

Language, Thought & **CULTURE**

E59.0010003

MW 9:30-10:45am Main 407

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When and Where You Can Find Me:

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| M | 11:00-12:00 | Department Office, 7 th Floor East Building |
| W | 11:00-11:45 | Department Office, 7 th Floor East Building |
| R | 1:00-3:00 | Barney Building #505 (notification requested) |

Other times by appointment

Why We're Here:

During this course we will examine language and culture as means of communication, as social processes, and as representations of mind. During the semester, we'll (1) analyze language as the primary symbolic medium through which humans record, represent, and understand their experiences; (2) examine culture as a complex system of symbolic interactions; and (3) discover relationships among language acts, people's minds, social contexts, and cultural meanings. In addition, we'll come to appreciate language as a powerful tool with which we can sharpen our critical reading, writing, and reasoning skills.

What We Hope to Accomplish:

- To simulate thinking about and build knowledge of how language as a cultural medium works in human perception, understanding, interaction, and systems.
- To consider the role that interactive cultural contexts play in people's use and understanding of symbols, and thus their thinking and behavior.
- To further develop skills in (a) analyzing language texts, (b) written and spoken expression, (c) research and inquiry, and (d) argumentation and reasoning.

Our Tools:

We will make use of an "official" LTC reading packet and a supplemental section-specific reading packet, both of which you'll find at **Advance Copy**, 552 LaGuardia (South of 3rd St.). I'll distribute a few additional readings (mostly articles from the popular press) in class. I also invite all of you to share with the class any relevant resources/materials you find on your own. Examples in all media are welcome.

Your Part:

30% **Attendance and Participation**¹

- Perfect attendance is, of course, ideal—but you will be permitted two absences during the semester—no questions asked. The third and any subsequent absences *will* affect your attendance grade. Anyone absent for more than eight classes will *not* receive a passing grade.

30% **Three Short Papers** (2-3 pages each, more details later)

- Everybody's Got Style: Stylistic Analysis
- Unpack-a-Metaphor
- Cultural Cartography: Mapping Your Local Culture

All papers should be typed, double-spaced, edited, proofread, and *stapled*.

We will discuss the Punctuality Policy in class.

15% **Individual Paper**

10% **Group Presentation**

15% **Final Examination**

¹ The participation portion of the grade is based on two criteria: (1) your attendance and effective participation in class and (2) your participation online. Details about the class website will follow.

By **November 15**, you will need to post **at least ten substantial** (a paragraph of four to six sentences), **critical** comments or questions to the Discussion Board, which you'll find under the "Communication" section of the class website. These postings could take the form of personal anecdotes—stories explaining how LTC concepts become real in your everyday lives—or synopses of magazine or newspaper articles, TV shows, or movies in which you see LTC at play. Or, if you disagree with an argument presented in a particular reading or a previous discussion, you could voice your criticism. And if you're confused about a theory or concept, you could pose a specific question to the group.

This is *your* site; it's *your* public forum. Use it as frequently as you wish, and for whatever reasons you find appropriate. All I ask is that you exercise critical thought, communicate lucidly, and use the website **responsibly**.

Final Project: Individual Paper and Group Presentation

Within the first few weeks of class you'll establish groups of 3-4 people to examine a subculture that's unfamiliar to most members of your group. What are some examples of subcultures? Goths, the dot-com crowd, hardcore kids, senior citizen triathletes, moms who love boy bands, people who dress their pets like children, racial minorities, etc. These and other subcultures have a "lore" that tells people, both the in-group and the out-group, what it takes to be a member. Your job is to identify, categorize, and interpret artifacts and language that communicate something about a subculture's characteristic mindset and behavior. You may want to address the following questions:

- How does this group orient itself in relation to the rest of the world? How does the group position itself in the universe, in the nation, in the community? What are their conceptions of space and time? How does it identify itself ideologically (culturally, socially, politically, economically)?
- Is there a particular historical, geographical, or sociological background to the subculture?
- How is membership in the subculture determined or defined?
- How do people in the group negotiate their social relationships? How do they interact with one another and with "outsiders?" What do these patterns of behavior say about the group identity?
- What special words, phrases, or linguistic categories does the subculture use? Is this language unique to the group? What does it reflect about the subculture?
- Does the group hold any particular objects in high regard? Do they make use of any particular apparel or ornamentation—or any other symbolic object(s)? What is the meaning of these objects to the group?
- Are there any unique rituals or social activities that define the subculture?

Each member of your group will select different "symbolic items" (objects, concepts, linguistic constructions, behaviors, etc.) to analyze. This analysis will require that you observe your subculture; take note of their language and paralanguage, their body movements and patterns of social interaction. Speak with members of the group. I recommend that you keep a log of your research (for your *own* use), and update it *regularly*. Include brainstorming, reflections, doodles, and diagrams.

Supplement your first-hand research with other sources: books, articles, movies, websites, zines, "tokens," and music made by/for/about your subculture; interviews with anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, therapists, social workers, teachers, etc.; maps of the group's neighborhoods, territories, or hangouts....

Individual Papers:

Each student will compose a six- to eight-page analytic paper addressing a particular artifact (symbolic item) from within the subculture. The paper should involve both description and analysis of your object of study—and you should demonstrate, through your analysis, an understanding of the interplay between language, thought, and culture. All papers are due before presentations begin at the end of the semester.

