

# Ling 280 Interdisciplinary Topics in Linguistics: The Language of Social Media

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## Instructor

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Wednesdays, 10:30-11:20 am (or by appointment)

## Teaching Assistant

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Tuesdays, 12 noon – 1 pm

## Course Overview

The course examines the characteristics of language use in social media. We will study the adaptation of face-to-face conversation to the constraints of online interactions, and how paralinguistic aspects (intonation, gesture, facial expressions) are conveyed. Special attention will be given to the opinionated nature of much online interaction, and the role that figurative language (metaphor, irony, sarcasm) plays in conveying opinion. Other topics will include the features of different types of online genres, multilingualism, and the discourse structures specific to communication through social media.

**Warning:** Some of the material we will be discussing in this class is offensive.

## Course Materials

All readings and other course materials will be available through Canvas.

## Course Grade

The final grade will be calculated according to the percentages below.

COMPONENT	WEIGHT
Assignments	40%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Online discussion	20%

Classes will include lecture time, in-class activities, group work and discussion.

There will be four assignments throughout the semester. Assignments are done in groups. All students in a group will receive the same grade.

In-class exams will be closed-book, with a variety of question formats: multiple choice, short answer, or short essay. Prior to each exam, format will be further explained, and review sheets will be provided.

Attendance and participation in this class is essential. There will be a lot of in-class exercises and discussion, and it is important that you take part in those activities. You are allowed two unexcused absences for the entire semester. After that, each unexcused absence means that your course grade will be lowered by 1%.

Participation in online discussion is required. There are two components to participation:

1. Leading discussion. This is a group activity. Each week, a group will be in charge of leading the discussion. This includes posting 2-3 prompts for discussion at the beginning of the week (by 9 am Monday), monitoring the discussion throughout the week, and posting a

summary by the end of the week (by 11:59 pm Friday).

This will be 5% of your participation grade for the course, and it will be the same for all members of the group.

2. Participating in discussion. This is an individual activity. Everybody in the class is expected to participate, every week, and will be graded every week. The average grade of all your participations will constitute 15% of your participation grade for the course.

Percentage scores on assignments and other course components will be based on objective criteria. Final letter course grades will be computed from percentage scores on all the course components. The following table provides a rough estimate of grade breakdowns for the final grade. Due attention will be given to the verbal descriptions listed below. There is no university-wide standard scale. An instructor adopts a grade scale appropriate to the level and content of the course.

A+	100%	to 96.0%	Extraordinary performance
A	< 96.0%	to 91.0%	Excellent performance
A-	< 91.0%	to 86.0%	
B+	< 86.0%	to 81.0%	Good performance
B	< 81.0%	to 76.0%	
B-	< 76.0%	to 71.0%	
C+	< 71.0%	to 66.0%	Satisfactory performance
C	< 66.0%	to 61.0%	
C-	< 61.0%	to 56.0%	Marginal performance
D	< 56.0%	to 50.0%	
F	< 50.0%	to 49.0%	Unsatisfactory performance (fail)

### Grade Appeals

If a student wishes to contest the marking of an exam, assignment or paper, the instructor can agree to remark his/her entire exam at the instructor's convenience and not in front of the student. A grade reconsideration may raise the grade, lower the grade, or leave the grade unchanged, as stated in Policy T20.01, clause 2.4.4.

The only reason a grade change will be made is if there is an arithmetic error or if it has been determined that the exam, assignment or paper deserves a lower grade or a higher grade after it has been remarked.

The following **are not** reasons for reconsideration of a grade:

- The student is on probation.
- The student wants to get into Business or any other program.
- The student worked hard and thinks this should be a factor.
- The student does not like the grade scale.
- The student's score is x% below the next grade and would like the instructor to ignore the difference.

### Course expectations

1. Students are expected to attend all classes and to arrive **on time** so that classes may begin promptly. Announcements will be made at the beginning and end of classes regarding the assigned readings and the expectations for assignments.
2. Students are expected to have **read all assigned readings before class**. Because many students will be learning about a new field of study, some of the materials and concepts may seem complex. You should probably read assigned readings and go over the lecture notes multiple times.
3. It is very important for students to participate in class discussions and class activities. Therefore, everyone must come to class prepared. Preparation includes carefully reading of the readings and assignments, noting any questions that you have.

