

**Diversity in American Speech & Language FALL 2012 Syllabus**  
**SUNY Rockland Community College**

**Course Information**

Course Number: SPE 223 / PDA 223  
Course Title: Diversity in American Speech & Language  
Credits: 3  
Meets: TR 3:00 – 4:15  
Room: 2200  
Angel: <https://sunyrockland.sln.suny.edu>

**Contact Information**

Instructor: (Chaya) Rachel Nove  
Office: 2210 (Academic II, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor)  
Office Hours: MW 9:00 – 10:00 & 11:00 – 12:00  
TR 10:00 – 11:00 & 12:30 – 1:30  
(or by appointment)  
Email: [cnove@sunyrockland.edu](mailto:cnove@sunyrockland.edu)  
Phone: 574-4543

**Course Description**

This course is a general introduction to pluralism and diversity in American speech communication. Elements of speech such as accents (or dialect), word choice, and communication strategies are often influenced by factors such as our racial, religious, ethnic, sexual, class and regional identities. As a result, people in the U.S. speak many varieties of English and other languages. These varieties of speech and language not only reflect but also help constitute ethnic and cultural identities. This course will explore American speech and language through the lens of ethnic and cultural identity.

This course is also a good survey of the discipline of speech communication. Readings focus on wide range of communicative settings from interpersonal communication to public address (the study of public speaking) to mass media. The readings draw on a variety of other disciplines, methodologies and theoretical approaches such as sociolinguistics, rhetoric, ethnography and semiotics.

**Textbook:** There is no textbook required for the course. Readings will be available on Angel, through the library, library databases or distributed in class.

**Technology:** RCC uses Angel as a Learning Management System (LMS). When you register for a class you are automatically given an Angel account. You will use your RCC email login (username and password) to log on to Angel. Course readings and other relevant materials will be posted on Angel. You may also be required to participate in online discussions/forums and to post assignments on Angel. It is therefore extremely important that you become familiar with this platform at the start of the semester. I will conduct an in-class demonstration on how to log on to your Angel account during the first week of the semester. After this demonstration it is assumed that you have access to Angel. You can direct all further questions to the RCC IT department. Please note: private communications should be sent to my email address and not via Angel.

Additionally, we will utilize **Twitter** for communicating about class content. You will be required to create a Twitter account in order to participate.

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**Topics**

**Unit 1: Speech and Language**

In this unit we will explore the concept of language. What makes a symbol system a language? What kind of diversity is there within language groups (we will examine dialects, pidgins, creoles, and slang among other sub-groups). How does speech differ from language? We will learn about Jewish English, Spanglish and Black English (AAVE).

**Unit 2: The Rhetoric of Identity**

We will explore the concept of identity and investigate how speech and language reflects and helps constitute identities. We will look into the debate about what it means to be a Jew, explore how Blacks have named themselves throughout American history and explore terms lesbians use for self-identification.

**Unit 3: Identity and the Rhetorics of Silence**

In this unit we will examine a number of culturally distinct “speech communities” and unpack the cultural logic of their speech. These speech communities will include, the Deaf, white middle class women, and working class men in the Midwest. Silence plays an important role in each communicative culture. We will try to understand how refraining from certain kinds of communication makes one more fully a member of the community.

**Unit 4: Rhetorical Strategies for Dealing with Power and Domination**

In the fourth unit will study how communication functions between (sub)cultures. In particular we will examine how dominant and non-dominant groups use communication to impose and resist domination. We will study Aztecs resisting Spanish imposition of Catholicism, a white Southern politician trying to please Americans in both the North and the South, and gay representations in TV and movies.

**Student Learning Objectives**

As a result of successfully completing this course, the student will be able to:

- Define basic terms in sociolinguistics such as language, dialect, creole, and pidgin and be able to use them appropriately
- Understand and explain why dialects of English such as Black English are considered to be “legitimate” varieties of English.
- Understand how racism, sexism and prejudice may be reflected in attitudes about language varieties
- Understand and explain some of the history of the development of English and other European vernaculars
- Understand and explain how imperialism and nationalism (or national anxieties) are related to the push for official languages and the standardization of languages.
- Understand how socioeconomic class influences language orientation.
- Recall basic demographic information related to identity groups and language use in the United States of America and the world.
- Understand and explain how religious, racial, sexual, class, and other group identities, are constituted through language and other symbols in groups such as Jews, African Americans, lesbians, white working class men, the Deaf, Catholics and Aztecs.

