



## LANGUAGE CONTACT

SPRING 2026

### INSTRUCTOR

**Instructor:** Kendra V. Dickinson, PhD  
**Office:** Academic Building 5171  
**E-mail:** [kendra.dickinson@rutgers.edu](mailto:kendra.dickinson@rutgers.edu)  
**Support hours:** Tues. 1:30-3:00PM, or by apt.

### COURSE INFORMATION

**Course number:** 01:940:589  
**Section:** 01  
**Format:** In-person  
**Day/Time:** Tuesdays, 9:30am-12:30pm  
**Location:** Academic Building West, Rm. 5190

### I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

When communities meet, their languages do too. What kinds of linguistic phenomena emerge from these encounters? This course is an advanced introduction to the study of language contact and its outcomes, examining the social, cognitive, and linguistic factors that mediate contact-induced language variation and change. We will analyze key phenomena such as borrowing, codeswitching, convergence, and related processes, as well as the emergence of new languages and varieties. Students will engage with empirical case studies from a range of contact situations to investigate how different factors shape linguistic outcomes and to evaluate competing theoretical models. By the end of the course, students will be able to critically evaluate research in contact linguistics and design their own theoretically grounded, empirically informed research projects on language contact.

### II. OBJECTIVES

The course is designed to satisfy [the learning goals](#) of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese for the PhD in Bilingualism and Second Language Acquisition. By the completion of this course, students will:

1. Possess a solid theoretical understanding of language contact, including core concepts, mechanisms, and outcomes, and how language contact relates to bilingualism, acquisition, and language change.
2. Be able to articulate and evaluate major debates in contact linguistics, demonstrating an understanding of competing explanations for linguistic patterns in contact situations.
3. Be able to evaluate empirical evidence for and against contact-induced change, using appropriate theoretical and methodological criteria to assess claims about language and dialect contact in diverse sociolinguistic settings.
4. Be prepared to design independent research on language contact, including formulating research questions, selecting appropriate data and methods, and situating research within the relevant scholarly literature, and evaluating potential contact effects.

### III. MATERIALS

There are no required textbooks for this course. All required readings will be posted to Canvas or will be available digitally via [Rutgers Libraries](#).

## IV. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE COMPONENTS

### Grading Scale

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

### Grade Components

Component	%
Homework	20%
Journals	20%
Student-led Unit	20%
Final Project	40%

#### 1. Homework Assignments (20%)

Students will be assigned 4-5 homework assignments over the course of the semester, to be submitted on Canvas. These assignments may include short and long answer questions, analysis of data sets, etc., and are designed to reinforce the development of theoretical, analytical, and methodological skills central to the course.

#### 2. Journals (15%)

A critical part of being an active researcher is generating new ideas for research projects and making connections between your own ideas and previous work. Students will keep a research “notebook” to reflect on the readings for each week, make connections between course content and their own research interests, and brainstorm ideas for new research projects. Students are required to submit “notebook” entries to Canvas that provide answers to the questions below in any format (complete sentences, short paragraphs, bullet points). Submissions can be provided as electronic documents, or, if using a real-life notebook, as a picture of your written entry.

#### Related to the reading(s) for the week (required):

1. What did you find most interesting about this weeks’ readings?
2. How might the concepts, methods, or results, etc. in this week’s reading(s) be applicable to your own area of research interest?
3. What ideas for new research do you have based on this week’s reading(s)?

#### Other (optional):

4. What, if anything, have you observed in language this week (e.g., with family, on the radio, in another class, etc.) that may be a variable of sociolinguistic interest?
5. What (if any) questions/doubts do you have about the content of this weeks’ materials?

Beginning in Week 2, and for (nearly) every subsequent week until the end of the semester, students will need to submit a research notebook for that week to Canvas. Students will then need

come to class prepared to discuss their reflections with the group. Notebook entries will be graded for completion rather than correctness or polish. Students are encouraged to use the notebook as a working space to test ideas, raise questions, and make tentative connections, rather than as a finished product. The value of the research notebook lies in its function as a space for exploration, synthesis, and reflection. Accordingly, students will benefit from the notebook in direct proportion to the care and thought they invest in it.

### **3. Student-led Unit (25%)**

In this course, students will take an active role in shaping our collective exploration of language contact. Working in pairs, students will design and lead a student-led unit focused on a specific language contact situation in the Spanish-speaking world. Each group must select a distinct contact context.

Each pair will identify relevant scholarly readings on their chosen contact situation, in consultation with the instructor. Final readings will be selected collaboratively with the instructor and assigned to the entire class in advance of the student-led session. On the assigned class day, the student pair will be responsible for leading the entire class session. This is not an article presentation. Rather, students should design the session to foster critical engagement with the readings and the broader theoretical and methodological issues raised by the contact situation. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Framing key theoretical or empirical questions
- Designing discussion questions that encourage comparison, critique, and synthesis
- Creating in-class activities (e.g., data analysis exercises, structured debates, small-group tasks)
- Guiding the class in evaluating evidence for or against contact-induced change

The goal of the student-led unit is to move beyond summary and toward collective analysis, encouraging classmates to apply concepts from earlier in the course to new empirical contexts.

