

**Introduction to Language and Culture
Anthropology 280
University of Oregon, Fall 2011
M,W: 2:00-3:20 pm
115 Lawrence Hall
CRN: 10925**

Professor: Philip Scher
Office: 319 Condon Hall
Email: pscher@uoregon.edu
Phone: 346-5104
Office hours: *by appointment only*

GTFs:
Ivan Sandoval-Cervantes

“All understanding is constrained by borders: Our very status as the subjects of our lives depends on the necessary presence of other subjects.” M.M. Bakhtin.

This course is concerned with the relations between language, thought, and culture. The first half of the course centers on how language as a system of signs makes culture possible. It looks at some basic questions about the nature of human language and its implications for how people make sense of the world. We ask such things as these: How are our identities constructed through language? How does language shape the way we perceive and think about the things around us—and how does the world shape language? How does language let people mean things? The second half of the course focuses on language in action and interaction. We explore the dynamics of everyday conversations, the artful uses of language in performance, and aspects of power such as the politics of gender, national identity, and social status. Although most of the readings are drawn from anthropology, we will also venture into closely related areas in linguistics, sociology, and psychology. This course does **not** assume any background in linguistics.

Some readings will be available online through e-reserve at the Knight Library. Readings will generally be fewer than 100 pages per week.

Assignments: The course will require three 2 page responses to questions handed out in sections/ posted on Blackboard, regarding the readings. You must write all three papers. The papers will require that you use the readings to formulate a thoughtful answer to the question posed. The papers are due on the Monday following the Wednesday they are assigned, giving you the weekend to ponder the question. The first paper will be due in class on the Monday of week 3. You are also obligated to attend all lectures and discussion sessions and complete all readings. There will be a **Mid Term and a Final Exam**.

Paper Format: Papers will be no more and no less than two pages in length. You will answer a specific question handed out to you in discussion section and posted on Blackboard. **The papers will be 12 point font, normal margins, double spaced with name, discussion leader, day and time printed at the top in single space. The text will begin exactly two lines from the bottom of your personal information. Please follow these instructions exactly.** Deviations will be penalized even on otherwise excellent papers. No formal bibliography is required, however frequent and useful reference to the class readings is an absolute must. These references will be cited in standard in-text style. There is a style guide on-line on e-reserve for your convenience. Some of the questions may ask you to do a brief amount of fieldwork and this will be discussed further in class.

Grade %: Grading breakdown is as follows:

Papers = 30%

Attendance & Participation = 10%

Mid Term = 30%

Final Exam = 30%%

Course Materials: At the U of O Bookstore

Making Sense of Language. Susan D. Blum, 2009 Oxford University Press.

Other readings available online at Blackboard.

Reading List

Week 1: Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology

Mon: No readings First day of class.

Wed:

Blum, Susan: The Nature of Language and What is Language in Textbook.

In Blum:

Burling: Smiles, Winks, and Words

Hockett: The Origin of Speech

Pinker: How Language Works

Week 2: Signs & the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Mon:

In Blum:

De Saussure: Nature of the Linguistic Sign

Stokoe: Signing and Speaking

Wed:

In Blum:

Whorf: The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language

Sapir, Edward

1921 Form in Language: Grammatical Concepts. *In* Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech. Pp. 82-119. NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers. (Online)

Week 3: Mind, Self, Society: The Nature of the Sign.

Mon: 1st Paper Due

Benveniste, Emile.

1971 Subjectivity in Language. *In* Problems in General Linguistics. Miami Linguistics Series No. 8. University of Miami Press. (Online)

Ochs, Elinor and Lisa Capps

1996 Narrating the Self. *In* Annual Review of Anthropology, 25:19-43. (Online)

Wed:

In Blum:

Lee: Codifications of Reality: Lineal and Non Lineal

Lakoff and Johnson: Metaphors We Live By

Levinson: Language and Mind: Let's Get the Issues Straight!

Borges, Jorge L.

Borges and I. (Online)

Week 4: Categories and Color

Mon:

Lakoff, George.

1988 Radial Categories. *In* Women Fire and Dangerous Things. Pp. 91-114. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Online)

Wed:

Berlin, B. and P. Kay

1969 Basic Color Terms. Pp. 1-17 and 105-110. University of California Press. (Online)

Conklin, Harold

1955 Hanunoo Color Categories. *In* Southwestern Journal of Anthropology. Pp. 339-344. (Online)

Week 5: Types of Language and Non-Verbal Communication

Mon:

Goffman, Erving

1979 Footing. *In* Forms of Talk. *Reprinted from* Semiotica. 25:3-29. (Online)

Salzman, Zdenek

1998 Non Verbal Communication and Writing. *In* Language, Culture, & Society: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology. 2nd edition. Pp. 246-269. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. (Online)

Wed:

MID TERM EXAM

Week 6: Societal Multilingualism:

Mon:

In Blum:

McArthur: Chinese, English, Spanish – and the Rest

Ohly: Trigglossia: African Privilege or Necessity?

Battistella: Bad Language – Bad Citizens

Wed:

In Blum:

Gumperz: Conversational Code Switching

Tannen, Deborah and Cynthia Waiet

1993 Interactive Frames and Knowledge Schemas in Interaction: Examples from a Medical Examination/Interview. *In* Framing in Discourse. Deborah Tannen (ed.) Pp. 57-76. NY: Oxford University Press. (Online)

Week 7: Region and Class

Mon: 2nd Paper Due

In Blum:

Preston: They Speak Really Bad English Down South and in New York City

Labov: Social Stratification of (r) in New York York

Wed:

In Blum

Tannen: New York Jewish Conversational Style

Week 8: Race and Ethnicity

Mon:

In Blum:

Rickford: Suite for Ebony and Phonics

Morgan: Nuthin' but a G Thang: Grammar and Ideology in Hip Hop Identity

Wed:

In Blum:

Bucholtz: The Whiteness of Nerds: Superstandard English and racial Markedness

Barrett: Language Ideology and Racial Inequality: Competing Functions of Spanish in an Anglo-Owned Mexican Restaurant

Week 9: Gender

Mon: 3rd Paper Due

In Blum:

O'Barr & Atkins: Women's Language or Powerless Language?

Homes: Women Talk Too Much

Wed:

In Blum:

Kiesling: Power and the Language of Men

Cameron: Performing Gender Identity: Young Men's Talk and the Construction of Heterosexual Masculinity

Keenan (Ochs): Norm-Makers, Norm-Breakers: Uses of Speech by Men and Women in a Malagasy Community.

Week 10: Language as Social Action

Mon:

In Blum:

Austin: How to Do Things With Words

Sherzer: Kuna Curing and magic: Counseling the Spirits

Blum: Naming Practices and the Power of Words in China

Wed:

Bauman: Let Your Words Be Few: Speaking and Silence in Quaker Ideology

Basso: To Give Up on Words: Silence in Western Apache Culture

Final Exam: TBA