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- Define acculturation and assimilation and explain the differing visions of society that are premised on encouraging either assimilation or acculturation.
- Explain how separatist and assimilationist tendencies are reflected in language use.
- Explain why some people consider language varieties such as sign language and Black English to have aesthetic value
- Describe the controversy surrounding the so called different cultures thesis – that men and women generally use different language and communication strategies.
- Explain the controversy surrounding sign language use and the Deaf culture movement
- Understand how groups appropriate language as part of a strategy to dominate others or to resist domination.
- Explain communicative strategies used in power struggles such as resistive appropriation, cooptive appropriation, resistive reading, strategic ambiguity and hermeneutic depth.
- Explain how sexism, anti-gay prejudice and gay invisibility sometimes function in the media
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**Grading**

Your final grade will consist of four graded elements (A. Four exams, B. In-class quizzes and occasional written assignments, C. Discussion leadership, and D. Class participation). Please note that answers on all assignments (except research papers) should come from lecture or assigned sources *not* from outside sources.

**A. Three Exams (20% each for a total of 60%)**

Four exams will be administered. You can opt out of one exam without penalty, or take all four exams and receive extra credit. The exams will be essay and/or short answer. A review sheet will be handed out at least one class period prior to the test.

**C. Discussion Leaders (20%)**

During the first week of the semester each student will sign up to lead a discussion on a particular section of a unit. Working in small groups, you will complete the assigned reading, summarize it and prepare a 20-minute discussion activity for the class. You will receive a letter group grade for this assignment (guidelines and rubric will be provided).

**B. Quizzes and written assignments (10%)**

In-class quizzes will be multiple-choice and will be based on the day's reading assignment. Written assignments may include out-of-class fieldwork, case studies or reflection papers based on assigned readings, lecture, or other topics.

**D. Class participation (10%)**

You must complete the daily assigned readings. If you don't read you will fail the course, it is that simple. You will prepare one multiple-choice question for each assigned reading and hand it in or post in online on the day the reading is due. Class participation (both in-class and online) will be measured by *my perception* of your constructive participation in class activities and discussion. Be aware that this portion of your grade is completely dependent on my subjective view of your participation. I expect that students will be cordial and respectful of others at all times.

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**Electronic Devices**

Cell phones and laptops are great tools, however they have limited use within the classroom. Use of these electronic devices at inappropriate times is both disruptive and rude. Laptops (but not cell phones) may be used for note-taking during class lectures. They should NOT be used for Internet access unrelated to class activity. They should NEVER be used while a student or group is presenting. Cell phone use is not permitted at any time in the classroom, in either text or audible mode (unless they are required for a class activity, as specified by your instructor). Your phone should be turned OFF (not set to vibrate) while you are in class. If you are expecting an emergency phone call, please let me know before class begins. You can then set your phone to vibrate and sit close to the door so that you can leave quickly and quietly if necessary. Students seen using cell phones or laptops inappropriately will be reminded once of this policy. Continued cell phone use may result in an absence being recorded, dismissal from class, or my holding of cell phones until the end of class. **Students who continuously flout these rules should expect a reduced final grade or an F.**

**Extra Credit**

There will be 7 page extra credit paper option. At least some topic choices will be based on the assigned readings.

**Attendance**

You are allowed 3 unexcused absences. Two lates equal an absence. Each additional absence will lower your final mark one full letter grade (An A becomes a B etc.) Your active participation is essential for the success of this course. If you have a medical condition or other problem that may cause additional absences, please let me know in advance. If you are asked to leave the class, it will count as an absence.

**Inclement weather:** You may call (845) 574-4034 for closing or delay information.

**Assignment Deadlines**

All assignments must be completed by the date due. Students should not expect late assignments to be graded. Exceptions will be granted solely at my discretion.

**Academic Dishonesty**

*Academic dishonesty is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. DO NOT DO IT.* Below is the policy for academic dishonesty as per the SUNY Rockland student handbook:

- “1. Academic Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to the following:
- a. Cheating on examinations.
  - b. Plagiarism, i.e.: the use of words or ideas of others, whether borrowed, purchased or otherwise obtained, without crediting the source.
  - c. Submitting work previously presented in another course.
  - d. Willingly collaborating with others in any of the above actions which result(s) in work being submitted which is not the student's own.
  - e. Stealing examinations, falsifying academic records and other such offenses.
2. If the instructor deems that a student is guilty of cheating or plagiarism, the instructor may initiate disciplinary action through the Dean of Students, and/ or may:
- a. Require that the student repeat the assignment or the examination.

