

Gender and Language (ENGL 3315-22632)

T/Th 8:00-9:15 in Irby 303

Dr. Katherine E.C. Willis

Three Ways to Contact Me:

Email: kwillis@uca.edu

- I only reply if you use basic etiquette (salutation, legible grammar, signature)
- Allow 24 hours for a response

Meet with me in Irby 317D:

- Stop by my office hours on **MWF 9-10, 11-12** or **T/Th 9:30-10:30**
- Schedule an appointment through the Calendly app: <https://calendly.com/katherinewillis>

Phone: 501-450-5100

Course Description & Objectives:

In this course we will take a sociolinguistic approach to the study of the relationships between gender and language. No previous experience with linguistics is required. Our course will mostly take a descriptive rather than prescriptive approach. In other words, we will explore what people *actually* think and do in real life rather than attempt to define what they *should* think and do. Although we will focus on a diverse array of English speakers, we will also look at case studies from other languages, such as Japanese, Czech, Swahili, and Hebrew.

In the process of considering a range of theoretical concepts and their real-life applications, we will work from three main presuppositions:

- a) Language is always changing: Every living language must change over time. Only dead languages are fixed.
- b) Our relationship with language is a two-way street: Language shapes us, but we also shape it.
- c) "Gender" and "sex" are not interchangeable terms. Whereas "sex" is a term referring to biological traits, "gender" refers to social constructs of identity that differ among communities and change over time.

Because the course will be heavily discussion-based and because some of the material has the potential to be heated, we will spend time in the first couple of weeks creating together a set of guidelines for appropriate conduct.

By the end of this course, you will:

- ✓ understand the complexities of gender in diverse communities
- ✓ deepen your knowledge of historical and contemporary issues
- ✓ explain major theoretical approaches to gender and language using the terminology of sociolinguistics
- ✓ apply theoretical concepts and complex terminology to real life situations
- ✓ hone your research and information literacy skills with both academic and popular sources
- ✓ sharpen your communication skills through public speaking, seminar discussion, and observational and analytic writing

UCA Core: This course satisfies the **upper division C (communication)** and **D (diversity)** requirements. For more info, go to <http://uca.edu/core>.

- Communication courses promote the ability to develop and present ideas logically and effectively in order to enhance communication and collaboration with diverse individuals and groups. This course will use **rubric A** for the following goal: Students will use appropriate conventions and strategies in oral communication for various audiences and purposes.
- Diversity courses promote the ability to analyze familiar cultural assumptions in the context of the world's diverse values, traditions, and belief systems as well as to analyze the major ideas, techniques and processes that inform creative works within different cultural and historical contexts. This course will use **rubric B** for the following goal: Analyze or compare diverse values, traditions, belief systems, and/or perspectives.

Required Materials:

All of our readings will come from free sources: either ebooks through the library or online articles/videos/etc. These ebooks require you to login if you're off campus; each one allows you to print/save a limited range of pages:

- [A Beginner's Guide to Language and Gender](#), 2nd edition, by Allyson Julé (2017)
- [Language and Gender](#), edited by Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet (2003)
- [Sexed Texts: Language, Gender and Sexuality](#), by Paul Baker (2008)
- other materials (handouts, articles, etc.) distributed electronically

Assignments and Grading:

10% Participation: Come to class each day prepared to write and to discuss. Because this is a seminar course, our success as individuals and as a group depends upon your consistent, active, and vocal participation. Good participation means being regularly present and active in class, engaging with me and your classmates in generative, constructive discussion, and being prepared for each day of class (i.e., you completed the reading, finished the assignments, arrived with the text and/or notes in hand, etc). See the rubric online.

