**Course Description**

This course will examine gender as a sociolinguistic variable in speech behavior. The scientific investigation of gender-linked language is a discipline which has begun to be studied scientifically only in the last twenty five years. Research into language and gender may be said to fall into two major categories. The first has to do with gender-based ideologies, or sexism in language, where attitudes toward men and women have become attitudes toward language. These include the ways that women have been negatively positioned by dominant naming and representation practices in language or the ways in which speakers (and writers) demonstrate their different cultural attitudes toward men and women. An alternative to sexist practices is gender-based language planning, whose aim is to challenge hegemonic discursive practices which disadvantage women, by creating new forms or selecting alternative forms, for example, in vocabulary and grammar. We will investigate both the linguistic and the cultural problems involved in such reforms, which have been only minimally successful.

The second major category in the study of gender and language, which can be said to have begun with Robin Lakoff’s l975 *Language and Woman’s Place,* concerns possible differences in the actual way of speaking, or interactional style, of men and women. Lakoff posited that women‘s speech is more polite, and makes more use of a variety of "powerless" linguistic strategies such as "empty" adjectives, hedges, tag questions, and a question intonation in statements. Other researchers, focusing on male dominance in interaction, have added different kinds of features to this list, for instance, that men interrupt women more than women interrupt men, that men raise new topics more often, talk more in public than do women, and that they are, on one hand, voluble, while they also make use of silence as a form of control. More recently, other researchers have suggested that what had been termed "women’s language" would be more appropriately termed "powerless language," and that, in fact, both men and women used these features in certain situations.

We will review this controversy, which has been labeled "dominance" versus "difference," in recent theoretical articles that revise assumptions about how language and gender should be studied. The first, the *dominance approach*, sees women as an oppressed group and interprets linguistic differences in women’s and men’s speech in terms of men’s dominance and women’s subordination. Researchers using this model are concerned to show how male dominance is enacted through linguistic practice. Their motto might by: ‘Doing power’ is often a way of ‘doing gender’. The second and newer approach, the *difference model*, emphasizes the idea that women and men belong to different subcultures, and the differences in women’s and men’s speech are interpreted as reflecting and maintaining gender-specific subcultures. Because boys and girls grow up in what are essentially different cultures, talk between women and men can be considered as a form of cross-cultural communication. In this context, work is being done on children’s and on adolescents’ socialization in single-sex and in mixed peer groups, and on the consequent development of gender-differentiated linguistic styles. This two-cultures model has, in turn, also been widely criticized as a watering down of feminism for its failure to recognize the importance of sexual inequalities at the societal level, where men are accorded greater power, status, and privilege than women. Many linguists have preferred to adopt a compromise position, in which they combine elements of both the dominance and difference model.

Another area that we shall examine is usual s to exclude emotions from the process of attaining knowledge. Feminists, on the other hand, insisting that the private is the public and the personal is the political, have been concerned with questions about how women can create stories of their lives if they have only the male language with which to do it. The so-called personal turn in academic writing -- linked to both Postmodernism and Multiculturalism -- is largely a female strategy. We will question if this autobiographical turn is a phenomenon that can properly be gendered.

We will also review the variability in the linguistic expression of gender in cultures around the world, as well as in a survey of differences in language and gender within a single national context, the United States. It is appropriate that in a setting like Central Europe we also consider gender in multilingual societies, in postcolonial contexts, and in diglossic linguistic situations, where it may be access to certain languages, in particular to the prestige or textualized language, which differentiates the speech of men and women. For example, we will discusses cases like the resistance of some highly educated Arabic women to the use of the high language, classical Arabic, bilingualism among Andean Indian women, and the gender differentiation in the use of Hungarian and German in Austria, which focuses on the effects of urbanization and industrialization on the speech patterns of the sexes. We will also consider gender diversity across cultures in the United States, among native-born white Americans, among Chicanas, in different immigrant communities, and African-Americans, as well as in the adolescent subculture, and, finally in the classroom, one of society’s primary socializing institutions.

. Finally, we examine if anatomy need not be linguistic destiny, that is, if the bipolar categories of man and woman are really fixed categories. Instead of assuming that women and men behave in certain ways linguistically, we might ask how particular linguistic practices contribute to the production of people as "women and men"? Judith Butler and others who have taken a constructive view of gender propose that ways of talking and behaving that are associated with gender are a matter not of identity but of display. They suggest that behavior is not a reflection of the individual’s nature but rather of some performance that the individual is accomplishing. According to this view "gender is doing, not being," so that it is the practices people engage in that produce their gendered identities, and not the other way around. Constructionists also emphasize that no one is ever finished becoming a woman, or a man, but that each individual must constantly negotiate the norms, behaviors, and discourses that define masculinity and femininity for a particular community at a particular point in history. In this context, we will discuss how language may be used to perform social identities that do not match the individual’s biological characteristics, such as "queerspeak," "cross expressing," or "linguistic gender bending." For example, performance has a literal force in the "fantasy femininity" enacted by telephone sex workers (some of whom are male), whose use of powerless women’s speech is specifically marked as sexy.

**Course Syllabus**

The following syllabus is based on a 24 hour course, divided into twelve two hour sessions over three weeks, but it could be modified to two to six weeks, with shorter or longer class sessions, respectively.

1. INTRODUCTION. What’s gender to do with Language: grammatical versus natural gender. Are gender-based languages more sexist? A questionnaire on sex stereotypes.
2. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND. Folklinguistics and early grammarians on gender and language.
3. SEXIST LANGUAGE AND SEXIST DISCOURSE. Sexist language and naming conventions; the sexual derogation of women; non-reciprocal address; sexism in dictionaries; sexism and obscenity.
4. GENDER-BASED LANGUAGE REFORM. "Verbal hygiene" and political correctness; dictionaries and manuals on language reform; the limits of change; linguistic utopias.
5. THEORETICAL DEBATES. The three paradigms: deficit, dominance, and difference.
6. GENDER SOCIALIZATION. Children’s and adolescents’ language socialization.
7. GENDERED TALK. Interactional sociolinguistics in male-female and in single-sex interactions: "women talk," gossip, shop talk, locker room talk, the gender-linked meanings of silence.
8. GENDER AND LANGUAGE IN A MULTILINGUAL AND POSTCOLONIAL CONTEXT
9. GENDER AND LANGUAGE IN THE USA.
10. THE LINGUISTIC PERFORMANCE OF MASCULINITY
11. GENDER AND SEXUALITY: Socially constructed selves; communicating gender, race, and class through language; "talking like a lady," linguistic gender-bending, "queerspeak."
12. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE. Beyond binary thinking; communities of practice; are there universals of women’s language? Is the future female?