



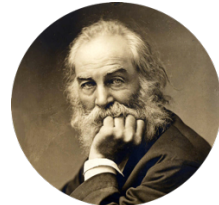
HONR 19901: Evolution of Ideas

SLANG

Honors College and Residences North 1145
Section 042: M/W 8:30 – 9:20
Section 015: M/W 12:30 – 1:20
Section 044 T/R 4:30 – 5:20

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Office: Honors College and Residences South 1074
Office Hours: 1:30 - 3:30 T/R

Slang, profoundly consider'd, is the lawless germinal element,
below all words and sentences, and behind all poetry.
-Walt Whitman



What's so wrong with *ain't*? What makes saying it feel so right? In this course, dedicated to the twisted history of slang, we will try to understand why certain words have such a hold over us and what is at stake in the lexical choices we make. From the poetry of common speech to the theories of the linguistic elites, we will consider a variety of texts and materials that think broadly about the politics of language. While phrases like "on fleek" and "stay woke" seem inseparable from our shared short-attention span, they too have a history, one that stretches back to the beginnings of western civilization. In representing the nonstandard, they structure our very concept of standardization. They are the disorder that orders the modern world. To study them is to study the line that separates insider from outsider, citizen from slave and *isn't* from *ain't*.

KEEPING US HONEST: CLASS OBJECTIVES

- 1) Conduct research across disciplinary lines, engaging with material composed for a variety of audiences.
- 2) Extend the ideas of others by forwarding or countering their claims with new evidence and interpretations.
- 3) Collaborate with other students to develop projects that contribute to the mission of the Honors College and Residences, Purdue University and the local community at large.

DIVERSITY

Each voice in the classroom has something of value to contribute. Please take care to respect the different experiences, beliefs, and values expressed by students and faculty involved in this course. All are expected to support Purdue's commitment to diversity, and thus to respect individuals of all ages, backgrounds, citizenships, abilities, educational backgrounds, ethnicities, family statuses, sexual orientations, genders & gender identities, geographical locations, languages, political affiliations, races, religions, socioeconomic statuses, and work experiences.

VULGAR TONGUES

For better or worse, slang does not play by the rules of standard etiquette. While it can exemplify many democratic and egalitarian ideals, it can also be racist, misogynist, homophobic, in a word: insensitive. Possible offenders include: curse words, graphic descriptions of bodily functions, language of a sexual nature, and derogatory terms for women, men, racial and ethnic groups, members of the LGBTQ+ community, people living with disabilities and, unfortunately, many others. Just like the chemistry lab, where noxious fumes are treated with great care, our class must regard slang as a volatile property, one that seems innocuous at first, but can, at any moment, blow up in our faces. Our goal is to create an environment where collectively we can hone our sensitivities to the experiences of others, using slang as a means to do so. If the idea of studying profanity sounds like it might carry a heavy burden for your personal wellbeing, I encourage you to select another course. Simply put, we will study slang in this class. We will not use it unreflectively.

THE 411

Course Text

All readings will be posted on the course Blackboard site.

Submitting Projects

All work should be submitted through Blackboard, unless otherwise indicated. Students should only submit Word files, and these documents should follow MLA formatting guidelines. For questions about formatting, consult the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL).

Email Etiquette

Please begin your email with a greeting and end it with a closing signature. Clearly state your reason for emailing in the subject heading. I will respond to all academic emails within 24 hours, if not before. Before sending an email asking for information or clarification, consider whether that info or clarification might already have been provided via this syllabus, Blackboard, or a previous email.

CALENDAR

Week 1: The Meaning/s of Slang

M/T 8/22 Lecture

- Why study slang
- Slang Introductions and Definitions
- Syllabus Overview
- Explain major projects in brief

W/R 8/24 Recitation

- [Read Dumas and Lighter, "Is Slang a Word for Linguists" \[11 pgs, 1 hr\]](#)
- Group In-Class Assignment: Defining the Undefinable, see description below. **[Due by the end of class]**

Week 2: The Domains of Slang: Underworld, Inner-City, and Campus

M/T 8/29 Lecture

- Read section from Eble, *Slang and Sociability* [pgs 1-5, 25-43, 2 hrs]
- In-class: Watch "Ice-Cube Tries to Guess Cockney Rhyming Slang" [Youtube, 3 min]

