

SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE (LING 79300)

SPRING 2021, THU 2:00-4:00 PM

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DESCRIPTION

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.

TOPICS BY DATE AND READINGS

February 4 and 11 Towards a political theory of language

- John E. Joseph. 2007. *Language and politics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Chapter 1.
- Ferdinand de Saussure. [1916] 1959. *Course in general linguistics*. Columbia University Press. Introduction, chapters 1-5; Part two, chapters 1-8.
- V.N. Voloshinov. [1930] 1973. *Marxism and the philosophy of language*. Part two.

February 18 and 25 The language of politics

- John E. Joseph. 2007. *Language and politics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Chapter 6.
- Janet McIntosh and Norma Mendoza-Denton (eds.) 2020. *Language in the Trump era: scandals and emergencies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Introduction.

Victor Klemperer. [1947] 2000. *The language of the Third Reich*. London: Bloomsbury. Chapters 1-10.

March 4 and 11 Language, race and the development of raciolinguistics

John E. Joseph. 2007. *Language and politics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Chapter 2.

H. Sami Alim, John R. Rickford and Arnetta F. Ball (eds.). 2016. *Raciolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Introduction and chapters 13, 17 and 18.

Janet McIntosh and Norma Mendoza-Denton (eds.) 2020. *Language in the Trump era: scandals and emergencies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Introduction. Chapter 15 and 17.

March 18 and 25 Normativity and prescriptivism

John E. Joseph. 2007. *Language and politics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Chapters 3 and 5.

Deborah Cameron. 1995, 2012. *Verbal hygiene*. London: Routledge: Chapters 1 and 2.

Rosina Lippi Green. 1997, 2012. *English with an accent*. London: Routledge. Chapters 4, 5 and 11.

April 8 and 15 Language and gender

Annabelle Mooney et al (eds.). 2011. *Language, society and power reader*. London: Routledge. Part five.

Lucy Burke, Tony Crowley and Alan Girvin (eds.). 2000. *The Routledge language and cultural theory reader*. Chapters 15, 18 and 19.

April 22 and 29 Language and social positioning

Annabelle Mooney et al (eds.). 2011. *Language, society and power reader*. London: Routledge. Part eight.

Lucy Burke, Tony Crowley and Alan Girvin (eds.). 2000. *The Routledge language and cultural theory reader*. Chapters 47-50.

May 6 and 13 Language and politics: separable or inseparable?

John E. Joseph. 2007. *Language and politics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Chapters 4 and 7.

Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault. (1971) 2006. *The Chomsky-Foucault debate: on human nature*. New York: The New Press.

ASSIGNMENTS

- Each student will write two reaction papers. 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