project.
- The first two C&As will carry a relatively smaller weight in your final grade than the last three. The intent is to provide a practice period in the earlier C&As.

Final Project

- At the end of the semester, you will collect and analyze language-related data on your own by extending one of the Data C&A assignments. There is a series of assignments for the final project including a proposal, presentation, and write-up.

Miscellaneous Activities

- In order to facilitate your learning, you may be asked to complete various tasks that are not formal assignments. These could include brief surveys, polls, and simple activities.

Experiment Participation

- Students are required to earn **2 credits** for participation in linguistics studies. Different studies offer different number of credits, so check before you sign up. Even if you earn more than 2 credits, only 2 credits will be counted. For more information and to sign up for linguistics studies, please visit <https://sites.google.com/view/speech-acquisition-lab/participate-in-experiments>.
- If you need accommodation of any kind, have a question about accommodation, and/or prefer to complete an alternative assignment for any reason, please create a Sona account and then email speechacquisitionlab@gmail.com. Arrangements for alternative assignments must be made before the semester's add/drop deadline.
- If no study appointments are available, check back later, as new appointments are added periodically.
- If you have any questions or concerns regarding the Linguistics Study Pool or the Sona sign-up system, please contact the Linguistic Study Pool coordinators at speechacquisitionlab@gmail.com.

Grading

- Reading quizzes: 16%
- IQR Quizzes: 16%
- Discussion board activities: 16%
- Data C&A: 25%
- Final project: 20%
- Miscellaneous: 5%
- Experiment participation: 2% (1 SONA credit = 1 %)

Grade Scale

94 – 100	A	74 – 76.9	C
90 – 93.9	A-	70 – 73.9	C-
87 – 89.9	B+	67 – 69.9	D+
84 – 86.9	B	64 – 66.9	D
80 – 83.9	B-	60 – 63.9	D-
77 – 79.9	C+	0 – 59.9	E

Course Policies

Communication

- Important communication, including weekly announcements, will be made through **Announcements on Canvas**. Please check your Canvas account's notification settings and make sure you are receiving announcements in your email.
- The best way to communicate with me is to send an email to seungkyung.kim@utah.edu.
- **When you have a non-sensitive question, please send your email to Ying Zhang, the course TA**, whose email is u1361304@utah.edu. She will forward your email to me if needed.
- When you email, please put **[LING3475]** at the beginning of the subject line. Prefixing subject lines like this is a good practice to help the receiver to recognize the nature of the email quickly.
- You can also use Inbox on Canvas to send a message to the teaching team.
- When you have questions that other students can also benefit from (e.g., about course schedules, content, and assignments), please post your question on the **Community Board on Canvas**. Make sure to subscribe to the Community Board (by clicking the white ribbon icon so that it turns green) in order to receive a notification when there is a new post on the Community Board.
- We will respond to your emails and questions within 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays).
- **Do not hesitate to request a meeting when you have any questions or concerns.**

Assignment Submission & Late Assignments

- All assignments must be submitted to Canvas. Email submissions are not allowed.
- In this course, most of the assignments will be due on **Tuesday at 11:59 pm**.
- Having a single due date is to provide you with predictability and consistency so that you can plan and manage your time effectively. Keep in mind that having a single due date means **multiple assignments are due on the same day**. Plan accordingly and set your own deadlines; you do not want to find yourself having to complete several assignments at once on a Tuesday evening.
- Read through an assignment as soon as it is posted and estimate how much time and effort will be required. Start early and do not wait until the last moment.
- **Do not solely rely on the Canvas to-do list.** It is your responsibility to keep up with readings and videos, and other assignments/activities that may be communicated through learning materials and announcements. For example, replies to discussion boards will not show up on the to-do list.

- Late submissions are allowed (**up to 48 hours**) with penalty (10% per 24 hours). Do not submit your work after the 48 hour window (even if an assignment is open). Work submitted after the 48 hour window will not be graded and receive no credit.
- If you experience medical/family emergencies, please contact me to discuss extension options.

Accommodation

Accommodations will be considered on an individual basis and may require documentation. Please contact me as soon as possible to request accommodation of any kind.

Academic Honesty and Integrity

It is expected that students adhere to University of Utah policies regarding academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. This includes the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools without citation, documentation, or authorization. Students are expected to adhere to the prescribed professional and ethical standards of the profession/discipline for which they are preparing. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty or who violates the professional and ethical standards for their profession/discipline may be subject to academic sanctions as per the University of Utah's Student Code: <https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-410.php>.

Department of Linguistics' Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

Our classrooms provide opportunities to embrace diversity and promote equity. As educators, we commit to engaging *all* students in higher education. This commitment requires that we are willing to listen, learn and change; that our classrooms challenge assumptions; and that all members of our community are responsible for creating and maintaining a safe space for learning and growth. Respectful debate and civil disagreement are encouraged and expected; mocking, belittling, and bullying will not be tolerated.

University Policies

The Americans with Disabilities Act

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability & Access, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability & Access.

Addressing Sexual Misconduct

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

University Safety Statement

The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.

Course Schedule

This is a general schedule and details can change. It is your responsibility to check Canvas frequently to keep updated with the most up-to-date information.

Week	Dates	Topic	Learning activities	Notes
0		Introduction	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus Do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz #0: Syllabus Quiz • Discussion #0: Introduce yourself 	
1	8/21 - 8/25	Basic statistics	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video(s) Do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz #1 • Discussion #1 	
2	8/28 - 9/1			
3	9/4 - 9/8	Standard & non-standard dialects	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch 2 Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video(s) Do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz #2 • Discussion #2 • IQR Quiz #1 • Data C&A #1 	9/4 (Mon): Labor Day Holiday
4	9/11 - 9/15			
5	9/18 - 9/22	Sign language	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch 3 Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video(s) Do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz #3 • Discussion #3 • IQR Quiz #3 • Data C&A #2 	
6	9/25 - 9/29			
7	10/2 - 10/6	Language & animals	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch 4 Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video(s) Do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz #4 • Discussion #4 • IQR Quiz #3 	

8	10/9 - 10/13	Fall Break		No assignments will be due during Fall Break.
9	10/16 - 10/20	Language & technology	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch 9 Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video(s) Do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz #5 • Discussion #5 • IQR Quiz #4 • Data C&A #3 	
10	10/23 - 10/27			
11	10/30 - 11/3	Aesthetics of language	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch 10 Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video(s) Do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz #6 • Discussion #6 • Data C&A #4 	
12	11/6 - 11/10			
13	11/13- 11/17	Language & gender	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch 8 Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video(s) Do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz #7 • Discussion #7 • IQR Quiz #5 • Data C&A #5 	11/23 - 24 (Thu - Fri): Thanksgiving holidays
14	11/20 - 11/24			
15	11/27-12/1	Final project workshop		
16	12/4 - 12/8	Wrap Up		12/6 (Wed): Final project presentation due at 11:59 pm 12/7 (Thu): Last day of class 12/8 (Fri): Reading Day
Finals	12/12 (Tue): Final project write-up due at 11:59 pm			