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- b. Give the student a failing grade for the assignment or examination.
  - c. Give the student a failing grade in the course and deny the student continued access to the class.
  - d. The instructor should advise the Dean of Students, in writing, of any of these actions.
3. If the student wishes to appeal the above decision, he/ she may request in writing a hearing before a Hearing Committee.”

If any work is called into question you must be able to demonstrate to my satisfaction that the work was produced in accordance with the academic code of conduct. Note that the burden of proof is on the student (so for example, a student may have to prove to my satisfaction that the sources cited in her/his paper were sufficient to create the entire piece of work in accordance with the academic code of conduct).

**Changes in Course Policy**

If I want to change a course policy outlined in this syllabus I will only do so if a majority of students who are present in class on the day the vote is taken approve it.

**Accessibility Services (AS)**

RCC is committed to providing qualified students with disabilities equal access to all programs, services and facilities in compliance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the American with Disabilities Act. If you believe you will need accommodations to succeed in this class, you are strongly encouraged to contact Accessibility Services (AS) located in the Tech Center, RM 8150, (845) 574-454. Services are available to students with documented disabilities and are individualized based upon disability documentation, functional limitations and assessment of student’s needs without compromising academic standards.

**Book Loan Funds**

The financial aid office and the student senate may loan students money to buy textbooks. Don't fall behind in the reading. Take advantage of these funds if need be.

**Downloading Class Readings**

Many of the assigned readings are available online through the RCC Library. To access these articles from home you must have an RCC email address. Go to: <http://www.sunyrockland.edu/contact/webmail> to activate your student email account. You can save the files to your computer and print them (usually this requires the Adobe Acrobat Reader: <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>).

**Directions to the RCC Library Databases**

1. From the SUNY Rockland home page click on “Academics,” then click “Library” then click information resources then click databases.

Or go directly to:

<http://www.sunyrockland.edu/academics/library/information-resources/database-list/>

Click on the appropriate database (usually Ebsco).

2. If off-campus, enter your user name and password

3. Then select the database within this database (usually Academic Search Elite)

4. Search by the article name or author (article name often works best).

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**Course Outline, Readings and Assignments**

Note: Readings are due on the day listed. Assignments and schedule are subject to change.

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics and Readings</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
<b>1</b>	Sept 4	Introductions (questionnaire) Logging on to Angel / Using Twitter How to Read for Class	
<b>Unit 1: Speech and Language</b>			
	Sept 6	Readings for: "Dialect," "Pidgin," "Creole Language," "African American Vernacular English (wikipedia – until section on Educational issues)," Speech Community, and "Jewish English" <b>Note:</b> SAE stands for Standard American English, SE = Standard English	
<b>2</b>	Sept 11	1) Continue discussing articles from last class and 2) Academic Ignorance and Black Intelligence by William Labov	
	Sept 13	The Gravitas of Spanglish by Ilan Stavans (database: Ebsco: Academic Search Elite)	Quiz #1
<b>3</b>	Sept 18	<b>NO DAYTIME CLASSES (Rosh Hashanah)</b>	
	Sept 20	1) Continue discussing The Gravitas of Spanglish by (database: Ebsco: Academic Search Elite) 2) The Hispanophobia of the Official English Movement in the US by Ana Celia Zentella (database: Ebsco: Communication & Mass Media Complete) <b>Optional:</b> The Melting Pot: Immigration in America by Bill Bryson (H). "Ethnics Against Ethnicity," in The Journal of American History by Jonathan Zimmerman	
<b>4</b>	Sept 25	To be announced	Quiz #2
	Sept 27	<b>Review for Test #1</b>	
<b>5</b>	Oct 2	<b>Test #1 (proctor)</b>	
<b>Unit 2: The Rhetoric of Identity</b>			
	Oct 4	American Jews and the Problem of Identity by Edward S. Shapiro (database: Ebsco: Academic Search Elite) <b>Optional:</b> Latino vs. Hispanic: The politics of ethnic names by Linda Martin Alcoff (database: Ebsco: Academic Search Premier)	
<b>6</b>	Oct 9	<b>CLASS CANCELLED:</b> Watch American Tongues (online?) and answer questions	
	Oct 11	Theorizing the Postcoloniality of African American English. By M.B. Zeigler and V. Osinubi (database: Database: Ebsco: Academic Search Elite ) <b>Optional:</b> Columbus and Western Civilization by Howard Zinn <a href="http://www.zmag.org/crisesecurevts/columbus_western.html">http://www.zmag.org/crisesecurevts/columbus_western.html</a> (pardon their typos, it's a good piece anyway)	
<b>7</b>	Oct 16	Changing Racial Labels by Tom W. Smith (database: Ebsco: Academic Search Elite)	Quiz #3
	Oct 18	To be announced	
<b>8</b>	Oct 23	Chapter 12: Lesbian History and the Politics of Identities by Susan Hafen	
	Oct 25	1) Chapter 11: Cultural and Intercultural Speech Uses of the term	Quiz #4