4. Students will be responsible for all materials covered in the assigned readings and lectures. Assignments and exams will require students to refer to readings, lecture notes, and their own notes.
5. No late assignments will be accepted.
6. Following departmental policy, **make-up exams for in-class exams will not be given under any circumstances.** If you miss an exam, you will receive a grade of zero.
  - a. The only exception is if you are sick on the day of the exam. If you have to miss an in-class exam because of illness, you are required to contact me prior to the exam, if possible. When you return to class, I will need a note from your medical doctor specifying the date of your absence and the reason. There is a good chance that I will call the doctor to confirm the note.
  - b. If you have a doctor's note for the date of the exam, the weight of that exam will be re-allocated to the other course components.
  - c. Please check the following for further information on doctor's notes, and for a sample form that you can bring to your doctor: <https://www.sfu.ca/students/health/resources/faq/sick-notes.html>
7. Students will be respectful of other students and the instructor. In particular, students will not talk while the instructor or another student is talking.
8. Students should familiarize themselves with the Linguistics Department's Standards on Class Management and Student Responsibilities at: <http://www.sfu.ca/linguistics/undergraduate/exampoliciesanddepartmentstandards.html>
9. Cell phones: please make sure that your cell phone (or any other noisy device, including alarms) is turned off, or at least silent, during class.
10. Electronic devices: You may use a laptop, tablet or similar device to take notes and work on class content. Please, make judicious use of electronic devices, as they can be distracting, to you and to other students. Do not use cell phones to text and do not use laptops and tablets to check material that is unrelated to the class.
11. Academic dishonesty in all forms violates the basic principles of integrity and thus impedes learning. More specifically, academic dishonesty is a form of misconduct that is subject to disciplinary action and includes the following: cheating, fabrication, fraud, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism. For more information on academic honesty and student conduct, please visit the following websites: <https://www.sfu.ca/students/calendar/2016/fall/fees-and-regulations/student-contract/academic-honesty.html> <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/teaching.html>  
A grade of "FD" may be assigned as a penalty for academic dishonesty.
12. Please note that students requiring accommodations as a result of a disability must contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (778-782-3112 or csdo@sfu.ca).
13. All student requests for accommodation for religious practices must be made in writing by the end of the first week of classes or no later than one week after a student adds a course.
14. This syllabus is required reading.

### **E-Mail policy – Use Canvas**

Please, DO NOT send e-mail to my SFU address. Use the messaging system in Canvas instead.

1. I cannot always respond to messages late in the evening or on weekends. If you send a message late on Friday or during the weekend, I might not reply until the following week.
2. I can only respond to questions that can be answered *in a sentence or two*. Questions requiring longer replies should be asked in class or during office hours.
3. Please proof-read your message to make sure that your question is clear. In addition, I would appreciate questions that are expressed in an appropriately polite manner.
4. Because of the large number of messages that I receive, it may be several days before I am able to reply to your message. It is often easier and faster to ask a question in class, or during office hours. You can also call me on my office phone (but note that number cannot receive text messages). I may also provide answers in class, or post on Canvas to the whole class, instead of replying to individual messages.
5. If your question is about course content or general course administration, you should consider asking within your study group first, or posting on Canvas, rather than sending a message to me individually.

## Information on copyright

In Canada, copyright law automatically protects written and creative works (e.g., text, art, music or performance), in all formats, as soon as they are created and until 50 years after the creator's death. The creator of the work (i.e., author, composer or artist) often owns copyright, though for published works the publisher may own copyright. A work does not need to be marked with © or a copyright statement to be protected. A copyright protected work cannot be copied (i.e., scanned, printed, downloaded, emailed or photocopied) without the copyright owner's permission, except in certain situations outlined in the *Copyright Act* (see SFU's Fair Dealing Policy for details).

Course materials such as PowerPoint slides, lecture notes, the lecture itself, assignments and exams are all protected by copyright. You are NOT allowed to reproduce them, mail them or upload them to any site for a purpose other than your own study.

SFU students, faculty and staff are required to abide by Canada's *Copyright Act* as well as SFU's copyright policies. Find information about what this means for students at SFU's copyright website, [copyright.sfu.ca](http://copyright.sfu.ca), or by contacting the Copyright Office at [copy@sfu.ca](mailto:copy@sfu.ca). If you are copying works, using them in presentations and projects, or sharing them with other students, you should familiarize yourself with the guidelines and limits contained in SFU's Fair Dealing Policy.

## Resources

A number of resources are available to the students in the class. The TA will be available for general help with readings and assignments.

The SFU Learning Commons is available to all SFU students, and provides assistance with learning, academic writing and reading strategies (<http://learningcommons.sfu.ca>).

Please note that outside tutors or instructors are not allowed in this course. The only allowed help is that provided by the tutors and staff in the SFU Learning Commons, by the instructor and TA, and by other students in the class.

