Approach:

This topic in linguistic anthropology allows us to explore language as a crucial aspect of socio-cultural behavior. In our daily (post)modern lives, we interact with many people, express ourselves, and interpret the actions of others (sometimes in written or other mediatic forms). Much of the time we do this without thinking, or reflecting about how this happens. In this course we will explore the topic of social identity from cross-cutting perspectives that involve language. In addition to assigned readings and class discussion, there will be regular short assignments that involve observation and data collection to be turned in with brief analyses (that relate to the class lectures, discussions and readings). **Class attendance is important and required.**

Most of us realize that we have “multiple social identities.” Many social identities are temporary and shifting, based on the roles we play in structured social situations – guest or host, server or customer, student or instructor, patient or health practitioner. Other identities are based on less changeable attributes such as gender, age, and ethnic heritage. But even then, things can get complicated, as when a person’s parents come from different social back-grounds.

In all cases, our use of language is a major way in which we express or “enact” identity. In the U.S., this seems obvious when someone has a multilingual heritage such as Spanish or Arabic or Korean as well as English. But every language also has internal resources for expressing subtle social differences (e.g. “mom” vs “mother”), and these also influence (our perceptions of) “what’s going on” in the “real” social situations that we live through every day. The way we address someone typically “invokes” a particular identity (“Hi, Dr. Smith” or “Hey, girlfriend, what’s up?). We normally do this easily because we have been *socialized* to recognize and express these social differences, and are constantly engaged in "reading" the social situation and the identities of others.
How does this happen? What kinds of things do we observe and “know”? What are our “resources” for expressing (or hiding) our identities?

We will begin our exploration with a discussion of the “social construction of identity,” as developed from Erving Goffman’s work on the “social self” and his technical definition of the "social situation." (Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, and other readings) This work is foundational in the “ethnography of communication,” as originally proposed by linguistic anthropologists Dell Hymes and John Gumperz. To consider the public versus private aspects of identity, an early assignment will involve looking at “service encounters” and the work of Marilyn Merritt and others. Then, Keith Basso’s book will show us the complex interfaces among identity, relationship, situation, and genre in a way that builds on inter-ethnic service encounters in an Apache community. This will be followed by linguistic work on narrative and story, using Charlotte Linde’s Life Stories, and “discourse analysis” of linguistic forms. We will collect some material of our own, and read much of the anthology, Discourse and Identity, edited by Anna de Fina, Deborah Schiffrin, and Michael Bamberg. We will then focus on socialization and read the classic monograph on U.S. high school education, by Penelope Eckert (Stanton Wortham’s book on middle school identity shifts recommended, especially for those with a special interest in classroom/educational discourse/SETTINGS). As time permits, other materials will bring in international and multilingual settings and regional dialects. Though there will be a basic focus on face-to-face interaction throughout, the influence of technology and media will be considered, and will be an appropriate source of data for final projects.

Basic Texts and Readings:

The following books have been ordered for the campus bookstore, and will be read in approximately the following order:

Basso, Keith H. 1979. Portraits of "the Whiteman": Linguistic play and cultural symbols among the Western Apache. Cambridge U Press

Other materials may be recommended and ordered for the bookstore
Additional readings will be made available at the library or on-line. Students may have choices for different assignments, which will be shared through group discussion. Material will include interdisciplinary literature on discourse, social interaction, and conversational analysis in particular settings – drawing from various cultures and settings, sometimes involving more than one language. There will be emphasis on public situations and encounters that we have all experienced and that offer comparative data -- service encounters (and situations), medical settings, and educational or school settings. We will note that wherever there are complex and shifting agendas, individuals adapt in innovative ways and “use” their multiple identities – “performing” as it were from their repertoire -- to “manage” the social situation and the relationships involved. We will be doing a kind of discourse analysis, and will find that the notion of “situated discourse” is useful for analyzing and collecting data. We will also be asking, according to our individual interests, about the social consequences of identity.

Requirements:

Regular attendance & active participation in seminar format discussions. Brief oral and written reports on language observations and readings. Individual projects collecting/selecting a small corpus of data and providing an analysis for class presentation. There will be a take-home mid-term and an in-class required final consolidation review on the last day of regular class (no written final during exam week). Final projects are to be presented orally (with written summaries and bibliography) in last sessions. Individuals with special interests are encouraged to speak to the instructor and, when possible, accommodation to those interests in terms of individual assignments will be made. Detailed specification for written assignments will be discussed in class. Individual final projects should be discussed with the instructor before beginning research.

