

Course:	<b>Cog Sci Advanced Topics II: Sound and Meaning</b> (01:185:412)
Instructor:	Prof. Kristen Syrett (kristen.syrett (at) rutgers.edu) Department of Linguistics and Center for Cognitive Science
Meetings:	Mondays and Wednesdays 1:10 pm- 2:30 pm
Location:	Campbell Hall A4
Office Hours:	Tuesdays 10:00 am -12:00 pm, Linguistics Department, room 304 and by appt Please make an appointment with me in advance to attend office hours!

### Course Description

What we say and the way we say it can convey a wide range of meaning. As infants, we learn to associate meaning with individual words, and then to put those words together to arrive at compositional meaning. But sometimes those individual words can carry very different meanings in different contexts, and how we pronounce those words and those strings of words can carry a whole other level of meaning about the speaker - who we are, where we grew up, what group we belong to, and whether we "belong."

In this course, we'll explore a number of ways in which sound can convey meaning from a linguistic and cognitive science perspective. We'll learn about topics like how infants categorize sounds and acquire word meaning, how young children perceive dialects, how sounds even below the word level convey abstract meaning, how prosody interacts with truth conditional meaning, how we process meaning incrementally in real time, how even sign language has phonology, how speech patterns reveal socioeconomic status or demographic information or become associated with gender identity, what it means to "sound gay" or "sound black," why cartoon villains have foreign accents, and more!

This course is discussion-based. It relies upon your **preparation and active participation**.

### Course Objectives

- You will understand and appreciate a variety of ways in which aspects of language convey meaning and establish and reinforce categories and identities.
- You will learn how researchers of the topics we cover design experiments and/or conduct fieldwork, and collect and analyze their data.
- You will think critically about the connection between phonological and phonetic properties of language and how we categorize, and construct identities.
- You will analyze and evaluate evidence presented in support of claims and hypotheses.
- You will assess the validity of popular claims and perceptions about language.

### Readings

There is no textbook! The readings are source articles from peer-reviewed journals in the field of social sciences. We'll be working through these together. I will also include additional media, such as popular press articles, online links, and podcast episodes.

## Course Requirements

### 1. In-class participation 20%

This class is designed as a seminar that will be successful as long as we are all prepared. That means coming in to each class **having done the assigned reading(s)/listenings**, and having generated the 'food for thought' in your forum postings. You will receive a grade at the end based on the rubric on the last page of the syllabus. I will also provide you with an opportunity to assess your own participation, which I will take into consideration when assigning your final grade.

### 2. Weekly Discussion Generators 30% total

**"Get us started" Assignment: Due each Sunday by 9 p.m.** 15%

**"Food for thought" Forum Post: Due each Tuesday by 9 pm.** 15%

You should post thought-provoking comments on the Discussion Forum on Sakai about the reading material or follow-ups on the class discussion. These posts must be at least 1 paragraph (at least 5 sentences) each. They may be responses to someone else's post. Above all, they should be **RISKY: Respectful, Insightful, Substantive, Knowledgeable, and Your own**. They will provide some 'food for thought' for our discussions on Wednesdays. I will also occasionally bring in real food to enhance our discussion.

### 3. Final Paper 50% total

You will write and submit a final paper on a topic of your choosing. You will complete this in stages, using the Assignments function in Sakai. Each assignment is **due by 9 p.m. on the designated day!**

- |   |           |     |
|---|-----------|-----|
| • Propose a topic and prospectus (1-2-pages)          | 3/29      | 5%  |
| • Submit sample bibliography (MUST be in APA style!)  | 4/12      | 5%  |
| • Give a 4-minute lightning talk on your paper topic. | 4/29, 5/1 | 10% |
| • Submit the final paper.                             | 5/10      | 30% |

Every assignment will have a precise format, designated on the Assignments function. Failure to obey this format will result in deductions from your grade.

The following **grading scale** will be used, in accordance with the Rutgers Registrar's office:

A	4.0	(90-100)
B+	3.5	(87-89)
B	3.0	(80-86)
C+	2.5	(77-79)
C	2.0	(70-76)
D	1.0	(65-69)
F		(below 65)

### Academic Integrity

- You are expected to know and follow the Rutgers University policy on Academic Integrity: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>
- Cheating, plagiarizing, presenting someone else's work as your own, and not properly acknowledging another student's or researcher's contribution **will not be tolerated**.
- All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs.
- You may not video- or audio-record lectures, unless you have explicitly asked for permission and been given permission by the instructor in advance.

