

New York University
Department of Social and Cultural Analysis
Language as Culture in American Society V18.0541.001
Spring 2011
Monday/Wednesday 11:00-12:15
Bobs LL151

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00pm-2:00pm and also by appointment

Course Description

This course focuses on the ways that conceptions of language play a central role in defining American identity. We will examine a range of debates and linguistic practices – everywhere from bilingual education to ebonics – and the analytical concepts to which they correspond, including standardization, code(switching), socialization, and nationalism. By analyzing the creation of linguistic and national boundaries, we will rethink the meaning of the U.S. in relation to various peoples (e.g. (im)migrant, indigenous) and political entities (e.g. the “Americas”).

Guidelines and Requirements

Due to the interactive nature of this course and the sensitive topics that it covers, it is imperative to maintain a high degree of mutual respect and maturity. Give one another the benefit of the doubt in class discussions, and analyze one another’s ideas without waging personal attacks. Do not eat, sleep, or carry on private conversations during class. Electronic devices may be used for note-taking purposes only. Disruptive students will be asked to leave. If there are particular learning issues that might exempt you from these regulations, please inform me at the beginning of the academic term. It goes without saying that all written assignments submitted MUST be original work for this course.

Grading and Assignments

Percentage of Overall Grade	
* Attendance and Participation	20%
* Blog Responses	40%
* Blackboard Discussions	25%
* Facilitation/Discussion Questions	15%
	100%

1. Attendance and Participation (20%)

Twenty percent of your grade will reflect overall class attendance and participation. These points will be based on attendance, involvement in class by raising questions and issues, listening and responding respectfully to others, and participating in group work. Excellent class attendance and participation means not missing class without notice, being on time and staying for the full time (i.e., not packing up before the class ends), and being actively engaged in the class.

One of the best ways to learn something is to hang out with people who already know how to do what you need or want to learn. They can be role models and give you feedback. You can benefit from observing and working with others who are also learning. They, too, can be role models and provide support. To be prepared for the class you should do the assigned reading and assignments prior to the class, understand the major themes in the reading and/or ask questions related to your lack of understanding, raise questions and issues for discussion, and share materials with others in the class.

2. Blog Responses (40%)

We will construct a collaborative blog for this course. You are required to create and post at least four 1000-word responses to the blog throughout the semester. Each post is worth 10% of your final grade. Two of your postings must respond to readings during weeks 1-7 and the other two must respond to readings during weeks 9-16. Each of your postings must incorporate some sort of media (e.g., pictures, songs, video clips, news stories, etc.) in order to respond creatively to the readings from the week during which you post. The web address for the blog is: <http://languageasculturespring11.blogspot.com>. The username is: LgAsCult2011. The password is: LgAsCult.

3. Blackboard Discussions (25%)

In order to encourage discussion of the reading, I will post questions on Blackboard prior to each week's meeting. You can access the discussion question by logging onto Blackboard, then clicking on the "Discussion Board" tab. I will demonstrate this in class. You will have until Monday at 10pm to post an initial response to each week's question. Your initial response must range from 150-250 words. You will then have until Tuesday at 10pm to post a follow-up response to your classmates' initial response. These follow-up responses must be no more than 100 words. In class I will often draw on your postings to prompt discussion.

Your participation in these online discussions will count for 25% of your grade. Points will be based on clarity, level of engagement with the reading, and the maturity demonstrated in your responses to your classmates' ideas. Everyone is entitled to skip up to three responses during the semester (either three initial responses, three follow-up responses, or some combination thereof).

4. Facilitation/Discussion Questions (15%)

You are each required to facilitate an in-depth discussion of a reading at least one time during the quarter; depending on the length of the reading you select, you might be asked to facilitate discussion on more than one occasion. You will present key ideas in the reading, lead a discussion based on the text, and offer examples to illustrate key concepts. Making the discussion successful requires careful preparation; therefore, to be fair to the rest of the class and to me, you may not change your selection or reschedule if you miss class or are unprepared on your designated date.

For the day that you sign up to facilitate discussion, you are expected to develop a set of discussion questions and a creative way in which to guide the discussion. You will prepare a handout with your reflections on the reading and your discussion questions. This handout should be approximately one single-spaced page. Feel free to bring in any audiovisual media to supplement your handout.

Your Discussion Question and Facilitation assignment will be worth 15% of your final grade. Points will be based on your preparation, relevant examples, and classroom presentation.

