

QUEENS COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT of ANTHROPOLOGY
ANTHROPOLOGY 104
LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY
Fall 2009
Prof. Valentina Pagliai
Syllabus

Class Meeting:	MW 5pm-6:15pm; PH/114	
Office:	Powdermaker Hall, 314G	Code: 2724
Office Hours:	MW 2:00~2:30p.m and 4:20~4:50 p.m	Sec.: E5MBA
E-mail/Phone:	vpagliai@qc.cuny.edu / (718) 997-2856	3 hours, 3 credits

Course Description:

Language plays a very important role in our everyday life. Not only is linguistic behavior the central focus of many social settings, but it is also on linguistic evidence that we base many of our evaluations of the world around us. Yet attitudes towards language and the ways in which we use language are highly dependent on social and cultural factors. This course provides an introduction to the field of linguistic anthropology: the study of language use in its socio-cultural context from anthropological perspectives. It focuses on the social significance of language by addressing such questions as: To what extent does language shape our thoughts and identities? What does it mean to know a language? Can we think without language? Do all children follow the same language acquisition patterns within a society or across cultures? What is the nature of sign language? How do languages develop and change? What are the differences between language and dialect? How does language reinforce or challenge social stratification? What is the relationship between language and ethnicity? Do women speak more politely than men? Do men and women miscommunicate? How do we study language use in its socio-cultural context? How do conversations work? Do we need English-Only laws in the United States? Why is Ebonics controversial? Should we do anything about disappearing languages? Is English going to be the world language?

The Liberal Arts Goals of the Course:

Language is a central part of social and professional life but is often taken for granted and assumed to be a neutral referential medium. Becoming aware of how linguistic communication shapes, and can be shaped by, culture, inter-personal and group relations, and power dynamics can be an important learning experience for students. In our increasingly globalized world, we face more opportunities and need for intercultural communication, and a deeper awareness of the historical and cultural foundations of language will help both to reduce prejudice and to increase understanding and cooperative interaction. Linguistic anthropological works serve the larger society by providing deeper understanding of the sociocultural and linguistic diversity, which in turn influence policy discussions and decisions, e.g., the English only movement in the U.S., bilingual education, and language right and revitalization. The course fulfills the Perspectives on the Liberal Arts and Sciences (PLAS) requirements in the Area of Knowledge and Inquiry of Cultures and Values (CV) and the Context of Experience of World Cultures (WC).

Course Materials

All required readings will be available on Blackboard (<http://blackboard-doorway.cuny.edu>)

BlackBoard is a system which allows you as a registered student in a course to have access to course materials on a web page. First time users, please go to CUNY Portal at <http://www.cuny.edu>. In order to access Blackboard you must have a CUNY Portal account. Students who do not have a CUNY Portal account should follow these steps:

1. Log on to www.cuny.edu
2. Go to the “Portal Log-in” option
3. Select the “Register Now!” option
4. Follow the prompts.

If you need assistance to create an account call the Helpdesk at 718-997-4444, visit them in the Dining Hall, Room 150, or email them at helpdesk@qc.cuny.edu

Course Format and Requirements:

The class will combine lectures, film viewing, and class or group discussion. The attendance is required and lectures will include material covered in the tests and not included in the readings. You are expected to have completed readings ahead of class. Course grades will be determined as follows:

Test	30%
Mid-Term	30%
Final Exam	40%
Total	100%

Make-Up Policy:

Only students who have a legitimate reason and with official written documentation will be permitted to make up a test or exam. Proper documentation is required and if granted permission, you must take the make-up exam on a day agreed upon with the instructor.

Semester Outline:

The following schedule provides information on how the semester is broken down into topic units, and provides a list of required readings for each class. You are expected to have completed reading assignments ahead of class. Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class.

I: INTRODUCTION

		Topics	Readings
1	8/31 M	Introduction to the Course: What is language, communication, meaning.	
2	9/2 W	The structure of language.	- Bonvillain, pp. 7-30.