## Tips for success

To do well in this course, follow these principles:

- Follow the policies in this syllabus, and as outlined on Canvas
- Attend class regularly
- Complete all assignments and exercises, and do so on time
- Ask questions in class or during office hours
- Keep up with new material
- Work in groups or talk regularly to other students in the class
- Maintain a positive attitude
- Take accountability for your own actions and decisions



9	M Oct 30	Code-switching	Halim & Maros (2014) <a href="https://byts.commons.gc.cuny.edu/">https://byts.commons.gc.cuny.edu/</a>	
	W Nov 1			<b>Guest lecture: Christian Guilbault, SFU French,</b> <a href="http://www.sms4science.org/?q=en">http://www.sms4science.org/?q=en</a> <b>Link to data</b>
10	M Nov 6	Specialized vocabulary: memes, doggo, hashtags	<a href="http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2017/04/23/524514526/dogs-are-doggos-an-internet-language-built-around-love-for-the-puppers">http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2017/04/23/524514526/dogs-are-doggos-an-internet-language-built-around-love-for-the-puppers</a> <a href="https://qz.com/98677/why-youll-share-this-story-the-new-science-of-memes/">https://qz.com/98677/why-youll-share-this-story-the-new-science-of-memes/</a> <a href="https://www.wired.com/2017/05/oral-history-hashtag/?mbid=social_twitter">https://www.wired.com/2017/05/oral-history-hashtag/?mbid=social_twitter</a>	
	W Nov 8			<b>Guest lecture</b> Assignment 3 due (extension till Nov. 10)
11	M Nov 13	<i>Remembrance Day - no classes</i>		
	W Nov 15	Figurative language	Chapter 2 (by Dancygier) in Semino & Demjén (2016) <a href="http://nymag.com/scienceofus/article/why-the-internet-tilde-is-our-most-perfect-tool-for-snark.html">http://nymag.com/scienceofus/article/why-the-internet-tilde-is-our-most-perfect-tool-for-snark.html</a> <a href="http://the-toast.net/2015/06/22/a-linguist-explains-how-we-write-sarcasm-on-the-internet/">http://the-toast.net/2015/06/22/a-linguist-explains-how-we-write-sarcasm-on-the-internet/</a>	
12	M Nov 20	Are emojis a language?	<a href="http://the-toast.net/2016/06/29/a-linguist-explains-emoji-and-what-language-death-actually-looks-like/">http://the-toast.net/2016/06/29/a-linguist-explains-emoji-and-what-language-death-actually-looks-like/</a> <a href="https://makingnoiseandhearingthings.com/2016/12/07/do-emojis-have-their-own-syntax/">https://makingnoiseandhearingthings.com/2016/12/07/do-emojis-have-their-own-syntax/</a>	
	W Nov 22		Work on Assignment 4	Assignment 4 due (Nov. 24)
13	M Nov 27	Multimodality online	<a href="#">Levison and Holler (2014)</a> <a href="#">Morency et al. (2011)</a>	
	W Nov 29		Exam prep	
14	M Dec 4	<b>Exam 2</b>		

## References for readings

Androutsopoulos, J. (2006). Introduction: Sociolinguistics and computer-mediated communication. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 10(4), 419-438.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1999). Politeness: Some universals in language use. In A. Jaworski & N. Coupland (Eds.), *The Discourse Reader* (pp. 321-335). London: Routledge.

Dancygier, B. (2016). Figurativeness, conceptual metaphor, and blending. In E. Semino & Z. Demjén (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Metaphor and Language* (pp. 28-41). New York: Taylor & Francis.

Flowerdew, J. (2013). *Discourse in English Language Education*. New York: Routledge.

Halim, N. S., & Maros, M. (2014). The functions of code-switching in Facebook interactions. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 118, 126-133.

Hardaker, C. (2015). 'I refuse to respond to this obvious troll': an overview of responses to (perceived) trolling. *Corpora*, 10(2), 201-229.

Kübler, S., & Zinsmeister, H. (2015). *Corpus linguistics and linguistically annotated corpora*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Levinson, S. C., & Holler, J. (2014). The origin of human multi-modal communication. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 369(1651), 20130302.

Morency, L.-P., Mihalcea, R., & Doshi, P. (2011). Towards multimodal sentiment analysis: Harvesting opinions from the web. *Proceedings of the 13th international conference on multimodal interfaces* (pp. 169-176). Alicante, Spain.

Page, R. E., Barton, D., Unger, J. W., & Zappavigna, M. (2014). *Researching Language and Social Media: A Student Guide*. New York: Routledge.

Paltridge, B. (2012). *Discourse Analysis* (2nd ed.). London: Continuum.

Saleem, H. M., Dillon, K. P., Benesch, S., & Ruths, D. (2016). A web of hate: Tackling hateful speech in online social spaces. *Proceedings of Text Analytics for Cybersecurity and Online Safety (TA-COS)*, LREC. Portoroz, Slovenia.