W/R 8/31 Recitation

- Group In-class Assignment: Engineering New Slang, see description below **[Due by the end of class.]**

Week 3: The Ethics of Listening

M/T 9/5 Lecture [NO CLASS LABOR DAY]

- Read section from Rickford, *Spoken Soul* [91-108] [1 hour]
- Read section from Green, *Slang: A Very Short Introduction* on "Recording Slang" [2pgs, 20 min]

W/R 9/7 Recitation

- Guest Visitor, Speaking about the Ethics of Human Research
- Group In-class Assignment: Building the Template, see description below

Week 4: The Social Construction of Slang

M/T 9/12 Lecture

- Watch video of Dr. Moore explaining the steps for mapping slang [10 min]
- Individual Pre-class Assignment: Map 1 slang attestation¹ **[Due by Monday at 8pm]**
- Read Grossman and Tucker, "Gender Differences and Sexism in the Knowledge and Use of Slang" [9 pgs., 1 hr]

W/R 9/14 Recitation

- Individual Pre-class Assignment: Qualtrics Group Assessment
- Group In-class Assignment: Data Analysis, see description below. **[Due by the end of class.]**

Week 5: The Lexicographer

M/T 9/19 Lecture

- Individual Pre-class Assignment: Map 1 slang attestation **[Due by Saturday at 8pm]**
- Read from Stavans, *Dictionary Days* "Pride and Prejudice" and "In the Land of Lost Love"
- In class: Watch extended segment of *Ball of Fire* (1941)

W/R 9/21 Recitation

- Group In-class Assignment: Diving for Dictionaries

Week 6: The Lexicographer pt 2

M/T 9/26 Lecture

- Individual Pre-class Assignment: Map 1 slang attestation **[Due by Saturday at 8pm]**

¹ In **linguistics**, the term attested language applies to language that has been documented. Thus, attestation is simply another word for evidence. Slang attestation, in our case, means evidence of living slang.

- Read “Developing a Campus Slang Dictionary for the University of Botswana” [8 pgs, 45 mins]
- In-class Activity: Group Presentations of Diving for Dictionaries

W/R 9/28 Recitation

- Group In-class Assignment: Work on Slang Dictionary Project
- **Submit by the end of class** the following components:
 - 30 terms selected from the course-wide slang map and Proposed Type of Dictionary.

Week 7: The Poet and the Copywriter

M/T 10/3 Lecture

- Read Whitman, “Slang in America” [4pgs. 30 min]
- Read Whitman, sections 1, 2, 8 in Song of Myself [30 min]

W/R W/R 10/5 Recitation

- Group In-Class Assignment: Work on Slang Dictionary Project
- **Submit by the end of class** the following components:
 - Justification for your slang dictionary

Week 8: The Technology of Slang

M/T 10/10 [NO CLASS: FALL BREAK]

- Individual Pre-class Assignment: Qualtrics Group Assessment
- Read section from Zappavigna, *Discourse of Twitter and Social Media* [pgs 127-142, 1.5 hrs]

W/R 10/12 Recitation

- Group In-Class Assignment: Work on slang dictionary project, focusing on the following components:
 - Statement on the effect of social media on the terms in your dictionary

Week 9: The Evolution of Your Idea

M/T 10/17 Lecture

- Group Out-of-class Assignment: Complete Slang Dictionary Project, focusing on the following components
 - Revise Data Analysis to accentuate the theme of your dictionary
 - Conclusion
- Presentations

SHORT IN-CLASS PROJECTS

1) Define the Undefinable

As a group, use the criteria provided in “Is Slang a Word for Linguists” to fashion your own definition that emphasizes the aspects of nonstandard language that you as a group find most important. The best definition will serve as the standard for the rest of the class. In addition to defining slang, distinguish the concept from its synonyms (dialect, jargon, vernacular) as well as its antonyms (standard, formal, sophisticated).

2) Engineering New Slang

As a group, use the assigned reading to develop your own slang term. Eble describes a number of ways in which new slang terms come into existence. After generating your term, write a reflection on the ways in which you applied Eble’s comments to engineer your slang. Finally, give an account of your process, identifying the steps you took to completion.

