Sociolinguistic variation, meaning, and social practice
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Language is a social practice – a dialectic between structure and agency. It is in practice that language changes and that meaning is constructed, and a focus on practice allows us to see beyond subdisciplinary divisions in linguistic analysis. This course will focus on meaning in sociolinguistic variation. We will examine variation as part of a broader social-indexical system, locating stylistic variability in the social-semiotic landscape. We will also examine variation as part of the larger meaning system of language, considering the relations among what are commonly called “semantic,” “pragmatic” and “social” meaning.

Readings:

Eckert, Penelope. (2016). Variation, meaning and social change. Sociolinguistics: Theoretical debates. N. Coupland. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 68-85.

Zhang, Qing. (2005). "A Chinese yuppie in Beijing: Phonological variation and the construction of a new professional identity." Language in society 34(3): 431-466.

Moore, Emma. and Robert J. Podesva (2009). "Style, indexicality and the social meaning of tag questions." Language in society 38(4): 447-485.

Acton, E. (forthcoming). Pragmatics and the Third Wave. Social meaning and linguistic variation: Theorizing the Third Wave. Eds. L. Hall-Lew, E. Moore and R. Podesva. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Podesva, Robert and Patrick Callier (2015). "Voice quality and identity." Annual Review of Applied Linguistics 35: 173-194.