### Extra Credit

You have the opportunity to raise your final grade by up to 2 points by participating in Extra Credit in Linguistics experiments. Details are on our course Sakai site.

## Attendance

You are expected to attend every class. University policy excuses absences due to religious observance or participation in Rutgers-approved activities. If you anticipate that you will be absent for whatever reason, particularly religious or medical reasons or for an emergency, please notify me in writing (via email) as a courtesy as soon as possible AND report your absence via this link <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>. You will still be responsible for the readings and/or assignments for that day, and you should coordinate with a classmate to cover the material covered in that class.

## Disabilities

The Office of Disability Services provides resources for students with disabilities: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. In order to request accommodations for disabilities and receive a Letter of Accommodations, you must follow the procedures outlined here: <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html>. If this description applies to you, please talk with me at the beginning of the semester to discuss possible accommodations so I can support you.

## Student Support

Counseling <http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>  
Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance <http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu>

## Civility and Professionalism

We're going to cover a range of topics in this class, some touching upon issues related to how we and others self-identify and how we construct personas and evaluate others. This class should be a safe space for open, respectful discussion. We're all here to learn from and listen to each other as we come to appreciate the connection between sound and meaning. Here are some ground rules.

- **Communication with others**

Refer to and address people with the proper title (e.g., Dr., Prof. for your professor) and their chosen name and pronoun. This may arise in class discussions, or when you are making reference to someone's observations, argument, or presentation in a forum posting or in an email. In emails to your professor, keep register in mind. Always include a salutation (e.g., Dear Dr. X), and always sign your message along with your name (e.g., Best regards, Sincerely, Thank you, etc.). Do not include texting abbreviations in your messages. Above all, be respectful.

- **Emails and Meetings**

If you schedule a time to come in to my office hours (please do!), then be sure to show up. Cancellations (if unavoidable) should be made at least 12 hours in advance.

Instructors field a lot of emails each day. They may not be able to respond to your email right away, or respond to a string of emails with little questions. Send your email well in advance. If you do not receive a response within 24 hours time, then politely follow up, referencing your previous message. At the same time, do not wait until the last minute, and never send an email the morning of class, expecting a response before the start of class! Frame your questions or requests in the most polite way possible. Do not make demands of your addressee, even if they are preceded by 'please'. Remember, you are probably writing to resolve some issue or receive an answer to a question (quickly). If so, the best way to accomplish this is to be polite and show respect. (I grew up in the South. Politeness never gets old!)

For more on how to email your professor, enjoy this online piece, "How to email your professor (without being annoying AF)": <https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087>

## Course Schedule

<b>Sundays:</b>	'Get us started' (questions or post) due to Sakai assignment section by 9 p.m.
<b>Mondays:</b>	Begin topic and discussion
<b>Tuesdays:</b>	'Food for thought' forum post for topic due by 9 p.m.
<b>Wednesdays:</b>	More in-depth discussion on topic

Date	Topic
W 1/23	Introduction
M 1/28	1. Speech sounds and word learning
W 1/30	
M 2/4	2. Vowels, consonants, and sound symbolism
W 2/6	
M 2/11	3. Prosody and information contrast in children
W 2/13	
M 2/18	4. Prosody and ambiguity in children and adults
W 2/20	
M 2/25	5. Intonation and pragmatics
W 2/27	
M 3/4	6. Accent and speaker categorization in childhood
W 3/6	
M 3/11	7. Accents, dialects, villains, and foreigners
W 3/13	
[spring break]	
M 3/25	8. Intonation, accent, (non)standard English, and identity
W 3/27	
F 3/29	<i>Paper Topic and Prospectus Due</i>
M 4/1	9. Intonation (uptalk) and gender
W 4/3	
M 4/8	10. Intonation and phonology in American Sign Language (ASL)
W 4/10	
F 4/12	<i>Preliminary Paper Bibliography Due</i>
M 4/15	Monday: Prof. Syrett away for research
W 4/17	11. Segmental and suprasegmental features of gay speech
M 4/22	12. Voice quality, segments, identity, and stance
W 4/24	
Sun 4/28	<i>Lightning Presentation Talk Slides Due</i>
M 4/29	<i>Lightning Talks (M+W)</i>
W 5/1	
F 5/10	<i>Final Paper Due</i>

