

FEATURED LINGUISTICS COURSES – Spring 2027

Ling 213: Topics in Sociolinguistics – Things You Can't Say

Honors optional

Professor Kelly Wright

TR 9:55-10:45 + T Discussion section

Social Science or Humanities

Things You Can't Say is a class about *bad* words—what they are, and what processes all languages share with respect to them. This is a class on how a word becomes *inappropriate*, about the ways *naughty* words operate in the brain. This is a class on what it means to stipulate what people can or cannot say, and how that control extends through spoken, written, and signed language—and across the lifetime. Indeed, some of the language considered *offensive* in our society mere decades ago is now considered utterly mundane—and vice versa. We will investigate what kinds of topics or words are typically considered to be *taboo* or *of -limits* and how bans on *blue* language are enforced. In so doing, we'll discover that what is considered *profane* is determined by social and cultural norms, situational expectations, and individual preferences, habits, & identities; we will consider the similarity of linguistic operation beneath that dynamism. We will also discuss the cognitive paths of *obscenity*, and the psychological and physiological consequences of processing *harmful* language. The goal of this class is to take the *unmentionable* and *illicit* as an inherently interesting lens through which we may learn about human linguistic capability and creativity. *Swearing* is, scientifically and socially, cool. We will approach Things You Can't Say from the viewpoint of multiple disciplines that concern themselves with the study of Language and its use, including Linguistics, Neurobiology, Anthropology, Psychology, Literature, Rhetoric, and The Law. Students will have the opportunity to engage in self-directed research on a *pejorative* word of their choosing, and will have the space to present that research to our classroom community.

Ling 303: Historical Linguistics

Honors optional

Professor Joe Salmons

MWF 12:05-12:55

Understanding language change; relation of variation and change to formal properties of human language; consideration of linguistic typology, basic concepts and methods of diachronic analysis. Topics include: language classification and reconstruction; language and social identity, geography, and power; language contact; registers; writing systems.

Requisite: Ling 101/301, Eng 417, Asian 631, German 650, Spanish 429, OR Scan Studies 415

Ling 373: Topics - Computational Linguistics

Professor Jacqueline Brixey

TR 1:00-2:15

We live in an era where we talk to our devices, and they talk back. But how does a computer actually "understand" a sentence? This course introduces the tools and techniques used to make computers process human language. We will explore how computer programs translate between languages, create text from speech, and categorize billions of data points. We will cover a broad range of methods, not just generative AI, to give you a complete overview of the field. No previous knowledge of programming is required for this interdisciplinary course.

Requisite: Ling 101/301

Ling 373: Topics - Historical Sociolinguistics New Topic!

Honors optional

Professor Joe Salmons

MW 2:30-3:45

Still a young field, historical sociolinguistics is the application and development of sociolinguistic theories, models, and methods for the study of historical language variation and change over time (NARNiHS.org). Historical written documents don't just provide us with linguistic data, like verb forms and word order, but also tell us about the writers and how they positioned themselves in their social networks, how their writing varied according to who they were corresponding with, language attitudes and ideologies, and much more. In this course, you'll do hands-on work with historical documents to learn what they can tell us about sociolinguistics, language variation and language change in the communities they come from.

Requisite: Ling 101/301

See our [Upcoming Courses](#) page for the full list of linguistics courses offered across campus!