No two speakers of the same language sound exactly alike – language varies socially. This variation turns out to be as complex and as interesting as society itself. Markers of individual personas and group affiliation—including age, gender, ethnicity, rural or urban lifestyle, sexual orientation, to name only a few axes of variation—are subtle but ubiquitous, especially at the level of speech sounds (phonetics).

Doing sociophonetics means to study socially meaningful intra- and inter-speaker phonetic variation in the context of associated social practices. This class provides a theoretical and practical introduction to these ideas and methods. There will be a focus on variation in local languages: English, Spanish as well as indigenous / lesser studied languages; a broad survey of common phonetic and phonological variables including vowels, consonants, variation in rhythm, intonation and voice quality; sociolinguistic field methods and field recording techniques; training in the widely used phonetics software Praat, including Praat scripting basics.