- 10% Reading Responses:** For every class meeting that has an assigned reading, you must submit a reading response online before the start of class time. For days when you are leading seminar, you do not have to complete a response. Your response should be 150-300 words in length and focus on a key concept or on a specific passage from the reading. Here are just a few examples of approaches to take for your responses: critique the author's ideas; explain a connection to other readings we have done so far together; reconstruct a complex explanation in layman's terms; articulate your own position on the topic.
- 10% Leading seminar round 1:** You will be responsible for leading class discussion of the assigned reading(s) twice this semester. The available days are marked in the schedule with asterisks. We will sign up for specific days early in the semester. Based on your understanding of the reading, you will pose 5 discussion questions to the class. The questions should work together to help us get at the most important ideas in the reading. To aid discussion, put together a handout and make enough copies for the class. Your handout will include your name, the date, the reading info, a summary of the reading (4-6 sentences), a list of any key terms, and your 5 questions. You will be responsible for leading discussion for at least 20 minutes. You will be graded on the thoroughness of your preparation, your comprehension of the material, the quality of your questions, the helpfulness of your handout, and your skill in facilitating critical and organized discussion. See the rubric online for more info.
- 10% Leading seminar round 2:** Same as above, but with a more complex reading in the second half of the semester.
- 10% Annotated bibliography:** As a class, you will compile an annotated bibliography of scholarly articles/book chapters related to the study of gender and language. Each student will contribute entries for 2 separate sources, both of which must be scholarly and post-date 2005. Your annotations must follow MLA style and be 300-400 words in length. You will be graded on your ability to find suitable sources, the quality and depth of your analysis, and your use of MLA style. See the rubric online for more info.
- 15% News/Media Analyses:** In the first couple of weeks, you will be assigned a non-scholarly news/media source to analyze over the course of the semester. Some options will include, for example, the *Economist*, *Vox*, *The Lily*, *The Hill*, *Washington Post*, *Forbes*, *Wall Street Journal*, and others (we will generate more as a class). For your source, you will focus specifically on the ways that it addresses topics related to gender and language and/or the ways it uses gendered language. Choose three articles and compose a 500-700 word analysis of each. Your analysis should apply the concepts we've studied. Each analysis will be graded on the relevance of the article you chose, the knowledge of theoretical terms/concepts that you demonstrate, the depth of your critical thinking, and the quality of your writing. See the rubric online for more info.
- 10% Presentation:** The last few class meetings will be dedicated to student presentations. In 8-10 minutes (strictly timed) you will present your findings from your analyses of your assigned news

source. Your presentation should provide some background information on the source, a description of its tendencies in coverage of topics and use of language, supporting evidence from the articles you wrote about, and your personal opinions on the value of the source. You will be graded on the basic principles of good public speaking (which we will discuss together), the focus and rigor of your ideas, your ability to apply complex concepts to real-life artifacts, and the helpfulness of your slideshow/handout. See the rubric for more info.

10% Midterm exam: Expect a combination of multiple choice, matching, and short answer (i.e., paragraph length).

15% Final exam: Same as the midterm, but cumulative.

Course Schedule:

Readings and assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day on which they are listed. Some days may specify other materials you are required to bring. Note: I reserve the right to change the schedule below if it will help the class. I will announce any changes in class and via email.

Aug. 23	Intro to course. Gender and language in everyday life.
Aug. 28	Historical and scholarly backgrounds for studying gender and language. READ: <i>Beginner's Guide</i> ch 1.
Aug. 30	How is language a gendered thing? READ: <i>Beginner's Guide</i> ch 2. Demo of seminar leadership.
Sept. 4	Building our own guidelines for civility in class. No reading.
*Sept. 6	Language is a social resource. READ: <i>Language and Gender</i> ch 2.
Sept. 11	Research strategies scholarly sources on gender and language.
Sept. 13	Overview of key linguistic terminology. No reading.
*Sept. 18	Gender as social construct. READ: <i>Language and Gender</i> ch 1.
*Sept. 20	Speech activities, situations, and events. READ: <i>Language and Gender</i> ch 3.
*Sept. 25	Speech act theory. READ: <i>Language and Gender</i> ch 5. DUE: FIRST ENTRY IN THE CLASS BIBLIOGRAPHY
*Sept. 27	Gender and language in media and technology. READ: <i>Beginner's Guide</i> ch 3.
*Oct. 2	Gender and language in education. READ: <i>Beginner's Guide</i> ch 4.
*Oct. 4	Gender and language in the workplace. READ: <i>Beginner's Guide</i> ch 5.