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		Nigga by Fong and McEwen 2) Appropriating a Slur: Semantic looping in the African American Usage of 'Nigga' <a href="http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0208/semantic.php">http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0208/semantic.php</a> by Andrew Jacobs 3) Language vs. Power by Andrew Jacobs	
<b>9</b>	Oct 30	Continue discussing, Appropriating a Slur <b>Optional:</b> Audre Lorde Sister Outsider	
	Nov 1	Review for Exam #2	
<b>10</b>	Nov 6	To be announced	
	Nov 8	Exam #2	Exam #2
<b>Unit 3: Identity and the Rhetorics of Silence</b>			
<b>11</b>	Nov 13	1. Defiantly Deaf by A. Solomon (Database: Lexis Nexis) 2. Watch this 5 minute video by Wayne Betts Jr. Click on the link that says, Watch a Clip of Vital Signs: <a href="http://www.pbs.org/weta/throughdeafeyes/about/filmmakers.html#videos">http://www.pbs.org/weta/throughdeafeyes/about/filmmakers.html#videos</a> <b>Optional:</b> "Educational Colonialism" and "'Kill the Indian and Save the Man:' Capt. Richard H. Pratt on the Education of Native Americans"	
	Nov 15	"Gendered Verbal Communication" by Julia Wood "Sex, Gender and Communication" by Andrew Jacobs (unpublished Word document)	
<b>12</b>	Nov 20	Speaking "Like a Man" in Teamsterville: Culture Patterns of Role Enactment in an Urban Neighborhood. by Philipsen (Database: Ebsco: Communication and Mass Media Complete) <b>Optional:</b> Chapter 10: Pahiwatig: The Role of "Ambiguity" in Filipino American Communication Patterns Review sheet for Exam #3	Quiz #5
	Nov 22	<b>NO CLASSES (Thanksgiving)</b>	
<b>13</b>	Nov 27	Review for Exam #3	
	Nov 29	Exam #3	Exam #3
<b>Unit 4: Rhetorical Strategies for Dealing with Power and Domination</b>			
<b>14</b>	Dec 4	Chapter 7: She Speaks to Us, for Us, and of Us: Our Lady of Guadalupe as a Semiotic Site of Struggle and Identity by Westerfelhaus	
	Dec 6	Polysemy: Multiple Meanings in Rhetorical Criticism by Ceccarelli (Database: Ebsco: Communication and Mass Media Complete) Review sheet for Exam #4	
<b>15</b>	Dec 11	Reinventing Privilege: the New (Gay) Man in Contemporary Popular Media by Shugart (Database: Ebsco: Communication and Mass Media Complete) <b>Note:</b> We will focus on the sitcom Will & Grace. If you haven't seen the show, watch some clips online. Review for Exam #4	
	Dec 13	Exam #4	Exam #4
<b>16</b>	Dec 18	To be announced	
	Dec 20	Make up day	

*Have a good winter break!*

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**Important Dates – Fall 2012**

Saturday, September 1	Day/Evening Classes Begin
Monday, September 3	No day/eve classes Offices Closed
Friday, Sept. 7	Last day for 75% refund  Last day to add day/eve classes
Friday, Sept. 14	Last day for 50% refund
Sunday - Monday Sept. 16-Sept 17	No day/eve classes
Tuesday, Sept. 18	No day classes – <b>Evening classes will meet</b>
Friday, Sept. 21	Last day for 25% refund. Last day to drop w/o a grade. Last day to apply for December graduation.
Tuesday, Sept. 25	No eve classes
Wednesday, Sept. 26	No day/eve classes
Monday, October 8	Classes in session
Friday, October 26	Last day to withdraw from a course w/o a failing grade. Last day to file pass/fail or audit forms in the Records Office Last day to finish an incomplete (I) from spring or summer
Tuesday, October 30	No eve classes
Sunday, November 11	Classes in session
Thursday- Sunday Nov. 22-Nov.25	No day/eve classes; Offices Closed
Friday, December 21	Last day of classes