Language and Power
ANTH 27420/37420 & LING 28860/38860
Spring 2015
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:30 a.m.-11:50 a.m.
Cobb 110

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Language is often imagined to inhabit a symbolic realm autonomous from other aspects of social life, including power. This seminar starts from the contrary position that language and power are intrinsically interconnected. Drawing particularly on the insights of linguistic anthropologists and critical sociolinguists, we will discuss how linguistic practices reflect and shape large-scale power relations, sometimes through explicit attempts to pursue particular linguistic projects, and sometimes through means more subtle and covert. How, we will ask, can we take relations of power and inequality into account and still make room for the agency and imagination of the speaking subject? Thus, we will push against both approaches that view power as a solely top-down phenomenon and those that confine analysis to everyday interactions in isolation from larger structures and relationships.

The course begins by considering classic approaches to power and inequality associated with institutional talk, language and gender, variation, and authoritative speech. We then turn to questions of the state, race, and ethnicity along with theoretical frameworks centered on language ideology. The next section puts particular focus on the question of agency, and examines the complex ways in which people position themselves via language amid larger relations of power and control in several contexts, including everyday talk, political performances, and genres of bureaucratic writing. The course concludes by considering how linguistic practices are conditioned by the transnational power relations involved in capitalism, development, and global circulation. Throughout, a central goal is to move beyond narrow understandings of “language” to think expansively about how language-focused approaches illuminate the entanglements between a broad range of semiotic phenomena and power.

PREREQUISITES
This course is aimed at graduate students and advanced undergraduates who are not daunted by—and even welcome—theoretically informed readings that may be dense and challenging at times. Undergraduates should note that expectations in mixed undergraduate/graduate courses are higher than those for undergraduate-only courses.

Previous courses in anthropology, linguistics, or related disciplines are helpful; however, it is assumed that students will have a wide range of previous exposure to the course material. If this is new to you, please be aware that facility with related terminology and approaches comes with time, and do not hesitate to ask questions, participate, or seek additional clarification in office hours. More experienced students are encouraged to contact the instructor about particular areas of interest and further reading suggestions.
Requirements: Undergraduates

1. Participation. This class will be run as a seminar and everyone’s participation is important. In addition to keeping up, please come to each class with a couple of questions or observations.

2. Responses. Participants are required to post a reading response of at least 400 words on the course blog on Chalk each week. You may post on either Tuesday’s or Thursday’s readings: Please strive to post by 10 p.m. the night before, e.g. Monday at 10 or Wednesday at 10. Your response should 1) demonstrate your grasp of the readings and 2) raise questions, provide critiques, and/or draw comparisons to previous texts. Writing may be informal, but quality matters, and posts should be checked for grammar, spelling, clarity, etc. If there are multiple readings, responses should address at least two. Late posts will affect the response paper grade, and will be accepted during the following week only. Each missing post has a heavy impact on the response grade.

3. Group Presentation. Group presentations will start off Thursday classes. Presenters are asked to pick out a central point or approach in that day’s readings, talk about it a bit (perhaps asking some critical questions) and present a relevant example or analogous phenomenon for the class to discuss and analyze. Appropriate examples include video or audio clips, transcripts, and/or copies of print/visual materials. Start preparing early and feel free to contact the instructor for guidance. The presentation and discussion combined should take approximately 10-15 minutes of class. (If you are using the a/v equipment, bring a laptop. Mac users may need to get adapters from Audio Visual Services in Stuart Hall 004.)

4. Papers. Two papers of 7-8 pages will be assigned. These will require students to demonstrate their understanding of approaches presented in the course and apply them to particular empirical phenomena.

Requirements: Graduate Students

Graduate students are also expected to participate, submit responses, and give presentations as outlined above. In place of the short papers, graduate students are required to write a focused seminar paper of approximately 20 pages that draws substantially upon concepts and readings of the course as well as empirical materials (e.g. media/internet sources, texts, recordings or observations from fieldwork, etc.). A one page proposal is due at the end of week 5. Please meet with me in office hours at some point during the quarter to discuss your ideas in more detail.

