

## **Topics in Inequality: Language, Power, and Society**

Soc 309  
Wellesley College  
Spring 2006

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Office Hours:  
Monday 1:30-4  
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also available by appt.

### **Course description**

Language is critical in the formation of social groups and struggles for power and prestige among groups. This course will survey language diversity in American society, based on such variables as class, ethnicity, race, gender, religion, age, and region. Examination of language policy issues will illuminate the ways that dominant uses of language reinforce structured differences in social power and prestige among cultural groups. We will also examine political uses of language to both legitimize and challenge key aspects of the social order, with particular attention to discursive attempts by both liberals and conservatives to appropriate the American narrative in staking their territory on contested issues.

### **Required texts**

Rosina Lippi-Green. 1997. *English with an Accent: Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States*. New York: Routledge.

Robin Tomalch Lakoff. 2004. *Language and Woman's Place: Text and Commentaries*, revised and expanded edition. New York: Oxford.

Theresa Perry and Lisa Delpit, eds. 1998. *The Real Ebonics Debate: Power, language, and the education of African-American children*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Additional readings will be posted on e-reserve.

### **Course requirements**

- Attendance 5% (more than 2 absences will result in no credit)
- Class preparation and participation 20%
- Sociolinguistic analysis essay 25% (due March 30)
- Case study—language groups, status inequality, and conflict 50%
  - conference with instructor (by March 3) 5%
  - annotated bibliography (by April 13) 5%
  - *detailed* outline of paper (by May 5) 5%
  - final paper (by 4:30 pm, May 19) 35%

### **Course Policies**

This course will abide by the following grading system outlined by the Wellesley College Articles of Government (Book II, Article VII, Section 1):

Grade A is given to students who meet with conspicuous excellence every demand which can fairly be made by the course.

Grade B is given to those students who add to the minimum of satisfactory attainment excellence in not all, but some of the following: organization, accuracy, originality, understanding, insight.

Grade C is given to those students who have attained a satisfactory familiarity with the content of a course and who have demonstrated ability to use this knowledge in a satisfactory manner.

Grade D is a passing grade. There is no grade of D+ or D-.

Grade F denotes failure and a loss of credit for the course.

Academic honesty is expected of all students in accordance with the Wellesley Honor Code. Suspected honor violations relating to course work in this class will be reported to the General Judiciary.

Late papers and exams will not be accepted, except in cases of extreme emergency (such as hospitalization, death of a loved one). Minor illnesses, over-scheduling, and perfectionism do not constitute extreme emergencies. However, if you have had a major disruption in your life and need extra time, I am willing to work with you; in such cases, please make a request as early as possible. Similarly, except for special cases, I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. Please come to class on time.

I will gladly make necessary accommodations for students with disabilities. Those needing accommodations are encouraged to work with either Jim Wice or Barb Burck in the Pforzheimer Learning and Teaching Center in Clapp Library to make appropriate arrangements.

\*\*\*Disclaimer: The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus and course schedule. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on the course conference.

## Course Outline

### I Language and society

#### A. Getting acquainted; language histories and interests; overview – Feb. 2

Lippi-Green *English with an Accent* chapter 1

#### B. Language variation – Feb. 9

Lippi-Green *English with an Accent* chapters 2-3

Waggoner, Dorothy. “The Demographics of Diversity in the United States.”  
Pp. 5-27 in *Language Ideologies: Critical Perspectives on the Official  
English Movement*, Vol 1. Roseann Duenas Gonzalez and Ildiko  
Melis, eds. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates 2000.

#### C. Culture, meaning, and metaphor – Feb. 16

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. “Language and Knowledge in  
Everyday Life” in *The Social Construction of Reality*. Doubleday  
1966.

Sapir, Edward. 1958. *Culture, Language, and Personality*. Berkeley:  
University of California Press. (selections)

Whorf, Benjamin Lee. “Science and Linguistics” in *Language, Thought, and  
Reality*. MIT Press 1964.

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago:  
University of Chicago Press. (read chapter 1, “Concepts We Live  
By”)

#### D. Language and social power—theoretical considerations – Feb 23

Taylor, Charles. 1994. “The Politics of Recognition” in *Multiculturalism:  
Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton, New Jersey:  
Princeton University Press. (available at Knapp reserve desk)

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1982. “The Production and Reproduction of Legitimate  
Language” in *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge,  
Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Lippi-Green *English with an Accent* chapter 4

#### Recommended:

Hymes, Dell. “Speech and Language: On the Origins and Foundations of  
Inequality among Speakers” in *Ethnography, Linguistics, Narrative  
Inequality: Toward an Understanding of Voice*. Taylor & Francis  
1996.