## Readings, Viewings/Listenings(\*), "Get us started"

### 1. Speech sounds and word learning

**READ** 1. Jusczyk (1999), 2. Ferry et al. (2010)

**WATCH** or read the transcript from this TED Talk by Speech and Hearing Prof. Patricia Kuhl  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/patricia\\_kuhl\\_the\\_linguistic\\_genius\\_of\\_babies/transcript](https://www.ted.com/talks/patricia_kuhl_the_linguistic_genius_of_babies/transcript)

**"Get us started" post:** 3 questions

### 2. Vowels, consonants, and sound symbolism

**READ** 1. Ohala (1994) or Svantesson (2017), 2. Ozturk et al (2013) or Imai et al. (2008)

**LISTEN** to the episode from *Lingthusiasm* podcast called, "What words sound spiky across languages?" featuring psycholinguist Suzy Styles (June 21, 2018)

**"Get us started" post:** 3 questions

### 3. Prosody and information contrast in young children

**READ** 1. Grassmann & Tomasello (2010), 2. Syrett & Kawahara (2013)

**"Get us started" post:** 3 questions

### 4. Prosody and ambiguity in children and adults

**READ** 1. Snedeker & Yuan (2008), 2. Choi & Mazuka (2003)

**"Get us started" post:** 3 questions

### 5. Intonation and pragmatics

**READ** Hirschberg (2002) or Ward & Hirschberg (1985)

**"Get us started" post:** Find a scene from a show, movie, podcast, audiobook, vlog, youtube channel, interview, or some other media source in which intonation is used to convey contrast, hedging, or clarification. Post to sakai in the assignments section.

### 6. Accent and speaker categorization in childhood

**READ** 1. Kinzler et al. (2011), 2. Hwang & Markson (2018)

**"Get us started" post:** 3 questions

### 7. Accents, dialects, villains, and foreigners

**READ** Dobrow & Gidney (1998), *The Atlantic* article

**"Get us started" post:** Find a scene from a show, movie, podcast, audiobook, vlog, youtube channel, interview, or some other media source in which phonological/phonetic features are used to portray a 'villain' (broadly speaking). Post to sakai in the assignments section.

### 8. Intonation, accent, (non)standard English, and identity

**READ** 1. McWhorter (2016) or Baugh (2003), 2. Bucholtz (2001) or Bucholtz (1999)

**LISTEN** to these episodes from the *Lexicon Valley* podcast featuring linguistics Prof. John McWhorter:  
The Blaccent: What does it mean to sound black? (May 3, 2016)  
Black Like Us (Nov 29, 2016)

**"Get us started" post:** 3 questions

## 9. Intonation (uptalk) and gender

**READ** 1. McConnell-Ginet (1978) 2. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003) ch. 5

**LISTEN** to or read the transcript from this NPR interview, featuring linguistics Prof. Penny Eckert: <https://www.npr.org/2015/07/23/425608745/from-uptalk-to-vocal-fry-are-we-policing-young-womens-voices>

**"Get us started" post:** 3 questions

## 10. Intonation and phonology in American Sign Language (ASL)

**READ** 1. Brentari et al. (2015) or Sandler (2012), 2. Gökgöz et al. (2016)

**LOOK AT** at the images and descriptions on these pages:

1. 'yes'/'no' questions: <https://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-layout/yesnofacial%20expression.htm>

2. 'wh' questions: <https://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-layout/whfacialexpression.htm>

**"Get us started" post:** 3 questions

## 11. Segmental and suprasegmental features of gay speech

**READ** 1. Munson et al. (2006) or Munson (2007), 2. *one of* Podesva (2011)

*We'll be watching segments of the movie Do I sound gay? (It features linguistics Prof. Benjamin Munson, whose work we'll read, and linguistics Prof. Ron Smyth). In preparation:*

**LISTEN** to or read the transcript from this NPR interview from the filmmaker and the speech pathologist/coach featured in the film: <https://www.npr.org/2015/07/07/420627143/filmmaker-and-speech-pathologist-weigh-in-on-what-it-means-to-sound-gay>

**"Get us started" post:** 3 questions

## 12. Voice quality, segments, identity, and stance

**READ** 1. Becker (2009) or Mendoza-Denton (2011), 2. Starr (2015) or Eckert (1991) or Mendoza-Denton (2008)

1. **WATCH** this Vox video on NY accents: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waeXBCUkuL8>

2. **LISTEN** to the episode from the *The World in Words* podcast featuring linguistically-savvy journalist Patrick Cox called, "Losing your accent" (Jan 12, 2018)

**"Get us started" post:** 3 questions