### **4. Final Project (40%)**

Students will produce an original piece of research, from start to finish, on a topic related to a language contact situation. This project will consist of assignments over the course of the semester that build to the final product:

- i.** Initial Project Proposal
- ii.** Rough Draft
- iii.** Presentation
- iv.** Final Draft

## **V. COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Participation**

Because this course will be taught as a seminar (primarily discussed-based), participation is an essential component in the success of this class. Scholarly endeavors and intellectual pursuits

are richer when they foster community and include a variety of perspectives. As your instructor, I will spend time during class reviewing core concepts and answering questions, but since this is a seminar-style course, most of our class time will be spent discussing concepts and readings *together*. For this reason, it is critical that you (1) show up for class, (2) do the readings, (3) reflect on the readings before coming to class, and (4) participate actively, both by sharing your insights and questions *and* by listening to and collaborating with peers. Resources:

[Maximizing Your Success in Graduate School Seminars](#)

[Succeeding in a Graduate Seminar](#)

### **Attendance Policies**

Students are expected to attend all classes. You will get out of this class what you put into it and attending class and actively participating will help you expand your abilities and succeed in the course. In the event of an absence, it is your responsibility to:

1. Self-report your absence via the Rutgers system for doing so:  
<https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>
2. Reach out to fellow students for class notes and to contact the instructor or other students for information about assignments, announcements, etc.

Please note that this does not apply to Religious Holidays. For more information, visit:

(<https://scheduling.rutgers.edu/scheduling/religious-holiday-policy>)

### **Assignment policies**

All assignments should be turned in on Canvas by the due date. However, late assignments will be accepted. 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. For the next 24-hour period, another 5% will be subtracted, up to 50% off. This means that students can turn in late assignments at any time before the last day of classes and still receive up to 50% credit.

### **Communication**

Both the teacher and the students are responsible for checking email every 48 hours, except on the weekends and during holidays. To receive the promptest reply, please email me at [kendra.dickinson@rutgers.edu](mailto:kendra.dickinson@rutgers.edu) rather than contacting me through Canvas.

### **Academic Misconduct**

Students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by 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. Students are responsible for:

- Properly acknowledging and citing all use of the ideas, results, or words of others
- Properly acknowledging all contributors to a given piece of work
- Making sure that all work submitted as their own in a course or other academic activity is produced without the aid of unsanctioned materials or unsanctioned collaboration.

- Treating all other students in an ethical manner, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.

For more information, please review the documents provided by Rutgers that outline the details of this policy: <http://nbacademicintegrity.rutgers.edu/home/academic-integrity-policy/>.

### **Artificial Intelligence Policy**

Read this section in its entirety in order to understand what is considered permissible use of AI in this course. The goal of this policy is not to prohibit the use of AI in this course, but to ensure that it is used responsibly and facilitates, rather than impedes, the students' learning of the course material. **Students may use advanced automated tools for editing or proofreading purposes.** If students use such tools for these purposes, this use must be **disclosed** and appropriately documented. For example, students could add a brief note at the end of the assignment specifying which tool was used, what task it performed, and how its output was verified or revised (e.g., "ChatGPT was used to proofread grammar and sentence flow. All content and ideas are my own"). However, **AI tools may not be used for content generation, idea development, or translation** unless explicit permission is granted by the instructor in advance. **Failure to follow these guidelines will be treated as a violation of academic integrity in the course**, potentially resulting in a grade penalty, a requirement to redo the assignment, or referral for an Academic Integrity review in severe cases.

## **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. [Introduction to Rutgers University Libraries](#)

### **Office of Disability Services (ODS)**

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

### **Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)**

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

## **Additional Resources**

[Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance](#)

[Student Success Essentials](#)

[Student Support Services](#)

[Bias Incident Reporting](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

[Basic Needs Assistance](#)

## **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**

### **Required readings**

- Brown, E. L. (2015). The role of discourse context frequency in phonological variation: A usage-based approach to bilingual speech production. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 19(4), 387-406.
- Carvalho, A. M. (2014). Sociolinguistic continuities in language contact situations: The case of Portuguese in contact with Spanish along the Uruguayan-Brazilian border. In *Portuguese-Spanish Interfaces* (pp. 263-294). John Benjamins.
- Dodsworth, R. (2017). Migration and dialect contact. *Annual Review of Linguistics*, 3(1), 331-346.
- Eppler, E. D., & Ozón, G. (2020). First- and second-language acquisition and contact-induced language change. In A. P. Grant (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Language Contact* (pp. 395-416). Oxford University Press.
- Erker, D. (2017). The limits of named language varieties and the role of social salience in dialectal contact: The case of Spanish in the United States. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 11(1).
- Gradoville, M., Waltermire, M., & Engelhardt, J. (2024). Variable contrast in Border Uruguayan Spanish /b/: From cognates to orthographic loyalty. *Journal of Language Contact*, 16(4), 456-493.
- Hawkins, J. A., & Filipović, L. (2024). Bilingualism-induced language change: what can change, when, and why?. *Linguistics Vanguard*, 10(s2), 115-124.
- Oushiro, L. (2020). Contrasting age of arrival and length of residence in dialect contact. University of

- Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics, 25(2), 79–88.
- Klee, C. A. & Lynch, A. (2009). *El español en contacto con otras lenguas*. Georgetown University Press.
- Poplack, S., & Levey, S. (2010). Contact-induced grammatical change: A cautionary tale. In P. Auer & J. E. Schmidt (eds.), *Language and space: An international handbook of linguistic variation*, pp. 391–419. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Sayahi, L. (2020). Contact, bilingualism, and diglossia. In R. Hickey (Ed.), *The Handbook of Language Contact* (pp. 51–66). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Sneller, B., & Roberts, G. (2018). Why some behaviors spread while others don't: A laboratory simulation of dialect contact. *Cognition*, 170, 298-311.
- Sinnemäki, K., Di Garbo, F., Napoleão de Souza, R., & Ellison, T. M. (2024). A typological approach to language change in contact situations. *Diachronica*, 41(3), 379-413.
- Thomason, S. G. (2020). Contact explanations in linguistics. In R. Hickey (Ed.), *The Handbook of Language Contact* (pp. 31–49). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Torres Cacoulios, R., & Travis, C. E. (2015). Gauging convergence on the ground: Code-switching in the community. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 19(4), 365-386.
- Travis, C. E., Torres Cacoulios, R., & Kidd, E. (2017). Cross-language priming: A view from bilingual speech. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 20(2), 283-298.
- Winford, D. (2019). Theories of language contact. In A. P. Grant (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Language Contact* (pp. 51–74). Oxford University Press.

### **Additional readings (optional)**

- Appel, R., & Muysken, P. (2005). *Language contact and bilingualism*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Erker, D. (2018). Sociolinguistic Approaches to Dialectal, Sociolectal, and Idiolectal Variation in the Hispanophone World. In *The Cambridge handbook of Spanish Linguistics* (pp. 529-562). Cambridge University Press.
- Haspelmath, M. (2008). Loanword typology: Steps toward a systematic cross-linguistic study of lexical borrowability. *Empirical Approaches to Language Typology*, 35, 43.
- Matras, Y. (2011). Universals of structural borrowing. *Linguistic Universals and Language Variation*, 231, 204- 233.
- Matras, Y. (2020). *Language Contact*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ivir, V. (1991). Contrastive methods in contact linguistics. *Languages in Contact and Contrast. Essays in Contact Linguistics*, 237-245.
- Sankoff, G. (2004). Linguistic outcomes of language contact. *The Handbook Of Language Variation and Change*, 638-668.
- Thomason, S. G. (2000). On the unpredictability of contact effects. *Estudios de sociolingüística*, 1(1), 173-182.
- Thomason, S. G. (2007). Language contact and deliberate change. *Journal of Language Contact*, 1(1), 41-62.
- Thomason, S. G. (2019). *Language contact: An Introduction*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Weinreich, U. (1953/2010). *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems*. Walter de Gruyter.

### VIII. COURSE CALENDAR

This is a **tentative schedule**, which may be modified 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.

FP = Final Project

	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
1	Jan. 20	Intro	Klee & Lynch (2009)	
2	Jan. 27	Fundamentals	Thomason (2020) Winford (2020)	Intro Survey Journal 1
	Feb. 3	Multilingual ecologies and acquisition	Sayahi (2020) Eppler & Ozon (2020)	HW1 Journal 2
4	Feb. 10	To change or not to change?	Poplack & Levy (2010) Hawkins & Filipović (2024)	Journal 3
5	Feb. 17	Case Study 1: Fronteriço	Carvalho (2014) Gradoville et al. (2024)	HW2 Journal 4
6	Feb. 24	Research Design Workshop	N/A	Unit planning meeting w/ instructor (by arrangement) HW3
7	Mar. 3	Case Study 2: Bilingualism in New Mexico	Brown (2015) Travis et al. (2017)	HW4 Journal 5
8	Mar. 10	Diagnosing contact-induced change	Torres Cacoullos & Travis (2015) Sinnemäki et al. (2024)	FP Part 1 Journal 6
Spring Break				
9	Mar. 24	Case Study 3: Student-led	TBA	Journal 7
10	Mar. 31	Case Study 4: Student-led	TBA	Journal 8
11	Apr. 7	Case Study 5: Student-led	TBA	Journal 9
12	Apr. 14	Dialect contact	Dodsworth (2017) Erker (2017)	HW5 Journal 10
13	Apr. 21	Dialect contact	Oushiro (2020) Sneller & Roberts (2018)	FP Part 2 Journal 11
14	Apr. 28	Presentations, wrap-up		FP Part 3 (presentation)
<b>Final paper due by Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 11:59pm</b>				