LINGUISTIC PROJECTS, TECHNOLOGIES, AND TECHNIQUES  
Anthropology/Linguistics 57305  
Fall 2014  
Thursdays, 10:30-1:20 p.m.  
Haskell 101

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While language often appears to be a fundamentally natural phenomenon, scholars have documented a long history of social interventions into language shaped by particular ideological assumptions and targeted at particular aims. This seminar considers the politics and semiotics of linguistic intervention via theory, ethnography, and linguistic anthropology.

Questions to be considered include: How do linguistic projects reflect larger modern, scientific, and state projects? What does it mean to technologize speech, and how do speech technologies become tethered to particular ends and imagined trajectories of action? What are the unexpected consequences of attempts to control meanings, performances, and outcomes? What happens when projects and techniques circulate across social, political, and cultural boundaries? How does the instrumentalization of language coexist with other ways of construing linguistic practices, especially those that are moral, affective, and/or rooted in community?

We begin by considering linguistic projects intertwined with modernity and the state in sites ranging from Europe to the colonies to the former Soviet Union. After considering some recent efforts at language revival, we move to consider attempts to ascertain what words “do,” both from the vantage point of performativity and by examining social actors’ attempts to reach publics through oratory and rhetoric. The last half of the course turns to theorizing and analyzing efforts to forge linguistic techniques and technologies with particular focus on interventions in the realms of literacy, psychology, and management.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Participation/Responses. In addition to keeping up with the readings and engaging in class discussion, please post a response of a couple paragraphs to the course blog each week that provides critical analysis and/or poses relevant questions for discussion. Try to post by 10 p.m. Wednesday to give others a chance to read your comments before we meet.

2. Leading a Discussion. The responsibility for leading discussions will be divided between participants. When it is your turn, you are expected to lead at least the first half of the discussion: In addition to preparing questions, you may want to call attention to some key themes in the readings, important concepts, other relevant literature, etc.

3. Seminar Paper. All participants are expected to write a seminar paper of approximately 20 pages that relates course readings to a topic of their choice. Try to pick a topic that is useful for your long-term research goals and/or projects. All are strongly encouraged to incorporate empirical materials (e.g. newspaper articles, documents, films or tv shows, internet research,
field data if you have it). Please email a 1-page prospectus by the end of Week 5 and schedule a meeting with me to discuss further before the end of the quarter.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

All books are available at the Seminary Co-op and Regenstein Course Reserves. All other course texts will be made available on Chalk.

**NOTE ON “TOUCHSTONE” READINGS:** These are foundational readings that present concepts that are useful in discussing the day’s topic, although they may not address it directly. They are part of the assigned reading, so please read or review as applicable.

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

This schedule is subject to change during the course of the quarter; any changes will be announced in class and via email and Chalk.

**I. Modernist Projects and the State**

**Week 1 (Oct. 2): Course Introduction**

**Week 2 (Oct. 9): Modernist Projects in Europe and Beyond**
- Bauman and Briggs, Voices of Modernity: Chs. 1-2 (pp. 1-69), 5-6 (pp. 163-225)
Week 3 (Oct. 16): Soviet Modernism and the Production of Authoritative Discourse

- Yurchak, Alexei. "Soviet Hegemony of Form: Everything was Forever, until it was no More." Comparative Studies in Society and History 45(3): 480-510.

Week 4 (Oct. 23): Revivals: Constructing Tradition

- French, Ethnolinguistic Identity
- Meek, Barbra A. 2010. We are our Language: An Ethnography of Language Revitalization in a Northern Athabascan community. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.: Chs. 3-4 (pp. 56-135)

II. Performativity and Rhetoric

Week 5 (Oct. 30): Performativity and the Things Words Do

- Butler, Excitable Speech

Friday, Oct. 31, 5 p.m.: Email 1-page course prospectus

Week 6 (Nov. 6) : Reaching Publics: Oratory and Rhetoric

III. Techniques and Technologies

Week 7 (Nov. 13): Conceptualizing Techniques and Technologies

Week 8 (Nov. 20): The Ends of Literacy
• Cody, The Light of Knowledge

IV. Capitalism, Psychology, and Technique

Week 9/10 *(To be scheduled)*: The Question of Capitalist Instrumentality
• Illouz, Cold Intimacies, Chs. 1-2 (pp. 1-73)
• Cohen, Susanne. “Humanizing Soviet Communication: Social-Psychological Training in the Late Socialist Period.” (manuscript)

Week 10/11 *(To be scheduled)*: Therapeutic Talk
• Carr, Scripting Addiction

*Friday, December 11, 12 p.m.: Seminar papers due.*