3) Building the Template

After you have read Rickford’s *Spoken Soul*, this assignment will require you to develop a template that will help us describe the social reality of slang. This is where you decide what information gets entered into the slang map. The best template will become the standard used by everyone in the class, when mapping slang. As a group, you will have to decide what information we need to know in order to appropriately comprehend slang. Should we include the definition of the word, the part of speech, information about context, who was speaking? How will we preserve the privacy of the speaker, while still producing a comprehensive account of slang attestation?

4) Data Analysis

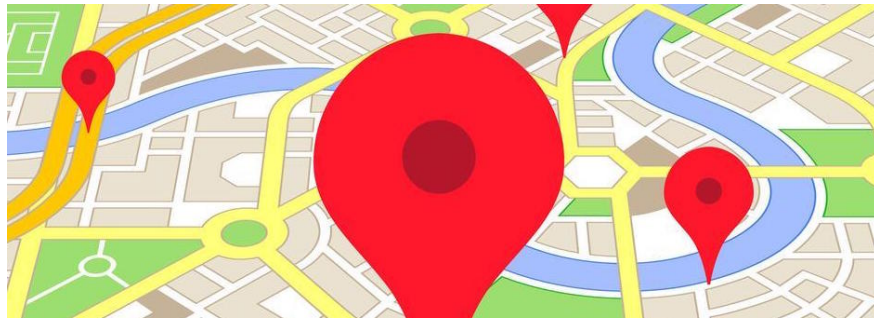
Write a collective overview of the slang map thus far, highlighting various insights from your experience. Focus on the following points: 1) Where does slang seem to circulate best on campus? 2) Could you argue that there is a correlation between time and speech, i.e. does slang emerge throughout the day or at a specific time (morning, afternoon, evening, late night)? 3) Drawing upon the readings, how would you characterize the culture of slang at Purdue? Is slang primarily a male enterprise in the ways that Grossman and Tucker imply? What other trends do you notice?

5) Diving for Dictionaries

As a group, you will search the library catalogue for a dictionary of slang. You will search the stacks and find a hardcopy of a dictionary that catches your collective interest. Read the introduction and other explanatory material included in the text, but do not check the book out from the library. Make a list

of the topics addressed in the introduction and make notes on the kinds of information provided for the individual entries. Complete this process for homework and be prepared to give a short 5-minute presentation in class, detailing the dictionary and your judgement of its value.

EXTENDED PROJECTS



During weeks 4 – 6, each student will be expected to map 1 attestation of slang use, as heard on campus. We will use the Google My Maps application to chart slang use. In week 3, groups will compete to develop the most comprehensive template for assessing slang attestations. This template will feature categories that reveal important information about slang use. For every slang attestation, you will need to complete a template, which you will then cut and paste into the digital map. In week 4, I will provide a video carefully guiding you through this process, but in a nutshell it should look something like this:

You're walking home from the gym at 8pm and you hear three students talking very loudly about the weekend, one says something that qualifies as slang in your mind. You immediately note the occurrence by writing down all of the information required by the template.

After you have this information, type it into the provided student-engineered template (available on Blackboard).

With the completed template, open the link to the shared class map in Google Maps. (Link available on Blackboard)

Select the "Layer" associated with your group and deselect all the other layers.

Select the "Add Marker" function for the cursor from the toolbox.

Guide the cursor to the area where you heard the slang and drop a pin.

In the title field, enter the slang word or phrase, and in the description box, copy and paste the language you entered into the provided template. Do not change formatting. The bullet points will make the text more readable.

You will then change the color of the pin to the color of your group.

And the last step: open the shared class spreadsheet (Available on Blackboard) and cut and paste the information from the template into the appropriate columns.

Some Ground Rules

- Each slang term/phrase can only be mapped once. Our goal is to map 207 different slang attestations. [23 students per section, 3 sections, 3 attestations per student]
- Pre-recorded slang (i.e. slang in television, movies, music) does not count, only slang that the student hears spoken in his/her immediate surroundings.
- Slang attestations are only permissible if they arise in the natural flow of conversation, without any coaching from the student lexicographer (i.e. no stacking the decks).