Course Schedule

*Note on readings:

All readings are available on the Blackboard site for this course in the “Course Documents” section. Please contact me if you have any problem accessing these readings. Students are expected to complete ALL readings for this course. While I have sought to alleviate the financial burden of purchasing books by scanning all of the course texts, students are certainly encouraged to purchase any and/or all of the larger texts from which these readings are excerpted.

Week 1: Introductions

1/24 (No Class), 1/26

Week 2: Reframing “Language” and “Culture”

1/31: Rosina Lippi-Green, “The Linguistic Facts of Life”

2/2: Irvine and Gal, “Language Ideologies and Linguistic Differentiation”

Week 3: Standardization

2/7: Silverstein, “Monoglot ‘Standard’ in America: Standardization and Metaphors of Linguistic Hegemony”; García and Torres-Guevara, “Monoglossic Ideologies and Language Policies in the Education of U.S. Latinas/os”

2/9: Urciuoli, “Good English as Symbolic Capital”; Ricento and Wright, “Language Policy and Education in the United States”

Week 4: Ethnolinguistic Identities and the Racialization Thereof

2/14: Silverstein, “The When and Wheres – As Well As Hows – Of Ethnolinguistic Recognition

2/16: Urciuoli, “Racialization and Language”; Mendoza-Denton, “Hemispheric Localism: Language, Racialized Nationalism, and the Politicization of Youth”

Week 5: Markedness: Nonstandard and Hyperstandard

2/21 (No Class – President’s Day)

2/23: Labov, “Academic Ignorance and Black Intelligence”; Bucholtz, “The Whiteness of Nerds: Superstandard English and Racial Markedness”

Week 6: Appropriation

2/28: Kiesling, “Stances of Whiteness and Hegemony in Fraternity Men’s Discourse”; Cutler, “Yorkville Crossing: White Teens, Hip Hop, and African American English”

3/2: Hill, “Linguistic Appropriation: The History of White Racism is Embedded in American English”

Week 7: Authenticity and Stereotypy

3/7: Urciuoli, “Whose Spanish? The Tension Between Linguistic Correctness and Cultural Identity”; Shankar, “Speaking like a Model Minority: ‘FOB’ Styles, Gender, and Racial Meanings Among Desi Teens in Silicon Valley”

3/9: Kroskrity, “Language Ideologies in the Expression and Representation of Arizona Tewa Ethnic Identity”; Collins, “Our Ideologies and Theirs”

Week 8: No Class (Spring recess)

3/14, 3/16

Week 9: Managing Multiple Voices

3/21: Morgan, “The presentation of indirectness and power in everyday life”

3/23: Bailey, “The Language of Multiple Identities Among Dominican Americans”; Martinez, “Mexican American Code Switching”

Week 10: Constructing (Un)Intelligibility

3/28: Decena: “Tacit Subjects”

3/30: Lavadenz: “*Como Hablar en Silencio* (Like Speaking in Silence): Issues of Language, Culture, and Identity of Central Americans in Los Angeles”

Week 11: Ambiguity

4/4: Anzaldúa, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue”; La Fountain-Stokes, “The Queer Politics of Spanglish”;

4/6: Bloomfield, “Literate and Illiterate Speech”; Rosa, “Unaccented Spanglish”

Week 12: Racializing Discourses

4/11: Hill, “Covert Racist Discourse: Metaphors, Mocking, and the Racialization of Historically Spanish-Speaking Populations in the United States”

4/13: Reyes, “‘Racist!’: Metapragmatic Regimentation of Racist Discourse by Asian American Youth”

Week 13: Language Panics Part 1: U.S. English/English-Only

4/18: Woolard, “Sentences in the Language Prison: The Rhetorical Structuring of an American Language Policy Debate”

4/20: Macedo, “The Colonialism of the English-Only Movement

Week 14: Language Panics Part 2: Ebonics

4/25: Read Oakland Resolutions on Ebonics; Richardson, “The Anti-Ebonics Movement”; Perry, “I’on Know why they be Trippin”

4/27: Wolfram, “Language Ideologies and the Ebonics controversy”

Week 15: Language Panics Part 3: Bilingual Education

5/2: Santa Ana, “American Discourse on Nation and Language: The ‘English for the Children’ Referendum”; González, “Children in the Eye of the Storm: Language Socialization and Language Ideologies in a Dual Language-School”

5/4: Rodriguez, “Aria”; Baltodano, “Latino Immigrant Parents and the Hegemony of Proposition 227”

Week 16: Institutions and Identities

5/9: Heath, “What No Bedtime Story Means”; Haviland, “Ideologies of Language: Some Reflections on Language and U.S. Law”