

Stanford University
Graduate School of Education
Theory and Method in Linguistic Anthropology
EDUC 457/ANTHRO 457A/LINGUIST 267/CSRE 267
Winter 2026

Instructor: Jonathan Rosa

Email address: jdrosa@stanford.edu

Office Hours (by appointment): <https://calendly.com/jdrosa1/30min>

Course Location: Building 160, Room 323

Course Time: 3:00-5:50pm

While language and culture are often regarded as self-evident phenomena, linguistic anthropologists have challenged this assumption by demonstrating the fundamentally situated ways in which forms of communication take shape as social action across contexts. This course introduces students to central concepts and approaches in linguistic anthropology, with a specific focus on the role of social practices, processes, ideologies, and institutions in shaping language use and vice versa. Importantly, we will develop careful conceptualizations of circulation and scale in the analysis of communication to link interactional and institutional orders, historical and contemporary phenomena, and local and global dynamics. This involves a critical reexamination of the mediated nature of identities and structures associated with various materialities, individuals, and collectivities. We will seek to gain insight into the communicative mediation of phenomena including race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, as well as the politics of language socialization and standardization, linguistic authenticity, societal multilingualism, language shift and revitalization, and multimodality. The seminar includes a set of methodological workshops in which students will learn practical skills for conducting ethnographic fieldwork focused on the study of language in culture. Topics for these methodological workshops include strategies for recording, editing, transcribing, analyzing, and archiving audio, visual, and broader multimodal discourse data. The overarching goal of the course is for students to gain a theoretical and methodological toolkit for understanding and examining the fundamental role of semiotic processes in structuring sociocultural life, as well as a range of analytical insights to be gained from investigating language ideologies and linguistic practices.

All of the required readings for this course will be accessible via Canvas. You can consult the following readers for broad overviews of linguistic anthropology and anthropological linguistics:

Laura Ahearn, *Living Language: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology*; Nancy Bonvillian, *The Routledge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology*; Alessandro Duranti, *Linguistic Anthropology*; Alessandro Duranti,

Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader; Alessandro Duranti; *Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*; James Stanlaw, Nobuko Adachi, and Zdenek Salzmänn, *Language, Culture, and Society: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology*; Asif Agha, *Language and Social Relations*; Sabina M. Perrino and Sonya E. Pritzker, *Research Methods in Linguistic Anthropology*

Guidelines and Requirements

This is an intensive seminar course. Most of your work each week will consist of reading and reflection in preparation for our meetings. All readings and seminar meetings are required. During Weeks 2-5, each student will sign up for a week in which to lead engagement with the readings and course concepts by working with classmates to facilitate an applied methodological workshop during the second half of class. For the week in which you sign up to facilitate an applied methodological workshop, you will collaboratively develop a set of a set of examples with which to think, as well as corresponding discussion and research questions. What are some different questions a linguistic anthropologist might ask about these examples? Based on these questions, what methods might they draw on to pursue their research? What concepts might be central to this work? You will prepare a handout with your reflections on the reading and your proposed discussion and research questions. This handout should be no longer than 1-2 single-spaced pages. Feel free to bring in any audiovisual media to supplement your handout. There is no possible way that you could get to all the issues covered in the reading, so focus on whatever ideas interest you most. We will discuss this exercise during our first seminar meeting.

You will also complete small projects focused on research methodologies in linguistic anthropology. Your final assignment for the course will emerge from these projects and your own research interests. There are two options for this assignment:

- (1) Create a research proposal in which you present a central linguistic anthropological question for investigation; situate it in relation to a specific ethnographic context and relevant literatures with a focus on contemporary questions and debates across these spaces; and propose a methodology for systematically pursuing this research.
- (2) Analyze the role of language ideologies and linguistic practices in the construction of a model of personhood (i.e., an identity!). In what context did this model of personhood emerge? What historical, sociopolitical, and economic relations shaped its emergence? What social actors, institutional contexts, and sociocultural relations come to be associated with this figure? What communicative practices are stereotypically linked to this figure and its circulation? Be sure to include specific examples of invocations, enactments, and other such engagements with the model of personhood that you examine.

The paper should be 2500-3000 words in length and include a title, page numbers, a bibliography, and citations in the convention of your choice so long as the format is consistent throughout the paper. If you are currently conducting ethnographic fieldwork or have ethnographic data from your

previous work, I encourage you to use this research as the focus of your paper. For Week 5 (February 3), please prepare a 250-word abstract for your final paper and come prepared to discuss it during class. This will serve as a collective brainstorming session. **Final papers are due on Canvas by 5pm on Tuesday, March 17.**

Course Schedule

Week 1 (January 6): Mapping Approaches to Linguistic Anthropology

1. Michael Silverstein, Getting—and Getting Across—the Message (Introduction to *Language in Culture: Lectures in the Social Semiotics of Language*)
2. Laura Ahearn, The Socially Charged Life of Language (Introduction to *Living Language: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology*)
3. Susan Gal, Linguistic Anthropology
4. Alessandro Duranti, Linguistic Anthropology: The Study of Language as a Non-Neutral Medium
5. Charles L. Briggs, Linguistic Magic Bullets in the Making of a Modernist Anthropology
6. Stanton Wortham & Sabina Perrino, Linguistic Anthropology of Education

Week 2 (January 13): Rethinking the “Total Linguistic Fact”: Structure, Ideology, Context

Concepts:

1. Paul Kroskrity, Language Ideologies: Emergence, Elaboration, & Application
2. Judith T. Irvine & Susan Gal, Language Ideology & Linguistic Differentiation
3. Susan Gal & Judith T. Irvine, Introduction to *Signs of Difference: Language and Ideology in Social Life*
4. Michael Silverstein, Cultural Concepts & the Language-Culture Nexus
5. Judith T. Irvine, Revisiting Theory and Method in Language Ideology Research