## II Language socialization

### A. Language learning – March 2

- Heath, Shirley Brice. 1982. "What no bedtime story means: Narrative skills at home and school." *Language in Society* 11, 49-76.
- Bernstein, Basil. 1971. *Class, Codes and Control*, Vol 1. London: Routledge. (Chapter 9: "Social class, language and socialization")
- Eckert, Penelope. 2003. "Language and Adolescent Peer Groups." *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 22:1, 112-118. (This journal is available online through Wellesley College library.)

#### Recommended:

- Clancy, Patricia M. 1986. "The acquisition of communicative style in Japanese." In *Language Socialization Across Cultures*, Bambi Schieffelin and Elinor Ochs, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Cook-Gumperz commentary in *Language and Women's Place* (p. 195)
- Carrie Secret interview in *The Real Ebonics Debate* (p. 79)

### B. Language and identity –March 9

- Lippi-Green *English with an Accent* chapters 5-7
- Rodriguez "On Becoming a Chicano"
- Tan, Amy. "Mother Tongue" in *Under Western Eyes*, Garrett Hongo, ed. Doubleday 1995.

#### Recommended:

- Nichols, Patricia. 2004. "Creole languages: forging new identities." In Edward Finegan and John R. Rickford, eds. *Language in the USA: Themes for the Twenty-first Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 133-152.
- Urciuoli, Bonnie. 2003. "Containing Language Difference: Advertising in *Hispanic Magazine*." In *Language and Social Identity*, Richard Blot, ed. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger.
- Heller "Negotiations of language choice in Montreal" in *Language and Social Identity*, John J. Gumperz, ed. Cambridge University Press 1982.

## III Language and power

### A. Gender and language -- March 16

- Lakoff *Language and Woman's Place*
- Read: Author's intro. & The Original Text; commentaries by Bucholtz (1), Holmes (5), Eckert (7), Hall (8), Meyerhoff (13), Ehrlich (15), and Kiesling (16)

## **B. Language and discrimination – March 30 & April 6**

### **March 30**

Cameron, Deborah. 1995. *Verbal Hygiene*. New York: Routledge. (Chapter 4: “Civility and its discontents”)

Hill, Jane H. “Mock Spanish, Covert Racism and the (Leaky) Boundaries between Public and Private Spheres.” In Roxy Harris and Ben Rampton, eds. *The Language, Ethnicity, and Race Reader* Routledge 2003, pp. 199-210.

Hill, Jane H. 1998. “Language, race, and white public space” *American Anthropologist* 100: 3, 680-9. (journal available online through Wellesley College library)

### Recommended:

Isaacs, Harold R. “Language as a Factor in Inter-Group Conflict.” In James Crawford, ed. *Language Loyalties*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 466-478.

Attinasi, John J. “Racism, Language Variety, and Urban US Minorities: Issues in Bilingualism and Bidialectalism” pp. 319-347 in *Race*, Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek, eds. Rutgers University Press 1994.

### **April 6**

Lippi-Green *English with an Accent* chapters 8-10

Perry, Theresa and Lisa Delpit. 1998. *The Real Ebonics Debate*. Boston: Beacon Press. (read section 2: “What is Ebonics?”)

### Recommended:

Smitherman-Donaldson, Geneva. “Discriminatory Discourse on Afro-American Speech” pp. 144-175 in *Discourse and Discrimination*, Geneva Smitherman-Donaldson and Teun A. van Dijk, eds. Wayne State University Press 1988.

## **C. Language status and language policy – April 13 & 20**

### **April 13**

Lippi-Green *English with an Accent* chapter 11

Perry, Theresa and Lisa Delpit. 1998. *The Real Ebonics Debate*. Boston: Beacon Press. (read sections 1, 4, & 5)

### **April 20**

Hill, Jane H. “The Racializing Function of Language Panics” pp. 245-267 in *Language Ideologies: Critical Perspectives on the Official English Movement*, Vol 2. Roseann Duenas Gonzalez and Ildiko Melis, eds. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates 2001.

- Valdes, Guadalupe. 1997. "Bilinguals and bilingualism: language policy in an anti-immigrant age." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 127: 25-52.
- Roosevelt, Theodore. "One Flag, One Language" from James Crawford, ed. *Language Loyalties*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 84-5.
- Schmid, Carol. 1992. "The English Only Movement: Social Bases of Support and Opposition among Anglos and Latinos." In James Crawford, ed. *Language Loyalties*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 202-208.

