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April 2011

Language and Culture (Spring 2011 Syllabus)

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Language & Culture

Dr. Adam Hodges
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Office: Baker 245Q
Hours: MW 4:30-5:30 pm

English 76-386; 76-786
Spring 2011
MW 3:00-4:20 pm
WEH 5328

In this course, we will take an ethnographic approach to examine language as a form of action through which social, cultural and political relations are constituted. Topics will explore language as it intersects with thought, ideology, identity, race and racism, ethnicity, gender, power, and linguistic diversity. In addition to articles, we will read several full-length ethnographies that focus on language practices within particular communities. The goals of the course are to (1) provide an introduction to key ideas in the study of language and culture, including the concepts of *ideology*, *dialogism*, *identity*, and *indexicality*; (2) equip students with a critical awareness of the role language plays in social, cultural and political interaction across a variety of cultures; and (3) explore the potential of ethnography for informing analyses of language and discourse.

Readings / Books

- Articles posted online
- Keith Basso. (1996). *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache*. University of New Mexico Press (ISBN 0 8263 1724 3).
- Jane H. Hill (2008). *The Everyday Language of White Racism*. Wiley-Blackwell (ISBN 978-1-4051-8453-3).
- Norma Mendoza-Denton (2008). *Homegirls: Language and Cultural Practice among Latina Youth Gangs*. Wiley-Blackwell (ISBN 063123490X).

Optional:

- Alessandro Duranti (ed.) (2001). *Key Terms in Language and Culture*. Wiley-Blackwell (ISBN 978-0-631-22666-6).
- Alessandro Duranti. (1997). *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge University Press (ISBN 0 521 44993 6).

Course Requirements

- 25% Seminar participation, including class contributions, weekly emails, discussion leads
- 25% Critical reflections
- 25% Midterm assessment, including essay and class presentation
- 25% Final essay

Seminar participation (25%): Seminar participation includes:

1. Coming to class prepared to contribute to discussions: All participants are expected to come to class fully prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that day.
2. Emailing a discussion question/comment to the discussion facilitator once per week: All participants need to email a discussion question or comment about that day's readings to the day's discussion facilitator (cc'ing the instructor). The class will be divided into a Monday group and a Wednesday group, so students need to submit one email per week accordingly. This could be a piece of insight that arose for you while reading or a question you would like the class to discuss. To ensure the facilitator has adequate time to organize submissions, emails should be sent by 8:00 pm the night before class.
3. Organizing/facilitating discussion for two class sessions: Each seminar participant is required to choose one day before the midterm week and one day after the midterm week to take the lead in organizing email comments/questions and facilitating discussion of the readings for that day. Discussion facilitators should compile a handout with student submissions along with their own questions/ideas to help structure and instigate class discussion.

Critical reflections (25%): Seminar participants are required to turn in six critical reflections of 300-500 words (no more than two double-spaced pages) on a bi-weekly basis. The class will be divided into two groups so that participants will follow the bi-weekly schedule for their group with submissions due before

class on Wednesdays (submitted via Blackboard). These concise essays should address issues that arise in that week's readings, and demonstrate your thoughtful, considered reflections on the topic. They *should not* simply be summaries of the readings, but should discuss what you find insightful (or problematic or useful) about key ideas presented in the readings. To these ends, be sure to organize your essay around a coherent thesis statement, question or argument. Remember, these are succinct, which means they should be well-edited to clearly articulate your point. As the semester progresses, you are encouraged to draw connections among the different authors read and ideas discussed in class.

Midterm assessment (25%): The midterm assessment will take place during week 8, and includes:

1. Midterm essay of 3-5 pages in response to the questions distributed during week 7: The midterm essay will be due by 5:00 pm on Thursday, March 3 (submitted via Blackboard).
2. Class presentation: Each seminar participant will be assigned (during week 7) an article on the syllabus (required or optional) from the first half of the semester. Your task will be to (re)read the article and provide a 5-minute review of that article to the class (followed by a 5-minute class discussion period), emphasizing key points/ideas made in the article in light of where the class has come since first encountering those ideas.

Final assessment (25%): A final essay of 4-8 pages in response to the questions distributed during the penultimate week of the semester will be due by 5:00 pm on Saturday, April 30 (submitted via Blackboard).

General Policies

Course Format and Expectations: This course will be run as a seminar with a primary focus on class discussion. Seminar participants are expected to read the assigned material prior to class and come prepared to discuss it. To prepare, you will want to jot down notes and questions that you think of while reading. It is up to you to make a personal commitment to your learning and make the most of all aspects of the class. A strong commitment to your learning will inevitably pay off in the knowledge you take away from the course at the end of the semester—and of course, also result in higher grades.

What you can expect from me: Timely feedback on your work; interest in you, your ideas and your contributions to the course. Please take advantage of my office hours to meet with me outside of class to get feedback on assignments, clarify questions or to further discuss topics of interest to you. I am here to help you make the most of your learning experience in this course!

Critical Thinking, Reading, Writing and Discussion: Scholarly inquiry requires stepping outside our usual frames of reference to examine issues from various angles. In order to critically evaluate ideas, we must first understand those ideas as laid out by authors and classmates. You are encouraged to try on ideas and examine topics from different angles, to challenge ideas and rethink your own positions throughout the semester as we engage in a collaborative process of scholarly inquiry.