Cases:

1. Miyako Inoue, What Does Language Remember?: Indexical Inversion and the Naturalized History of Japanese Women
2. Angela Reyes, Inventing Postcolonial Elites: Race, Language, Mix, Excess
3. Re-hearing Parents as Risks to Children: Institutional Listening Practices in a California Child Welfare Court

Week 3 (January 20): Tracking Discursive Processes: Texts, Roles, Scales, Performances, Circulations

Concepts:

1. Richard Bauman & Charles L. Briggs, Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life
2. Asif Agha, Voice, Footing, Enregisterment
3. Stanton Wortham, Beyond Macro and Micro in the Linguistic Anthropology of Education
4. Jan Blommaert, Chronotopes, Scales, and Complexity in the Study of Language in Society
5. Summerson Carr and Michael Lempert, Pragmatics of Scale (Introduction to *Scale: Discourse and Dimensions of Social Life*)
6. Susan Gal, Registers in Circulation
7. Jillian R. Cavanaugh, Stephanie V. Love, and Nikhil Sood, Interdiscursivity: Conventions, Gaps, and Renegades

Cases:

1. Krystal A. Smalls, Fighting Words: Antiracism and Discursive Violence in an American High School
2. Hilary Parsons Dick, Making Immigrants Illegal in Small-Town USA

Week 4 (January 27): Language Socialization, Multimodality, Verbal Art, Expressive Practice

Concepts:

1. Laura Ahearn, Language Acquisition and Socialization (Chapter 4 of *Living Language: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology*)
2. Elinor Ochs and Bambi Schieffelin, The Theory of Language Socialization
3. Barbra Meek, Language Endangerment in Childhood
4. Ilana Gershon, Media Ideologies
5. Ilana **Gershon**, Language and the Newness of Media
6. Joel Sherzer and Anthony K. Webster, Speech Play, Verbal Art, and Linguistic Anthropology

Cases:

1. Terra Edwards, Re-Channeling Language: The Mutual Restructuring of Language and Infrastructure among DeafBlind People at Gallaudet University
2. Alex E. Chávez, So ¿te fuiste a Dallas? (So you went to Dallas?/So you got screwed?): Language, Migration, and the Poetics of Transgression
3. Webb Keane, Introduction to *Animals, Robots, Gods: Adventures in the Moral Imagination*

Week 5 (February 3): Multilingualism, Codeswitching, Ethnolinguistic Identities, Raciolinguistic Ideologies, Standardization, Political Economy, Revitalization/Reclamation

Concepts

1. Susan Gal, Language and Political Economy

2. Shalini Shankar and Jillian R. Cavanaugh, Toward a Theory of Language Materiality: An Introduction (Introduction to *Language and Materiality: Ethnographic and Theoretical Explorations*)
3. Judith Irvine, Speech Community and Language Community
4. Kathryn Woolard, Codeswitching
5. Bernard Perley, Zombie Linguistics: Experts, Endangered Languages, and the Curse of Undead Voices
6. Wesley Leonard, Toward an Anti-Racist Linguistic Anthropology: An Indigenous Response to White Supremacy

Cases:

1. Judith T. Irvine, When Talk Isn't Cheap
2. Susan Gal, Codeswitching and Consciousness in the European Periphery
3. Jonathan Rosa, Standardization, Racialization, Languagelessness
4. Joseph Sung-Yul Park, Naturalization of Competence and the Neoliberal Subject: Success Stories of English Language Learning in the Korean Conservative Press
5. Joshua Babcock, Postracial Policing, "Mother Tongue" Sourcing, and Images of Singlish Standard

Week 6 (February 10): Politics & Practices of Observations & Fieldnotes

*Drawing inspiration from the conventions outlined by Pritzker and Perrino, conduct preliminary observations of and create fieldnotes for a communicative or broader semiotic practice

1. Sonya E. Pritzker and Sabina M Perrino, Participant Observation and Fieldnotes in Linguistic Anthropology
2. Steven Black and Robin Conley Riner, Care as a Methodological Stance: Research Ethics in Linguistic Anthropology
3. Deborah Jones and Ilana Gershon, Planning Your Research

Week 7 (February 17): Discourse Analysis Part 1

Stanton Wortham & Angela Reyes, *Discourse Analysis Beyond the Speech Event*, Chapters 1-3 ([open access](#))

Week 8 (February 24): Politics & Practices of Interviews & Transcriptions

*Drawing inspiration from Perrino as well as Shohet and Lloyd, conduct and record a short language-oriented interview and transcription, and come to class prepared to discuss findings and challenges

1. Merav Shohet and Heather Loyd, Transcription and Analysis in Linguistic Anthropology: Creating, Testing, and Presenting Theory on the Page
2. Sabina Perrino, Interviews in Linguistic Anthropology

Gregory Kohler and Keith Murphy, Audio-Video Technology for and in the Field: A Primer

Week 9 (March 3): Discourse Analysis Part 2

Stanton Wortham & Angela Reyes, *Discourse Analysis Beyond the Speech Event*, Chapters 4-7 ([open access](#))

Week 10 (March 10): Multimodal Data Collection, Analysis, Archiving, and Sharing

*Identify and submit an example of performance and be prepared to discuss it in class

1. Archie Crowley and Elaine Chun, Online Research and New Media
2. Teruko Vida Mitsuhara & Jan David Hauck Video Ethnography: A Guide
3. Sonya E. Pritzker, Mixed Methods and Interdisciplinary Research in Linguistic Anthropology