- *Oct. 9 Gender and language in religion. READ: *Beginner's Guide* ch 6.
DUE: SECOND ENTRY IN THE CLASS BIBLIOGRAPHY
- Oct. 11 No class — fall break
- *Oct. 16 Gender and language in relationships. READ: *Beginner's Guide* ch 7.
- Oct. 18 MIDTERM EXAM**
- *Oct. 23 Positioning. READ: *Language and Gender* ch 5 (stop at "Who Cares" section)
- *Oct. 25 Positioning, continued. READ: *Language and Gender* ch 5 ("Who Cares" section thru the end)
DUE: NEWS/MEDIA ANALYSIS #1
- *Oct. 30 Fashioning a self. READ: *Language and Gender* ch 9 (stop at "Legitimate and Illegitimate Performances" section).
- *Nov. 1 Fashioning a self, cont. READ: *Language and Gender* ch 9 ("Legitimate and Illegitimate Performances" thru to the end).
- *Nov. 6 Performativity. READ: "Doing Femininity at Work: More than Just Relational Practice" by Janet Holmes and Stephanie Schnurr, *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 10.1 (2006): 31-51.
DUE: NEWS/MEDIA ANALYSIS #2
- *Nov. 8 READ: "Black Women in the Rural South: Conservative and Innovative," by Patricia C. Nichols.
- *Nov. 13 READ: "Indexing Polyphonous Identity in the Speech of African American Drag Queens," by Rusty Barrett.
- *Nov. 15 READ: "Female Speakers of Japanese in Transition," by Katsue Akiba Reynolds.
DUE: NEWS/MEDIA ANALYSIS #3
- *Nov. 20 READ: "Zuiqian Deficient Mouth : Discourse, Gender and Domestic Violence in Urban China," by Jie Yang.
- Nov. 22 No class — Thanksgiving break
- Nov. 27, Nov. 29, Dec. 4: Presentations
- Dec. 6 Retrospective on the course.
- Study Day: Dec. 7
- Final exam: Dec. 13, 8-10 am**

MY POLICIES FOR THIS COURSE:

STUDENT CONDUCT:

You are responsible for your conduct. I expect you to conduct yourself professionally and courteously in the classroom, in my office, and in your work. If your behavior seriously disrupts the learning experience of other students or my ability to teach, I will ask you to leave the classroom and/or the course.

ATTENDANCE AND DROP POLICY:

Your attendance and active participation in each class meeting throughout the semester is the foundation of your whole grade in this course. I reserve the right to drop students who have an excessive amount of unexcused absences. For a MWF course, that begins at 4 unexcused absences. For a T/Th course, that begins at 3 unexcused absences.

As the Attendance section of the Student Handbook explains, "A student's official program is regarded as his or her obligation to the institution, full performance of which requires regular and punctual class attendance and active participation. A student is responsible for coming to class prepared, completing any missed work, and knowing the dates and places of required course examinations."

GRADING POLICIES:

If you are unable to submit work on time due to an excused reason, it is your responsibility to contact me as soon as possible to document your reason and to make timely alternative arrangements. As the Student Handbook specifies in the section on Attendance, "Make-up examinations and assignments are required only for valid absences as determined by the faculty member. Students who miss an examination or assignment without a valid excuse may receive a failing grade for that exam or assignment."

Excused reasons include (but are not limited to): official university-sanctioned athletic or organizational events (requires appropriate documentation), severe illness, death of a family member, court appearances, jury duty. For such excused reasons, late work will be accepted for full credit. However, be aware that some in-class activities may not be possible to make up.

Unexcused reasons include (but are not limited to): computer/printer malfunctions, traffic problems, family vacations/travel, or forgetfulness. For such unexcused reasons, I may be able to accept late work for partial credit, but you must discuss it with me first. The standard deduction for late work is one letter grade off per day.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE:

I will respond to your email within 24 hours. If you do not hear from me in that time window, contact me again. This means you should not, if at all possible, email last minute concerns. In addition, I only respond to emails that follow basic etiquette. That includes the following: a salutation line, readable grammar, and a signature line.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

As a general rule, you should know the policies described in the Student Handbook. The Sexual Harassment Policy and Academic Policies are especially important. You can find the current edition of the Student Handbook online here.

Academic Integrity: The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

Title IX Disclosure: If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to "student-on-student" or "employee-on-student"), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs, and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on the specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>. *Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.

Americans with Disabilities Act: The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Disability Resource Center, 450-3613.

Building Emergency Plan: An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with

emergency procedures for any campus building in which they spend time for classes or other purposes.

Course Evaluations: Student evaluations of a course and its professor are a crucial element in helping faculty achieve excellence in the classroom and the institution in demonstrating that students are gaining knowledge. Students may evaluate courses they are taking starting on the Monday of the thirteenth week of instruction through the end of finals week by logging in to myUCA and clicking on the Course Evaluations task. This semester, course evaluations open on Monday Nov. 19.