# Module 9: The Racial Dimensions of Language

## Introduction

In the United States, race is a sometime contentious and difficult topic. However, it is impossible to deny that there is a profound connection between language, race, and ethnicity. This connection has been explored by linguistic anthropologists from a variety of perspectives. American Anthropology was founded in large part as a scientific enterprise to debunk the idea that race is biological. In this module, I will introduce the topic of race, giving a brief historical background on how race has been conceptualized anthropologically before discussing the relationship between racial and ethnic identity, language ideologies, and linguistic practices.

This week will be challenging in terms of the amount of reading expected of you. Not only are you expected to complete chapter 10 and Urcioli’s article on the use of Spanish and English in a New York Puerto Rican neighborhood, but you are also expected to have finished reading Keith Basso’s book *Portraits of ‘the Whiteman.’* Each of these readings: the book, which focuses closely on African American English and the Ebonics controversy; the article, which focuses on the choice to speak Spanish or English in New York city; and Basso’s book, which brings in the question of social relations through the construct of “the Whiteman” each presents an example of the relevance of race and ethnicity within many linguistic anthropological analyses, particularly research carried out in the United States.

## Objectives

At the end of this module, you will be able to:

* Define “race” and “ethnicity.”
* Explain what is meant by the statement “race is not biological.”
* List and explain the rules governing African American English (AAE).
* Analyze connection between identity, race, language ideologies, and language use.

## Time Management

This course is designed to maximize benefits gained from our weekly f2f meeting. In order for our class meeting to enhance and further deepen your understanding of course materials and help you achieve our module objectives, I suggest you manage your time wisely. An efficient example of how you can best utilize your time for this course is as follows:

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| **Day** | **Suggested Action** |
| Monday | Read assigned reading and module content |
| Tuesday | Finish assigned reading and module content |
| Wednesday | Original post due in the weekly graded discussion |
| Thursday | F2F Meeting |
| Friday | Response to another’s original post due by midnight tonight |

## Assigned Reading

This week, you will complete the following readings. Please do the reading as you complete the module content. You must have the required reading done prior to our f2f class meeting on Thursday.

* Ahearn, Laura. *Living Language.* **Chapter 10** (NOT Ch. 9).
* Basso, Keith. *Portraits of ‘the whiteman’*. Ch. 3-5.
* Urcioli, Bonnie. 1991. [The Political Topography of English: the view from a New York Puerto Rican Neighborhood](http://www.jstor.org/stable/645150). *American Ethnologist.*