Anticipated Outcomes

- Convey information clearly and concisely through written communication.
- Listen to everyday language and decode its contextual information.
- Use critical, practical, and creative thinking skills to make decisions and problem solve.
- Understand standards and expectations for personal and professional ethical behavior by acting in accord with an appropriate set of social norms.
- Become critically conscious of cultural difference, understanding how diverse perspectives, backgrounds, beliefs, cultures, experiences, and/or historical dynamics can influence groups and individuals.

EXTENDED PROJECTS, pt. 2

In week 6, each group will begin the process of using the slang map to compile a slang dictionary. Each slang dictionary must have a unique theme. You can make a dictionary of jock slang, of engineer slang (NOT JARGON), of gendered slang, of ethnic slang. The dictionary will feature the following components:

- critical definition of slang [200 words]
- an explanation of the difference between slang and its synonyms [200 words]
- overview of the proposed type of dictionary [200 words]
- justification for your proposed dictionary of slang [400 words]
- data analysis (what arguments can you make using the map and your dictionary) [400 words]
- 30 terms, taken from the map at large, contributed by any student in any section.
- reflection on the role of social media on campus slang [200 words]
- conclusion [200 words]

Students can expect to be provided with an example of this dictionary project in week 6.

Anticipated Outcomes

- Effectively exchange information verbally and in writing with group members and others.
- Select, sort, and combine information to create a useful summary of the slang map, which reflects a well-articulated perspective.
- Generate new ideas through creative and critical thinking processes.
- Foster appropriate and productive relationships with group members in order to undertake complicated teamwork and pursue a shared goal.
- Come to a clearer understanding about one's beliefs, values, culture, and actions, all as they relate to the production, perception, and collection of slang.



PARTICIPATION

Although our first session of the week is called Lecture, do not be fooled. Student participation is vital. Good lectures feel like conversations. So in order to make these lectures feel good, I'll need you to come to class with something to converse about. Questions, opinions, declarations. Please beware: quantity is not a substitute for quality. One well-placed comment that addresses the reading and builds upon the conversation at hand is worth much more than a handful of comments that do not advance our collaborative engagement.

As for participation during recitation group meetings, I will use a Qualtrics survey in weeks 4 and 7 to assess individual participation in group assignments.

GRADING

Define the Undefinable [Collaborative, In-class]	5
Engineering a New Slang [Collaborative, In-class]	5
Building the Template [Collaborative, In-class]	5
Data Analysis [Collaborative, In-class]	5
Diving for Dictionaries	5
3 Slang Attestations, 1 per week [Individual, Out-of-class]	10 each 30 total
Slang Dictionary [Collaborative, In-and-out-of-class]	35
Lecture Participation [Individual]	5
Recitation Participation [Individual]	5
	100

Grade Descriptions

100-90 (A) – You did what the assignment asked at an exemplary level, meaning that I could use your work as a possible guide for future courses. Work in this range fulfills all required aspects of the assignment in ways that exceed my expectations. Where B work exhibits mastery of concept and careful execution, the A separates itself by virtue of creativity. To get the A, one must find creative (i.e. unexpected) connections between the matter at hand and issues not discussed directly in this course. [A+: 98–100 / A: 92–97 / A-: 90–91]

- 89-80 (B) – You did what the assignment asked of you at a high quality level. Work in this range exhibits mastery of concept and careful execution, has a clear purpose, and makes a well-organized contribution to class culture. [B+: 88-89 / B: 82-87 / B- 80-81]
- 79-70 (C) – You did the assignment asked of you, and the work is passable. Work in this range tends to have problems with organization, engagement with course concepts, or critical thinking. [C+: 78-79 / C: 72-77 / C-: 70-71]
- 69-60 (D) – You did what the assignment asked at a low level of quality and/or did not fulfill the assignment requirements. [D+: 68-69 / D: 62-67 / D- 60-61]
- 59.6 > (F) – For those who don't show up, don't do the work, or plagiarize.

COURSE POLICIES

Instructor Reserves the Right to Amend the Syllabus

Like slang, our syllabus is an ephemeral phenomenon. Unlike slang, this ephemeral phenomenon is subject to the instructor's discretion. I reserve the right to amend any aspect of this syllabus if I deem it to be in the best interest of the group as a whole. I will notify you at least 2 weeks in advance if I need to make any changes that will affect grading expectations.

