

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Faculty First Year Seminar

Department of Anthropology

Learning to Sound Like Yourself: Language and Popular Culture

UNIVRSTY 197ANTH3 - 01

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan Rosa

Office: 204 Machmer Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:30pm-4:30pm

Classroom: Hasbrouck Laboratory 130

Class Meetings: Thursdays, 2:30pm-3:20pm

Course Description

This course focuses on the ways that conceptions of language and linguistic practices play central roles in defining and experiencing American identities. We will examine a range of debates and forms of communication – everywhere from bilingual education to ebonics – and the analytical concepts to which they correspond, including standardization, code(switching), socialization, and nationalism. By analyzing the interrelated creation of linguistic, social, and political 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”). Importantly, our “sites” of language and popular culture will be everyday communicative practices in cultural domains such as music, the Internet, movies, and television. We will investigate mundane forms of literacy and talk, such as cellular text messaging and face-to-face interactions, as well as more politically authoritative modes of speech, including oratory and punditry, as the 2012 presidential election approaches.

Course Requirements

This course is a Faculty First Year Seminar. As such, it is intended to provide first-year students with the opportunity to gather with a faculty member for in-depth discussions focused on a given topic. The requirements for this course are: regular readings, attendance, in-class participation, and regular participation in our course blog: <http://lgandpopcultspring2012.blogspot.com/>. Each student will be responsible for posting media corresponding to the topic for a designated week. This posting must consist of at least 500 words and 2 different representations (e.g., videos, songs, pictures, etc.). It is due by Monday evening at 10pm, so that there is plenty of time to view the blog before our Thursday class. Each student is required to post a 100-word response to at least 8 blog postings, 4 for Weeks 1-8 and 4 for Weeks 10-15. The responses are due by Friday at 10pm during same week that the posting was published. To post on the blog, go to www.blogger.com. The username is “anthrocourseblog” and the password is “courseblog”. I will demonstrate how to create blog postings on the first day of class. The grading for this course is pass/fail.

Outline of Weekly Topics

- Week 1 (Week of January 23): Introductions and Sites of Popular Culture
“Sh*t...say”
- Week 2 (Week of January 30): Reframing “Language” and “Culture”
Lippi-Green, The Linguistic Facts of Life
- Week 3 (Week of February 6): Socialization and Learning Identities
Kroskrity, Identity; Ochs, Socialization
- Week 4 (Week of February 13): Standardization, Nonstandard, and Hyperstandard
Urciuoli, Good English as Symbolic Capital
- Week 5 (Week of February 20): Ethnolinguistic Identities and the Racialization Thereof
Hill, Language, Race, and White Public Space
- Week 6 (Week of February 27): Voicing Gender and Sexuality
Bucholtz, Gender; Hall, Performativity
- Week 7 (Week of March 5): Appropriation
Hill, The Everyday Language of White Racism
- Week 8 (Week of March 12): Authenticity and Stereotypy
Keane, Voice; Mendoza-Denton, Style
- Week 9 (Week of March 19): No Class (Spring recess)
- Week 10 (Week of March 26): Codeswitching, Multilingualism, and Managing Multiple Voices
Rampton, Crossing; Bailey, Switching
- Week 11 (Week of April 2): Constructing (Un)Intelligibility
Darnell, Translation; Hill, Syncretism
- Week 12 (Week of April 9): Ambiguity
La Fountain-Stokes, The Queer Politics of Spanglish
- Week 13 (Week of April 16): Language Panics Part 1: U.S. English, English-Only, and Bilingual Education
LSA on English-Only
- Week 14 (Week of April 23): Language Panics Part 2: Ebonics and Hip Hop
LSA on Ebonics