

THE MULTILINGUAL USA
INTERDISCIPLINARY HONORS SEMINAR
SPRING 2025

INSTRUCTOR

Instructor: Kendra V. Dickinson, PhD
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Student support hours: Wed. 1:30-3:30Pm, and by appt.

COURSE INFORMATION

Course number: 01:090:295:H4
Format: In-person
Day/Time: M, 10:20AM-1:20PM
Location: Murray Hall 207

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

From the Native Americans, to colonists, to the immigrant communities of yesterday and today, the United States has never spoken just one language. This course offers an exploration of this dynamic tapestry, tracing the history and ever-evolving demographics of languages spoken across the nation. Though addressing topics such as language policy, bilingual education, language contact and revitalization, language attitudes, and more, students will gain a better understanding of the linguistic landscapes that have shaped our past and continue to define our present. This course will offer the opportunity to discover the stories, challenges, and opportunities that arise when multiple languages intersect in a multicultural nation.

II. OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to meet the [goals](#) of the SAS Honors Program and the [objectives and mission](#) of the Rutgers New Brunswick Honors College. In this course, students will:

- 1) Analyze and appreciate linguistic diversity in the United States, gaining insight into cultural, social, and historical factors that contribute to multilingualism in a multicultural society.
- 2) Employ interdisciplinary approaches to investigate the intersections between language and society, recognizing how knowledge from different disciplines such as linguistics, history, politics, sociology, human rights, and more can contribute to our understanding of the complexity of language use in the United States.
- 3) Critically examine historical and current dominant narratives and linguistic ideologies in U.S. American society and assess their impact on various linguistic and cultural communities.
- 4) Engage in hands-on projects to explore the real-world implications of language use in various communities to better understand the dynamic relationship between language and society.
- 5) Develop the tools needed to assess information sources, use the conventions of attribution and citation, analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights, and effectively communicate this information in writing.
- 6) Develop an understanding of the importance of language in fostering equitable communities and reflect on how this can inform students' future professional and personal goals, particularly in creating spaces where linguistic diversity is valued and supported.

III. MATERIALS

There are no materials that students are required to purchase for this course. All necessary materials will be posted to Canvas by the instructor.

IV. GRADING AND GRADE COMPONENTS

Grading Scale

A	92-100
B+	87-91
B	82-86
C+	77-81
C	70-76
D	65-69
F	0-64

1. Quizzes (20%)

There will be weekly quizzes on the readings/at-home content to ensure each student reviews the material and can actively participate in class activities, to be completed by 10:19am every Monday. Each quiz can be taken twice, and the higher score will be recorded.

2. Homework Assignments (20%)

Students will receive periodic homework assignment to complete and submit on Canvas. These assignments may include short-answer questions, examination of resources, reflection, discussion responses, etc. All assignments will be provided to students at least one week in advance of their due date.

3. Projects (60%)

Students will complete 4 projects over the course of the semester. More detail will be provided about each project in advance of the due date.

i. Mapping the Languages of Our Communities (15%)

Students conduct background research and create an ArcGIS Story Map detailing the languages present in their hometown/county/state.

ii. Language Spotlight (15%)

Students will select a language *not* covered in the course content, conduct background research related to its presence in the United States, and prepare a 5-7 minute in-class presentation on their findings.

iii. Oral History (20%)

Students will interview someone who speaks a language other than English as their first language about their experiences in the United States. Then, they will write a narrative summary including background information, speaker background, methods used to conduct the interview, and the main takeaways from the interview.

iv. Linguistic Landscapes of New Brunswick (10%)

Working in pairs, students will visit and document the linguistic landscape of an assigned area in New Brunswick.

4. Class Participation

Preparing in advance will help students participate to the fullest extent during class, a critical component of a successful learning experience. While not a graded component of the course, participation is crucial for success in a discussion-based class, because diligent preparation and active participation can serve to strengthen students' ability to successfully complete graded assignments.

5. Extra credit

The following extra credit options are opportunities for students to receive up to 4% added to their overall grade in the course. Students may elect to:

- a) Not complete any extra credit
 - b) Complete only one of the options (for 2% added to overall grade)
 - c) Complete Option 1 once (for 2% added to overall grade) and Option 2 once (for 2% added to overall grade), for a total of 4%
 - d) Complete Option 2 twice (2% for each time)
- a. Option 1:** At the end of the semester, the instructor will administer a survey about your experiences studying linguistic landscapes in the course, which is part of a larger research project across multiple classes and sections. The survey will be anonymous and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.
- b. Option 2:** Extra credit can be received by participating in an event or activity related to the use languages and cultures in the United States outside of the classroom and then preparing a brief reflection on the experience. Opportunities will be mentioned by the instructor. If you plan to participate in event that you believe could be used for extra credit, please get it approved by the instructor beforehand.