Recommended:

- Bretzer, Joanne. 1992. "Language, Power, and Identity in Multiethnic Miami." In James Crawford, ed. *Language Loyalties*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 209-215.
- Perez-Bustillo, Camilo. 1992. "What Happens When English Only Comes to Town? A Case Study of Lowell, Massachusetts." In James Crawford, ed. *Language Loyalties*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 194-201.
- Reyhner, Jon. 1992. "Policies toward American Indian Languages: A historical sketch." In James Crawford, ed. *Language Loyalties*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**D. Rhetoric & political power – April 27**

- Lakoff, George. 1995. "Metaphor, Morality, and Politics: Or, why conservatives have left liberals in the dust." *Social Research* 62:2, 177(37). (journal available online through college library)
- Beasley, Vanessa B. 2001. "Identity, Democracy, and Presidential Rhetoric." In Roderick P. Hart and Bartholomew H. Sparrow, eds. *Politics, Discourse, and American Society*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 19-34.
- Hart, Roderick P., Sharon E. Jarvis, William P. Jennings, Deborah Smith-Howell. 2005. "The President: Managing Democratic Tensions." In *Political Keywords* New York: Oxford University Press.

**E. Rhetorical resistance to power – May 4**

- Forbes, Ella. "Every Man Fights for His Freedom: The Rhetoric of African American Resistance in the Mid-Nineteenth Century." Pp. 155-70 in *Understanding African American Rhetoric: Classical Origins to Contemporary Innovations*, Ronald L. Jackson II and Elaine B. Richardson, eds. Routledge 2003.
- Gamson, William A. 2002. "How Storytelling Can Be Empowering." In *Culture in Mind*, Karen A. Cerulo, ed. New York: Routledge.
- Polletta, Francesca. 2002. "Plotting protest: mobilizing stories in the 1960 student sit-ins." In Joseph E. Davis, ed. *Stories of Change: Narrative and social movements*. Albany: SUNY Press.

## **Sociolinguistic Analysis Essay**

Due March 31

The purpose of the essay is to engage in sociolinguistic analysis of an actual speech event in which two or more people (but not yourself) are involved. You should in some way record the event. You can either record speech in a natural setting (e.g., around campus or around town) or you can record something broadcast over some public medium. You should transcribe a segment of the recording of at least 5 minutes duration; attach your transcription to your essay. Your essay should analyze the linguistic and/or social features of the speech you record. You may comment on more than the segment that you transcribe, but your transcription should illustrate at least some of what you analyze.

Factors you may wish to consider include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Who is speaking? How does the speech reflect the social location(s) of the speakers? (age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, social class, status or prestige) What lexical or phonological markers indicate the speaker's identity?
- In general, how would you characterize the speech you recorded? Is it scripted or spontaneous? Is it formal or informal? Is it legitimate or illegitimate?
- What languages, codes, or dialects are used? If more than one, what is the relationship between them? If more than one variety is used by a single speaker, what seems to govern switching?
- What, if anything, might the speech you recorded indicate about the speakers' worldviews? Are culturally-bound metaphors prominent? How might their speech reinforce a particular sense of reality?
- Does the speech reflect the process of language socialization at work? How? What is being learned?
- In what ways does the speech you recorded reflect a dynamic of power or privilege between the speakers?

Suggested length of essay: 6-9 pages (not including transcript)

## **Language Status Case Study** Final Paper

For your course project, you will write a detailed case study of a language group involved in either an unequal status relationship or a social conflict in which language plays a part. The choice of cases can be driven by your own background and interests. Some of the kinds of topics you might think about include ethnic conflicts in which language is a prominent concern, conflicts over the status of a particular language or language variety, attempts to enact or resist change within a language or language group, struggles to maintain or gain social power that rely strategically on rhetoric or narrative, instances of development of specialized language features by dominant or dominated social groups, proposals of or protests to some language policy, the history of discrimination against a particular social group based significantly on linguistic matters, etc. The possibilities are extensive, and there is room to pursue divergent interests. You will select your topic and outline your approach to the case study in consultation with the instructor.

### Deadlines for completion:

- By March 3—conference with instructor to select topic and propose case study method
- By April 13—annotated bibliography of sources (list of sources that includes a brief abstract of each resource and summarizes its usefulness to your project)
- By May 5—*detailed* outline of paper
- By May 19 (4:30 pm)—final paper due

Suggested length of case study paper is approximately 20 pages.