



## Course syllabus

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Department of Swedish Language

1SV125 Fula ord i tvärvetenskaplig genomlysning, 7,5  
högskolepoäng

Taboo words from an interdisciplinary viewpoint, 7.5 credits

**Main field of study**

Swedish Language

**Subject Group**

Swedish/Nordic Languages

**Level of classification**

First Level

**Progression**

G1N

**Date of Ratification**

Approved by Faculty of Arts and Humanities 2019-01-21

The course syllabus is valid from spring semester 2019

**Prerequisites**

General entry requirements for university studies.

### Objectives

After completing the course, the students should be able to:

- account for swear words, insults and taboo words from the perspective of Swedish language history,
- apply a sociocultural, contrastive and cognitive perspective on the semantics of these categories of words,
- in general terms account for swear words from neuro-linguistic and neuro-behavioural perspectives,
- account for and explain the characteristic phonology of swear words and taboo words.

## Content

This course introduces swear words, insults and taboo words from an interdisciplinary perspective. It uses Swedish literature, linguistics, history and psychology. The course includes a historical introduction to the development of swear words and insults in Swedish from the 17th century until today in relation to the cultural contexts of different time periods. The semantics of Swedish swear words and insults is discussed from a contrastive perspective, i.e. in relation to equivalents in other languages. The course also discusses language policies and cognitive aspects of swear words, insults and taboo words, as well as questions of verbal hygiene and how language influences thought and vice versa. The course also includes a general introduction to neuro-linguistic and neuro-behavioural findings regarding swear words, including their localisation in the brain, their physiological effects and their special role in aphasia. The prototypical phonology of swear words and taboo words is discussed, and phonology and function are related to each other.

## Type of Instruction

This is an online distance course, using types of instruction appropriate for that form of distribution, such as recorded lectures and online seminars.

## Examination

The course is assessed with the grades Fail (U), Pass (G) or Pass with Distinction (VG).

In order to receive the grade of Pass, the student must achieve the objectives and be active continuously on the learning platform. Grading criteria for the grade of Pass with Distinction will be specified when the course starts.

The course is examined through compulsory group discussions, a minor empirical study of swear words, taboo words or insults, and a take-home examination.

For students who do not pass the first examinations, retake examinations are provided in accordance with local regulations at the university.

## Course Evaluation

At the end of the course, a course evaluation is conducted. Results and analysis of the course evaluation are communicated to the students who have taken the course and the students who are taking the course when it is offered the next time.

The evaluation is anonymous. The course evaluation is filed according to departmental regulations.

## Required Reading and Additional Study Material

### Required reading

*Advances in Swearing research: new languages and new contexts* (2017). (eds.) Kristy Beers Fägersten & Karyn Stapleton. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 282 p. ISBN: 978-90-272-6500-5.

Af Klintberg, B. (2003). *Fula visboken*. Stockholm: Ordfront. 137 p. ISBN: 9789188832047.

Aryani, A, Conrad M, Schmidke, D, & Jacobs A. (2018). Why is 'piss' ruder than 'pee'? The role of sound in affective meaning making. *PLOS One* 6:13 (6), 1–27. 27 p. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0198430>

Bowers, J. , Pleydell-Pearce, C., & Casles, A. (2011). Swearing, euphemisms and linguistic relativity. *PLOS One* 6(7), 1–8. 8 p. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0022341>

Cameron, D. (2012). *Verbal hygiene* (2nd. ed.), chap. 4: Civility and its discontents: language and 'political correctness'. New York: Routledge, pp. 116–166. 50 p. ISBN: 9780415696005.

- Christie, C. (2013). The relevance of taboo language: An analysis of the indexical values of swearwords. *Journal of Pragmatics* 58, 152–169. 17 p. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.06.009>
- Dewaele, J.-M. (2018). “Cunt”: On the perception and handling of verbal dynamite by L1 and L2 users of English. *Multilingua* 37(1), 53–81. 28 p. <https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2017-0013>
- Falk, E. (2011). *Verbala förolämpningar i 1630-talets Uppsala: En historisk talaktsanalys*. diss. Uppsala. 265 p. ISBN: 978-91-506-2231-7.
- Holm, Gösta (2000). Fitta, fucka, knulla, kuk: en grupp mycket anrika ord, som undviks i bildat samtal. *Språkets speglingar*. Festskrift till Birger Bergh. (eds.) Arne Jönsson & Anders Piltz. Lund: Klassiska institutionen och Skåneförlaget, 368–372. 4 p. ISBN: 91-87976-13-7. Selection available as a PDF on the learning platform.
- Jarrick, Arne & Söderberg, Johan (2002). *Odygd och vanära: folk och brott i gamla Stockholm*. Stockholm: ePan Prisma, avsnittet ”Förtal och okvädande – en lättsårad 1700-talsmänniska?”, 149–168. 19 p. Selection available as a PDF on the learning platform.
- Jay, T.B. & Janscheqwitz (2008). The pragmatics of swearing. *Journal of Politeness Research* 4, 267–288. 21 p. <https://doi.org/10.1515/JPLR.2008.013>
- Jay, T. B. (2009). The utility and ubiquity of taboo words. *Perspectives in Psychological Science*, 4, 153–161. 8 p. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6924.2009.01115.x>
- Ljung, M. (2010). *Swearing: A Cross-Cultural Linguistic Study*. Palgrave MacMillan. 190 p. ISBN: 9780230576315.
- Melin, L. & Parkvall, M. (2016). *Laddade ord: en bok om tankens makt över språket*. Stockholm: Morfem. 190 p. ISBN: 9789198092288.
- Rassin, E. & Van der Heijden, S. (2005). Appearing credible? Swearing helps! *Psychology, Crime & Law* 11:2, 177–182. 5 p. <https://doi.org/10.1080/106831605160512331329952>
- Sköldberg, Emma (2015). Bland runda ord och dialektala uttryck. Om den användargenererade sajten Folkmun.se. In *Perspektiv på lexikografi, grammatik och språkpolitik i Norden*. Caroline Sandström et al. (ed.). Institutet för de inhemska språken, Helsingfors, 229–241. 12 p. ISBN: 9789525446852.
- Stephens, R., Atkins, J., Kingston, A. (2009). Swearing as a response to pain. *NeuroReport* 5, vol. 20 (12), 1056–1060. 4 p. <https://doi.org/10.1097/WNR.0b013e32832e64b>
- Stephens, R., & Umland, C. (2011). Swearing as a response to pain—effect of daily swearing frequency. *Journal of Pain* 12, 1274–1281. 7 p. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpain.2011.09.004>
- Stroh-Wollin, U. (2005). Från vaserra till herregud: Om Vår Herres medverkan i 1700-talets svordomar. In *Språk i tid. Studier tillägnade Mats Thelander på 60-årsdagen*, Institutionen för nordiska språk, Uppsala, 535–544. 9 p. ISBN: 9789150618105.
- Stroh-Wollin, Ulla, 2010: Fula ord – eller? En enkät om attityder till svordomar och andra fula ord. In *SoLiD* nr 20 (FUMS Rapport nr 230). Uppsala University. 25 p. ISSN 0348-5838.
- van Lancker, D., & Cummings, J. L. (1999). Expletives: Neurolinguistics

and neurobehavioral perspectives on swearing. *Brain Research Reviews* 31, 83–104. 21 p. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0165-0173\(99\)00060-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0165-0173(99)00060-0)

**List of references**

Andersson, L-G. (2004). *Fult språk: svordomar, dialekter och annat ont*. Stockholm: Carlsson. ISBN: 9172033940.