Class Ambience and Academic Respect: Academic courses are a place for intellectual challenges and interactive discussions. Everyone benefits from an atmosphere of creativity, diversity, and expressive freedom as we negotiate new understandings of concepts, and explore ideas from different angles. Please practice the art of thoughtfully challenging a person's ideas while respecting the person, so we can create a supportive atmosphere where everyone can build on each other's knowledge and experience, and learn from each other.

Students with documented disabilities: Students who might need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the office of Equal Opportunity and Disability Services, which will evaluate the request with required documentation and recommend reasonable accommodations. Students should contact the office as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. More information can be found at www.cmu.edu/hr/eos/disability/.

Academic Integrity: Cheating and/or plagiarism on any assignment/exam will result in a forfeited grade and could also result in an F for the course. Each student is expected to know and adhere to the Carnegie Mellon Code and follow the policy laid out therein. Violations of this policy include plagiarism and representing as one's own work the work of another. More information can be found at <http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/theword/code.html>.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS**Week 1: Introduction to language and culture****Mon, Jan 10****Wed, Jan 12**

- Duranti, "Language as a Non-neutral Medium"

Optional

- Duranti (1997), "The Scope of Linguistic Anthropology" [LA Chap 1]

Week 2: Language, culture and cognition**Mon, Jan 17** MLK Day – no class**Wed, Jan 19**

- Lucy (2004), "Language, Culture, and Mind in Comparative Perspective"

Optional

- Duranti (1997), "Linguistic Diversity" [LA Chap 3]

Week 3: Language as social action**Mon, Jan 24**

- Keating and Egbert (2004), "Conversation as a Cultural Activity"

Wed, Jan 26

- Ochs (1996), "Linguistic Resources for Socializing Humanity"

Optional

- Duranti (1997), "Speaking as Social Action" [LA Chap 7]

Week 4: Language and identity**Mon, Jan 31**

- Bucholtz and Hall (2005), "Identity and Interaction: A Sociocultural Linguistic Approach"

Wed, Feb 2

- Bailey (2000), "Language and Negotiation of Ethnic/Racial Identity among Dominican Americans"

Optional

- Bucholtz and Hall (2004), "Language and Identity"

Week 5: Language ideologies**Mon, Feb 7**

- Barrett (2006), "Language Ideology and Racial Inequality: Competing Functions of Spanish in an Anglo-owned Mexican Restaurant"

Wed, Feb 9

- Lippi-Green (2004), "Language Ideology and Language Prejudice"

Optional

- Woolard and Schieffelin (1994), "Language Ideology"

Week 6: Language varieties**Mon, Feb 14**

- Rickford (1997), "Suite for Ebony and Phonics"; and "What is Ebonics?"

Wed, Feb 16

- Baugh (2004), "Ebonics and Its Controversy"

Optional

- Rickford, "Using the Vernacular to Teach the Standard"

Week 7: The dialogic emergence of culture**Mon, Feb 21**

- Spitulnik (1996), "The Social Circulation of Media Discourse and the Mediation of Communities"

Wed, Feb 23

- Tannen (2006), "Intertextuality in Interaction: Reframing Family Arguments in Public and Private"

Optional

- Duranti (1997), "Theories of Culture" [LA Chap 2]

Week 8: Midterm reports**Mon, Feb 28**

- Midterm reports

Wed, Mar 2

- Midterm reports

Midterm essays due by 5:00 pm on Thursday, March 3 (submitted via Blackboard)

Spring Break: March 7-11**Week 9: Ethnography of communication****Mon, Mar 14**

- Basso (1996), *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape & Lang. among the Western Apache*, chap 1-2

Wed, Mar 16

- Basso (1996), *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape & Lang. among the Western Apache*, chap 3-4

Optional

- *Optional*: Duranti (1997), “Ethnographic Methods” [LA chap 4]

Week 10: Language and cultural practice among Latina youth gangs**Mon, Mar 21**

- Mendoza-Denton (2008), *Homegirls: Lang. & Cultural Practice among Latina Youth Gangs*, chap. 1-2

Wed, Mar 23

- Mendoza-Denton (2008), *Homegirls: Lang. & Cultural Practice among Latina Youth Gangs*, chap. 3-4

Week 11: Gender and identity practices**Mon, Mar 28**

- Mendoza-Denton (2008), *Homegirls: Lang. & Cultural Practice among Latina Youth Gangs*, chap. 5

Wed, Mar 30

- Mendoza-Denton (2008), *Homegirls: Lang. & Cultural Practice among Latina Youth Gangs*, chap. 6

Week 12: Language variation and identity**Mon, Apr 4**

- Mendoza-Denton (2008), *Homegirls: Lang. & Cultural Practice among Latina Youth Gangs*, chap. 7-8

Wed, Apr 6

- Mendoza-Denton (2008), *Homegirls: Lang. & Cultural Practice among Latina Youth Gangs*, chp. 9-10

Week 13: Everyday racism and slurs**Mon, Apr 11**

- Hill (2008), *The Everyday Language of White Racism*, chap. 1-2

Wed, Apr 13

- Hill (2008), *The Everyday Language of White Racism*, chap 3

Week 14: Gaffes and covert racism**Mon, Apr 18**

- Hill (2008), *The Everyday Language of White Racism*, chap. 4

Wed, Apr 20

- Hill (2008), *The Everyday Language of White Racism*, chap. 5

Week 15: Linguistic appropriation**Mon, Apr 25**

- Hill (2008), *The Everyday Language of White Racism*, chaps. 6-7

Wed, Apr 27

- Course conclusion

Final essay due by 5:00 pm on Saturday, April 30 (submitted via Blackboard)