

## Sociolinguistics and the Politics of Language

THU 2:00-4:00 PM

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In this seminar, we will trace the emergence and development of sociolinguistics, that is, of the study of language as a form of social practice. However, rather than simply follow a chronological, historiographic, and descriptive approach to different schools of sociolinguistic thought, we will focus our examination on the degree to which those schools incorporate politics as a component—whether peripheral or integral—of their object. How do different approaches to language as social practice conceptualize—whether explicitly or implicitly—the relationship between language and politics? In order to tackle this broad question, we will examine the theory of power that underpins variationist sociolinguistics, the geopolitical frameworks that resulted in the emergence of language policy and planning, and the specific impact of critical theory in the development of critical discourse analysis and glottopolitical studies.

### Learning Objectives

The learning goals of this course contribute to the Graduate Center Institutional Learning Goals and the Linguistics Program Learning Goals. Therefore, students in this course will gain specialized knowledge of sociolinguistics as well as the different theoretical articulations of language and politics. They will develop oral and written communication skills appropriate to sociolinguistics and, in particular, its critical branches.

### Assignments

- Each student will write three reaction papers throughout the semester. Each will consist of a three-page summary and discussion of the readings, discussions, and class presentations of one of the weekly meetings
- Each student will lead one seminar-style discussion based on one of the readings on the syllabus
- Students will write a short final paper (4000 to 5000 words). While students will be allowed to select a preferred topic, the paper will be based on a question presented by the instructor