Grading

10%: Participation (includes attendance and presentation)
15%: Responses
75%: Paper(s)

Keep in Mind:

Participation: Active participation is an important component of this class. Only those who contribute regularly to class discussions will be eligible for an A/A- participation grade.

Attendance: Missing more than three classes will affect the participation grade. The instructor will assess cases where excessive numbers of classes have been missed on a case-by-case basis. This may result in a failing participation grade, or, in cases where very few classes have been attended, not being able to achieve a passing grade for the course.

Graduate students: Clear, critical writing and engaged participation is expected from everyone. However, grading will reflect higher expectations for graduate students.
**REQUIRED TEXTS**


Required texts are available at the Seminary Co-op and Regenstein Course Reserves. Other texts will be made available on Chalk.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Students new to linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics (as well as anyone looking for additional reference materials) may find it helpful to look at the following books for background. Both have been put on Regenstein Course Reserves.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

This schedule is subject to change during the course of the quarter. Any changes will be announced via Chalk.

I. Classic Touchstones

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION

Tuesday, March 31: Course Introduction

Thursday, April 2: Conversation, Context, and Power


Recommended

WEEK 2: POWER IN INTERACTION

Tuesday, April 7: Institutional Talk

- Philips, Susan U. 2004. “Language and Social Inequality.” In A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology. Alessandro Duranti, ed. Pp. 474-495. Malden, MA: Blackwell. (Read it all, but pay particular attention to pp. 476-480, which is what we will focus on this class.)

Recommended

Thursday, April 9: Language and Gender


**Recommended**


**WEEK 3: VARIATION, STANDARDIZATION, AUTHORITY**

**Tuesday, April 14: Variation and Standardization**


**Thursday, April 16: Authority, Register, and Institutional Legitimation**


**Recommended**


**II. State, Race, Ethnicity**

**WEEK 4: THE PROBLEM OF THE STATE**

**Tuesday, April 21: The State I**

- Yurchak, Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More, Chs. 1-4 (pp. 1-157)

**Thursday: April 23: The State II**

- Yurchak, Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More, Chs. 5-7, Conclusion (pp. 158-298)
WEEK 5: LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY AND SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

Tuesday, April 28: Language Ideology I
- Hill, The Everyday Language of White Racism: Preface, Ch. 1-3 (pp. vi-87)

Recommended
- Williams, Raymond. 1977. Marxism and Literature. New York: Oxford University Press: “Base and Superstructure” (pp. 75-82) and “Hegemony” (pp. 108-114)

Thursday, April 30: Language Ideology II
- Hill, The Everyday Language of White Racism: Ch. 5 (pp. 119-157)

Friday, May 1, 12 p.m.: Paper 1/Paper Proposal due

III. Finding a Space of Authoring: Questions of Agency

WEEK 6: AGENCY AND MULTIVOCALITY

Tuesday, May 5: Agency amidst Heteroglossia

Thursday, May 7: Shifting and Switching

Recommended
WEEK 7: AGENCY AND THE STATE

Tuesday, May 12: Entextualizing Personhood


*Recommended*


Thursday, May 14: Politics: Performing “Message” and “Transparency”


*Recommended*


IV. Capitalism, Development, Globalization

WEEK 8: LANGUAGE AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

Tuesday, May 19: Language and Political Economy I

- Heller, *Paths to Post-Nationalism*, Chs. 1-4 (pp. 3-93)

*Recommended*


Thursday, May 21: Language and Political Economy II

- Heller, *Paths to Post-Nationalism*, Chs. 5-8 (pp. 94-194)
WEEK 9: CIRCULATIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

Tuesday, May 26: Globalization, Codes, and Linguistic Repertoires
- Blommaert, The Sociolinguistics of Globalization, Chs. 1-2 (pp. 1-62), 4 (pp. 102-136), and 6 (pp. 153-79)

Thursday, May 28: Development, Enlightenment, and Technologies of Speech and Writing

Recommended

WEEK 10: NEGOTIATING CAPITALIST GOVERNMENTALITIES

Tuesday, June 2: Corporations, Advertising, Identity

Recommended

Tuesday, June 9: Paper 2/Seminar paper due