V. COURSE POLICIES

Assignments

All assignments should be turned in on Canvas by the due date. Late assignments will be reduced by 5% of the total possible points for each 24-hour period that they are late, beginning 1 minute after the deadline, up to 50% off. Students can submit late assignments until the last day of classes and receive up to 50% credit for their work. This policy is flexible, provided that you communicate your needs with me. If you feel that you will not be able to complete certain coursework by the established deadline for any reason at all, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can make alternative arrangements (such as a new deadline or additional support) for you to complete the work.

Communication

Both the teacher and the students are responsible for checking email every 48 hours, excluding weekends/holidays. To receive a prompt reply, please contact kendra.dickinson@rutgers.edu rather than communicating through Canvas.

Academic Misconduct

Students are responsible for reading and understanding the Code of Academic Integrity at Rutgers University. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, and aiding and abetting dishonesty. Please review the documents provided by Rutgers that outline the details of this policy: <http://nbacademicintegrity.rutgers.edu/home/academic-integrity-policy/>.

Classroom interactions

In this course we will engage with complex and at times challenging topics related to language, culture, and identity. I encourage everyone to bring their experiences and perspectives to our discussions as

part of our collective learning. However, we must approach these conversations with mutual respect and empathy at all times. Differences of opinion and diverse viewpoints are a natural part of learning, but it is essential that we express ourselves thoughtfully and listen actively to others. Hurtful, discriminatory, or disrespectful language will not be tolerated. We are all responsible for creating a classroom environment where everyone feels safe to share and learn. If you ever feel uncomfortable or unsure about a discussion, please reach out to me so we can address it together.

VI. RESOURCES

Rutgers University Libraries

The Rutgers University Libraries offer numerous resources to assist students. Librarians can help guide you through research and reference tools. Get started here: [Introduction to Rutgers University Libraries](#)

Office of Disability Services (ODS)

[\(848\) 445-6800](tel:848-445-6800) | dsoffice@echo.rutgers.edu | [website](#)

Rutgers University is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and welcomes students with disabilities into all the University's educational programs. ODS provides reasonable academic accommodations for students with disabilities.

Rutgers Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities (SJE)

[848-445-4141](tel:848-445-4141) | sje@echo.rutgers.edu | [website](#)

SJE promotes a supportive environment for students of all backgrounds, with a focus on gender and sexuality, while promoting both social and educational opportunities for leadership, identity, and social justice advocacy development.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

[848-932-7402](tel:848-932-7402) | health@rutgers.edu | [website](#)

University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professionals within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University.

UWill

<http://health.rutgers.edu/uwill/>

Free immediate access to teletherapy; you can choose a therapist based on your preferences including issue, gender, language, ethnicity.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

[848-932-1181](tel:848-932-1181) (24/7 Availability) | vpva@echo.rutgers.edu | [website](#)

The Office of Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides counseling and advocacy, to the University community, aiming to prevent and address interpersonal violence. They offer 24/7 crisis intervention with confidential advocates.

Additional Resources

Student Success Essentials

<https://success.rutgers.edu/>

Student Support Services

<https://www.rutgers.edu/student-support>

The Learning Centers

<https://learningcenters.rutgers.edu/>

Bias Incident Reporting
Student Health Services
Basic Needs Assistance (food,
housing, and other essentials):

<https://nbdiversity.rutgers.edu/bias-and-crisis-support>
<https://health.rutgers.edu/>
<https://ruoffcampus.rutgers.edu/basic-needs>

VII. IMPORTANT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the land on which we stand is the ancestral territory of the Lenape People. We pay respect to Indigenous people throughout the Lenape diaspora – past, present, and future – and honor those who have been historically and systemically disenfranchised. We also acknowledge that Rutgers University, like New Jersey and the United States, was founded upon the exclusions and erasures of Indigenous peoples. For more information, you can visit:

- <http://www.lspirg.org/knowtheland>
- <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1k3s9r0.5>

Instructor's Statement

My educational philosophy and teaching style are deeply rooted in teaching to the whole student, recognizing that everyone reacts to and understands course materials based on their own realities and lived experiences. I am a whole person and so is each one of my students. There are many circumstances in the world that can impact our ability to do our best academic work, from political unrest to pandemics, from social injustices to personal challenges. If, at any point, you experience anything impacting your performance or ability to participate in this class, please reach out to me. I promise to treat you as a whole person, and work with you to come up with solutions or resources to help you be successful in this course.