Learning Objectives:

Students are to become familiar with the many ways in which language use provides expression of personal social identity and serves, in fact, to “socially construct” identity through social structures that are “communicatively constituted” as it were. Basic concepts learned in Anth 4 should become more fluent and nuanced.

Through assignments in which students explore their own personal social experiences and document and analyze the language and communicative elements that are part of these experiences, students will become convinced that we all have multiple social identities, and that language is a powerful tool for both personal expression and interpretation of others. Students will also learn that the variable nature of social experience can often be characterized in terms of
settings, participants, and modalities for communication, and they should develop a sensibility for noticing all these differences and the linguistic resources at play.

Students should acquire a basic model of language in social interaction that provides the foundation for designing a small research project of their own, through which they are able to explore some issue about social identity (and its relation to language use) that is of particular interest to them.

**Grading:**

Grades will be based on class participation and oral presentations as well as written assignments. For full credit, all written assignments must be submitted in a timely way, and in no case after the last day of class. **Final marks will take into serious consideration how much individual students have gained and how much they have contributed to others in the class.** Learning from each other is highly valued. There may be no incompletes for this class.

**Schedule of Assignments (always subject to revision)**

**Jan 14** Introduction. Overview of approach, meeting each other, course goals and requirements.

**Jan 21** No class (MLK holiday and Presidential Inauguration)

**Jan 28** Goffman, Presentation of Self…. (whole book, especially first half). Observe/Collect two to five greeting exchanges (i.e. what A says and then what B says, etc. with some description of setting,) in written form (to be discussed in class). Also, name at least one recurrent “social setting” in your own life and characterize yourself in relationship to other participants. Note: if anyone has remembered (or currently observed) greeting exchanges that are multilingual or in a language other than English, these are encouraged as additional data.

**Feb 4** Read at least two of the following: Goffman, “On the Nature of Deference and Demeanor (AA 1956), Goffman, “The Neglected Situation” (AA 1964), Frame Analysis of Talk (electronic reserves); Footing (electronic reserves); write up greetings to turn in* (1 –3 pages only), Keisling ‘Dude’

**Feb 11** Service encounters: Merritt “OK”, Merritt Resources for Saying… (excerpt) ;Heller, “Bonjour, Hello”, Bailey, Wolfson & Manes, Rec. Zhang (other readings in blackboard); Read two or more of these. Observe/Collect brief service encounter exchange --- pay attention to openings and be prepared to “compare” with greetings assignment….Part 1 of take-home mid-term distributed.

**Feb 18** Presidents’ Day (no class)
Feb 25  Basso Portraits (whole book), Baugh, (more on service encounters,  
*Turn in service encounter exchanges (each on separate page)  Part 2 of take  
home mid-term distributed.  


SPRING BREAK (suggest long distance family or friends as story interviewees)  

Mar 18, Linde Life Stories --- chaps 1-4 required, esp. 1,2,4; rest of book recommended. Discussion of personal story data, written assignment to be turned in March 25.  

Mar 25 D& I section 1 and 2 (selected chapters) Cook-Gumperz, Ochs & Taylor (Blackboard, e-reserves) Final Project Guidelines reviewed and Annotated Bibliography Assignment using references from final projects.  

Apr 1 Eckert, “Jocks & Burnouts” (whole book); bring notes/ideas about own high school experience; Interviews of personal stories and retellings due* (may be turned in on Mar 25)  
Note, other materials may be assigned on learning and socialization. (E.g., a good time to read Wortham on Learning and Identity if interested in educational settings over time) Assignment on collection of media example explained.  

Apr 8  D& I sections 3 & 4, other materials may be assigned on multilingualism, multi-modalities, and on-line identities (personal stories/experiences to be shared orally with written outline*). Annotated bibliography items due (e-mail these).  

Apr15 Lecture/Discussion of Media & Genre & Historical Contact. McLuhan, Merritt, Dent, Kuipers (Blackboard, e-reserves), Philips (if available) Media examples to be ready to present and discuss.  

Apr 22 Required final in-class review and group consolidation exercises. Presentation of Individual Projects may begin (required attendance, written commentary on others)  

Apr 2 Final Project Presentations (written commentary on others required – no other written final exam). All final projects should be ready for presentation.  

Apr 30 possible makeup class if needed to schedule all presentations (to be determined later)  

May 1 designated Monday, last day of class and presentations. All written accompaniments of presentations to be turned in not later than this day.