II: BIOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

3	9/9 W	Language Acquisition and Socialization	- Ferguson, “Baby Talk” pp.103-114.
4	9/14 M	Nature or nurture? The cross-cultural perspective	- Ochs, “Cultural Dimensions of Language Acquisition” pp. 430-436. - Material from web sites.
5	9/16 W	Socialization among peers.	- Reynolds “Socializing Puros Pericos (Little Parrots)” pp. 82-102.

6	9/21 M	Review for Test	
7	9/23 W	TEST	
8	9/29 T	Sign Languages and their socialization. Classes follow a Monday schedule	- Wolkomir, "American Sign Language" pp.1-5. - Osborne, "A Linguistic Big Bang" pp.1-10 (website). - Hoffmann, "Many Names for Mother," pp. 1-30.

III: LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND THOUGHT

9	9/30 W	Whorf's Study of the Hopi Language and Culture	- Whorf "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language" pp. 200-215.
10	10/5 M	Linguistic Relativity and conceptual metaphors	- Lakoff and Johnson, "Metaphors we live by" pp.1-13.

IV: LANGUAGE AND CHANGE

11	10/7 W	Language Origin and Historical Linguistics	- Wade, "Early Voices" pp1-7 (webpage). - The Austronesians (Lingua Franca) pp.1-5 (website).
12	10/14 W	Non-verbal language. Movie: <i>The Language of the Body</i> by Desmond Morris	
13	10/19 M	Historical Linguistics: Pidgins and Creoles	- Bickerton, "Creole Languages" pp. 59-69.
14	10/21 W	Writing Systems	- Finegan & Besnier, "Writing" pp.358-378. - Miller, "Much Ado about Nushu" pp.1-4 (website). - Cody, "A Language by Women, for Women" pp.1-4 (website).
15	10/26 M	Literacy Practice and Culture	- Harmon, "Internet Changes Language for ☺ & ☹" pp.1-3 (website). - Duranti and Ochs, "Literacy Instruction in a Samoan Village" 213-231.
16	10/28 W	Review for Mid-Term Exam	Review Sheet 2
17	11/2 M	Mid-Term Exam (Non-cumulative)	

V: LANGUAGE IN SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT

18	11/4 W	Language and Dialect Speech communities, communities of practice, contact linguistics and code-switching	- Lippi-Green, "The Standard Language Myth" pp. 52-62. - Blumenthal, "Scholars of Twang Track All the 'Y'all's' ..." pp. 1-4 (website).
19	11/9 M	Varieties of American English. Movie shown in class: <i>American Tongues</i> .	- Preston, "Some Plain Facts About Americans" pp. 398-401.
20	11/11 W	Language and Context Language and Social Identity: Social class, social dialects, registers	- Schilling-Estes, "Redrawing Ethnic Dividing Lines," pp. 357-358. - Lanehart, "Let the Copula Be" pp.1-3 (website)
21	11/16 M	African American English	- Labov, "Academic Ignorance and Black Intelligence" pp. 1-24 (website).
22	11/18 W	Ethnography of Communication Case Study: Silence among the Western Apache	- Scollon&Scollon, "Methodology" pp.16-21. - Basso, "To Give Up on Words" pp. 67-86.
23	11/23 M	Do women and men speak differently?	- Brief excerpts from Lakoff, Tannen and Uchida.

VI: LANGUAGE, MULTILINGUALISM, EDUCATION, AND LAW

24	11/25 W	Bilingualism and code-switching	- Zentella "Returned Migration, Language, and Identity," pp.81-98.
25	11/30 M	Language Policy and Planning in the US	- Rickford, "Suite for Ebony and Phonics," pp. 160-167.
26	12/2 W	English as Global Language. Movie shown in class: <i>New Year's Words</i> , from the History of English Series.	- Pennycook (review of book by) pp.21-23.
27	12/7 M	Endangered Languages	- Hinton, "Language Loss and Revitalization in California: Overview," pp. 216-221.
28	12/9 W	Conclusion & Review	Review Sheet (Handout)

Final Exam (cumulative, with emphasis on Parts V & VI)			
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