VII REFERENCES

- Eller, J. D. (2015). *Culture and Diversity in the United States: So Many Ways to be American*. Routledge.
- Gorter, D. (2006). Introduction: The study of the linguistic landscape as a new approach to multilingualism. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 3(1), 1-6.
- Fuller, J. M., & Leeman, J. (2020). *Speaking Spanish in the US: The Sociopolitics of Language*. Multilingual Matters.
- Listokin, D., Berkhout, D., & Hughes, J. W. (2016). *New Brunswick, New Jersey: The Decline and Revitalization of Urban America*. Rutgers University Press.
- Nichols, Patricia. (2004) "Creole languages: Forging new identities." In Finegan, E. & Rickford, J. (Eds.), *Language in the USA: Themes for the Twenty-first Century*, pp. 133-136.
- Ostler, R. (2023). *The United States of English: The American Language from Colonial Times to the Twenty-first Century*. Oxford University Press.
- Potowski, K. (Ed.). (2010). *Language Diversity in the USA*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rumbaut, R. G., & Massey, D. S. (2013). Immigration & language diversity in the United States. *Daedalus*, 142(3), 141-154.
- Tamasi, S., & Antieau, L. (2014). *Language and linguistic diversity in the US: An introduction*. Routledge.
- Wiley, T. G., Peyton, J. K., Christian, D., Moore, S. C. K., & Liu, N. (2014). *Handbook of Heritage, Community, and Native American Languages in the United States*. Abingdon: Routledge.

IX COURSE CALENDAR

This is a **tentative schedule**, which may be modified as the semester develops at the instructor's discretion. Students will be advised of any changes and additions in class and on Canvas. All assignments and readings are to be done *before* class on the day that they are listed.

Handbook = *Handbook of heritage, community, and Native American languages in the United States*

LD USA = *Language Diversity in the USA*

LLD = *Language and linguistic diversity in the US: An introduction*

Wk	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
1	Jan. 27 th	Intro	Rumbaut & Massey (2014), pp. 141-153	Intro Survey Quiz 1
2	Feb. 3 rd	Linguistic Diversity in the U.S Project 1 Workshop	Eller (2015), pp. 163-190 ArcGIS intro	Quiz 2
3	Feb. 10 th	Native American Languages Early English	LD USA Chapter 3, pp. 47-65 Ostler (2023), pp. 7-30	Quiz 3 HW 1
4	Feb. 17 th	Varieties of English U.S. Creoles Project 2 Overview	Ostler (2023), pp. 101-133 Nichols (2004), pp. 133-150	Quiz 4 Project 1
5	Feb. 24 th	German Yiddish	LD USA, Chapter 9, pp. 146-163 Handbook, Chapter 25 pp. 263-269	Quiz 5 HW2
6	March 3 rd	Project 2 Presentations		Project 2
7	March 10 th	Polish Italian Project 3 Workshop	LD USA Chapter 15, pp. 238-254 LD USA Chapter 12, pp. 195-205 How to do Oral History	Quiz 6 HW3
8	March 24 th	Spanish Portuguese	Fuller & Leeman (2020), pp. 33-60 LD USA Chapter 14, pp. 223-237	Quiz 7 HW4
Spring Break				
9	March 31 st	Korean Chinese	LD USA Chapter 10, pp. 164-178 LD USA Chapter 5, pp. 81-95	Quiz 8 Project 3, Part 1
10	Apr. 7 th	Filipino/Tagalog Hindi	Handbook Chapter 28, pp. 297-306 Handbook Chapter 16 pp. 167-175	Quiz 9 HW5
11	Apr. 14 th	Arabic Project 3 Peer Review	Handbook Chapter 14, pp. 148-155	Quiz 10 Project 3, Part 2
12	Apr. 21 st	Linguistic Landscapes Multilingualism in NB Project 4 Overview	Gorter (2006)	Quiz 11 Project 3, Part 3
13	Apr. 28 th	Field Trip: Tour of New Brunswick	Listokin et al. (2016)	Quiz 12 HW6
14	May 5 th	Course wrap-up	TBA	
Project 4 due May 12 th by 7:00pm				