Attendance

As students have created their own schedules, it is assumed that they will be in class on time and ready to contribute. Students are allotted **2 absences**, which they can use

however they see fit (sick days, family engagements/ emergencies, or any day where something else takes a priority over this class). After two absences, students will lose a letter grade for each additional absence. If a student is absent, they have a responsibility to their group to make up for any group work they have missed.

- Special circumstances require a notice from the Dean of Students. See below for the University's Grief Absence Policy for Students. The link to the complete policy and implications can be found at <http://www.purdue.edu/odos/services/classabsence.htm>
- *Purdue University recognizes that a time of bereavement is very difficult for a student. The University therefore provides the following rights to students facing the loss of a family member through the Grief Absence Policy for Students (GAPS). [...] A student should contact the Office of the Dean of Students to request that a notice of his or her leave be sent to instructors. . . . Given proper documentation, the instructor will excuse the student from class and provide the opportunity to earn equivalent credit and to demonstrate evidence of meeting the learning outcomes for missed assignments or assessments.*

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Plagiarism can be defined as the appropriation of another person's intellectual property without proper permission or citation. A student is plagiarizing if he or she turns in someone else's work as their own, whether it is the whole paper, a copy-paste job of language from the web, or the presentation of another person's idea as the student's own. A student is also plagiarizing if they carelessly misrepresent their research or if they do not provide citations (or a works cited). Offenders will be reported to the dean and will be failed from the course regardless of the value of the assignment.

Campus Emergencies

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control.

Statement about Disabilities

Students with disabilities must be registered with Adaptive Programs in the Office of the Dean of Students before classroom accommodations can be provided. If you are eligible for academic accommodations because you have a documented disability

that will impact your work in this class, please schedule an appointment with me.

RECITATION GROUPS

Section 42

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Dowell, Samantha R. Kumpf, Lauren M. Plumer, Ross J. Upshaw, Angel N. Dillon, Mark T. Hayes, Bailey A. Heath, Samuel M.	Hong, Peter J. Lou, Christopher T. Newquist, Molly K. Lovering, Michelle F. Phelps, Ruth L. Stone, Julia E. Arthur, Alexia N. Garcia Vizcarra, Pedro E.	Park, Jung Hyun (Irene) Roth, Ilana L. Smith, Hugh L. Smith, Nathan S. Cao, Duong T. Dickson, Adam C. Frawley, Kaitlyn E. Friedlander, Max L.

Section 15

Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
Tesmer, Alexander L. Vance, Daniel W. Coffin, Eleanor J. Johnson, Juna R. Mbachu, Prisca A. Monti, Julia C. Wingard, Patrick H. Sharma, Jayant K.	Gandy, Ashlin J. Moore, Kileen Q. Begbaaji, Toyosi A. Pepen, Alexandra M. Cooper, Christopher C. Schingel, Andrew G. Kwieciak, Cameron T. Park, Sukmin	Adriano, Alexandra C. Glesing, Nicolas D. Ray, Lucinda C. Robbins, Taylor E. Bender, Adam M. Colston, John C. Long, Drake M.

Section 44

Group 7	Group 8	Group 9
Langowski, Simon H. Li, Jason J. Mains, Noah A. Carnahan, Matthew P. Garman, Kenna J. Peterson, Caroline F. Tockstein, Jaylin R.	Bellamy, Lauren E. Koeppen, Allison R. Turk, Eamaan Garla, Ashley G. Hickey, Taylor H. Bruns, Daniel J. Kraft, Owen Z. Pulsifer, Elizabeth A.	Smith, Noah A. Martin Tovar, Andrea Uli, Amala M. Whelan, Daniel P. Jones, Ashley J. Clifford, Abigail D. Raber, Vanessa R. Vecera, Elizabeth

Sources Consulted

- Adams, Michael. *Slang: The People's Poetry*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Allen, Irving Lewis. *The City in Slang: New York Life and Popular Speech*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Coleman, Julie. *The Life of Slang*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Eble, Connie. *Slang and Sociability: In-Group Language Among College Students*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996
- Green, Jonathon. *Slang: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Maurer, David W. *Language of the Underworld*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1982.
- Watkins, Adam. Syllabus for HONR 19901: Play, Spring 2016