Presentation:

All groups will design a 20-minute presentation in which each group member speaks for five- to seven- minutes about the cultural aspects he or she examined. Please do not

simply read from your papers! Pretend that you've created a new subculture exhibit at the Smithsonian Anthropological Museum, and today—for the very first time—you're presenting the exhibit to the public. I encourage you to "thematize" your presentation—that is, link each portion of the presentation together under a LTC theme and demonstrate your topic's relevance to the study of communication. If you like, you may incorporate audio-visual materials, develop a skit or role-playing exercise, or prepare handouts for the class. You're free to exercise your creativity—but keep in mind that I'm more interested in *content* than form.

| Date | On the Agenda | Reading | Additional Assignments |
|------|---|--|---|
| 9/6 | Introductions & Overview | | |
| 9/11 | What is Language? | Danesi, "Tell Me About Yourself" from <i>Of Cigarettes, High Heels, and Other Interesting Things</i> (begin w/ "Language and Thought" on p.69) (section packet) Schmidt, "Ink, Inc." from <i>I.D.: The International Design Magazine</i> (handout) Barber, "Color Me Psychologically Motivated" from <i>Stay Free!</i> (handout) | |
| 9/13 | The Problems and Functions of Language | Hayakawa, Chapters 1 & 2 from <i>Language in Thought and Action</i> (section packet) Berger & Luckmann, "Language and Knowledge in Everyday Life" from <i>The Social Construction of Reality</i> (section packet) | |
| 9/18 | Mind, Self & Society; Language, Thought & Reality; Signifier, Signified, Sign: The Tripartite Theories Establish Project Groups | D'Andrade, "A Folk Model of the Mind" (section packet) Saussure, "Linguistic Value" (section packet) | |
| 9/20 | Living a Figure of Speech Languaging Technology | Lakoff & Johnson, Chapters 1-6 in <i>Metaphors We Live By</i> (course packet) | Unpack-a-Metaphor Due 9/27 |
| 9/25 | Linguistically Constructed Environments, Linguistically Determined Thoughts | Postman's "Meaning Making" and "Languaging" (course packet) | |
| 9/27 | Linguistic Registers: Disciplines as Language Communities Tools for Analysis: Rhetoric, Stylistics, & Linguistic | Aristotle, from <i>Poetics</i> and <i>The Rhetoric</i> (handout) Stylistics Handout | <i>Everybody's Got Style: Stylistic Analysis Due 10/4</i> |

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| | Interrogators | | |
| 10/2 | Linguistic Relativity: Orwell's <i>1984</i> and Newspeak | Whorf's "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language" (course packet) Shorris, "The Last Word" from <i>Harpers</i> (section packet) | |
| 10/4 | Linguistic Self-ability: Commercial Applications of Linguistics and Semiotics Guest Speaker from Stern School of Business | Golden, "No Longer Just Eggheads..." from <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> (handout) Websites: www.namelab.com , www.lexicon-branding.com (Tools, Research), www.brandinst.com (Our Services), www.interbrand.com , www.landor.com | |
| 10/9 | It's Not <i>What You Say</i>... : International Business Applications of | Hall, "The Voices of Time" (Ch. 1) in <i>The Silent Language</i> (course packet) Hall, "Time Talks, American Accents" (Ch. 9) in <i>The Silent Language</i> (section packet) | |
| 10/11 | Sociolinguistics: Language and Culture | Hall, "What is Culture?" and "The Vocabulary of Culture" (Ch. 2 & 3) in <i>The Silent Language</i> (course packet) | <i>Cultural Cartography:</i> Map Your Culture (refer to map following Hall's Ch. 3 in course packet) Due 10/18 |
| 10/16 | Spatio-Temporal Sensibilities: Landscape Literacy | Hall, "Space Speaks" (Ch. 10) in <i>The Silent Language</i> (section packet) | |
| 10/18 | Politico-Linguistics: Language and Power | hooks, "Language" from <i>Teaching to Transgress</i> (section packet) Selected Poems (<i>Marianne Moore,</i> <i>Gwendolyn Brooks, Sylvia Plath,</i> <i>Adrienne Rich poems</i>) (handouts) | |
| 10/23 | Men are From Mars... : Gendered Communication | Wood, "Gendered Interaction" (course packet) | <i>The Future of Language and the Dominance of English</i> , Ian Buruma The New York Public Library 6 th Ave. & 42 nd St.—6pm |
| 10/25 | ...Women are From Venus: Intra and Interplanetary Communication | Thorne, "Do Girls and Boys Have Different Cultures?" and "Crossing the Gender Divide" (course packet) | |
| 10/30 | Language and Class | Wardhaugh, "Language and Disadvantage" (course packet) Montgomery, "Language and Social Class" (section packet) | |
| 11/1 | Language and Race | Rickford, "Suite for Ebony and Phonics" (course packet) | |

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| | | Excerpts from the <i>NYT Magazine's</i> race series (handouts) | |
| 11/6 | Language and Race (continued) | Moore's "Racist Stereotyping..." (course packet) <i>Further Reading:</i> Hall, "The Spectacle of the Other" (section packet) | |
| 11/8 | Linguistic Macro and Microcultures: Application | Clarke et al.'s "Subcultures..." (course packet) | |
| 11/13 | Project Planning | | Individual Papers Due |
| 11/15 | Presentations | | |
| 11/20 | Presentations | | |
| 11/22 | NO CLASS | | |
| 11/27 | Presentations | | |
| 11/29 | Presentations | | |
| 12/4 | Presentations | | |
| 12/6 | Presentations | | |
| 12/11 | Wrap Up & Evaluations | | |