Course Description

This course will introduce students to an anthropological perspective on the relationship between language and gender. We will analyze how language emerges from, reproduces, and sometimes challenges gender ideologies and gendered practices in all societies. When women and men as gendered subjects communicate (and occasionally miscommunicate) with members of their own and the opposite sex, what patterns are visible in their communication styles, what are the causes and consequences of these patterns, and how do their meanings differ across cultures? We will also consider how other aspects of an individual's identity, such as race, ethnicity, class, age, and sexual orientation, articulate with gender in linguistic interactions.

Requirements

There will be two short essays, a final exam, and four unannounced pop quizzes on the readings. Only your three best quizzes will count. Final grades will be calculated according to the following percentages:

- Pop quizzes (10% each)  30%
- Essays (20% each)  40%
- Final exam  30%

No credit will be given to students who are absent on the days of the pop quizzes, and there will be no make-ups for the quizzes, since only the best three of the four quizzes will count. There will be penalties for essays turned in late. The final exam is scheduled for 8:00 – 11:00 a.m. on Friday, May 10th. There will be no make-ups for the final exam except in extreme emergencies (which do not include prior travel plans).
Readings

The following three anthologies have been ordered for the course. They can be purchased at Recto & Verso Bookstore, 90 Albany Street, New Brunswick (732-247-2324), and will be on reserve at the Alexander Library:


Of these three books, the first (edited by Coates) is the source of most of our readings and is therefore the most essential book to buy. The second book (edited by Hall and Bucholtz) is the source of two important readings and also the reading you will choose yourselves for your second essay. The third anthology (edited by Tannen) is an optional source of supplementary readings for extra credit.

We will be watching two videos, “Killing Us Softly III” and “Sex and Justice: The Highlights of the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas Hearings.” If you miss the classes in which these videos are screened, you are responsible for viewing them on your own. They will be on reserve in the Douglass Library Media Center in the basement of Douglass Library.

Although this class has too many students to be considered an intimate seminar, you will have many opportunities to ask questions and engage in debate, both in small groups and as an entire class. Participation will improve your overall grade, as will regular attendance and respectful listening (both to the professor and to your classmates). And remember, the only dumb question is the one you don’t ask.

Daily Reading Assignments (Please complete before the class meeting indicated.)

Unit One: Theoretical Models

Tuesday, 26 March
Introductory lecture; no reading assignment

Friday, 29 March
Eckert, Penelope and Sally McConnell-Ginet, “Communities of Practice: Where Language, Gender, and Power All Live,” in Coates, pp.484-494.

Unit Two: Nonverbal Communication

Tuesday, April 2
Unit Three: Explanatory Models

Friday, April 5

Tuesday, April 9
Troemel-Ploetz, Senta, “Selling the Apolitical,” in Coates, 446-458.

Unit Four: Gossip, Femininities, and Masculinities

Friday, April 12
Pilkington, Jane, “‘Don’t Try and Make Out that I’m Nice’: The Different Strategies Women and Men Use when Gossiping,” in Coates, pp.254-269.

Tuesday, April 16
No assignment – first essay due.

Friday, April 19

Unit Five: Silence and Silencing

Tuesday, April 23

Unit Six: Resistance?

Friday, April 26
Hall, Kira, “Lip Service on the Fantasy Lines,” in Hall and Bucholtz, 183-216.

Tuesday, April 30

Friday, May 3
No assignment – second essay due. Review for final exam.