

Anthropology 359: Linguistic Ethnography

Days: Wednesday and Friday 12:30 – 2:20

Room: MGH 251

Instructor: Seth Messinger

Condon 630

Office Hours: Wednesday and Friday 10:30 – 11:30

Introduction: Linguistic ethnography explores the social life and social role of language. In this course we will focus on the social life and role of language across ethnographic contexts with a particular emphasis on health and illness. We will study what people “do” with language through the lens of culture, power, and identity and across social worlds. In addition we will explore the role that writing and description play in anthropology and consider ethical issues and responsibilities associated with writing about others.

For a final project students will develop a life history through interviewing a research participant. They will use this data to explore one or more of the topics that we discuss in class.

Learning Objectives: At the end of this course students should be able to:

- Have an introductory understanding of linguistic ethnography;
- Read texts from within the social sciences / humanities and popular media in light of the theories we have explored;
- Develop critical writing skills;
- Develop library research skills.

Grading: There are three types of assignments for this class. The first are response papers which are due at different dates during the semester. A response paper is a 2-page (double spaced) paper that directly engages the reading usually from the week it is assigned. The response papers are assigned in order to assess that students are keeping up with the coursework and are focusing their attention on relevant concepts in the course. The response papers are also assigned to contribute to the development of writing skills. A good response paper consists of a brief description / summary of the reading; a quick summation of the theoretical contribution or argument of the reading; finally a response paper concludes with the student’s reaction to the material presented. The first response paper will be graded by me, the remainder will be graded by peers: we will circulate papers to classmates who will provide anonymous reactions and grades using a -, 0+, 0- system. I will review the evaluated papers and provide a letter grade.

The midterm exam will be take home essay exams in which students will be asked to do one essay question in common and then pick one or two questions from a list.

The research paper, which will be due the final week of class, is a combined library and field research project. The field research project will require students to recruit

a participant in order to conduct an oral life history. The collected narrative will be edited for the formal paper and will be used to consider and apply a theoretical concept taken from the class readings.

Class Meetings: Class meets twice each week and will be a combined lecture and discussion. Students are expected to be prepared for class by having read and developed ideas and questions about the current week's assigned readings.

Course schedule (subject to revision)

Week 1 (September 30, October 2) –

Introduction – the early framing of an anthropologically grounded linguistics; Language and Culture; Communities of language.

- Duranti, A. 1997. "The Scope of Linguistic Anthropology" *Linguistic Anthropology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Cameron, D. 1998. "Performing Gender Identity: Young Men's Talk and the Construction of Heterosexual Masculinity." In Coates, J (ed). *Language and Gender*. Malden, MA: Blackwell
- Wolf, N. 2015. "Young Women, Give Up the Vocal Fry and Reclaim your Strong Female Voice." *Guardian* July 24, 2015
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jul/24/vocal-fry-strong-female-voice>

Week 2 (October 7, 9)

Language; Culture and Thought – Examining how culture and language are understood to be related; Language and Reality; Language and Community.

- Deutscher, G. 2010. "Does Your Language Shape How You Think?" *New York Times Magazine*
- Johnson, T. 2003. Contradictions in Learning How to Be Thai. *Hmong Studies Journal*. 4
- Cohn, C. 1987. "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals." *Signs* 12(14): 687-718

Commented [SM1]: Sapir Whorf Theory

Response Paper I Due Oct. 7

Week 3 (October 14, 16)

Speech Acts and Speech Events – Examining how we use words in different language contexts – the use of speech to proclaim and as a process.

- Geertz, C. 1973. Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture. In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Pp: 3 -33
- Rosaldo, M. 1982. The Things We Do with Words: Ilongot Speech Acts and Speech Act Theory. *Language in Society*. 11(2):203 – 237.
- Hall, K. 1999. Performativity. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*. 9(1/2):184 – 187.

- Duranti, A. 1997. "Speaking As Social Action." In Linguistic Anthropology. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Response Paper 2 Due Oct. 14

Week 4 (October 21, 23) – **Class Cancelled.**

Exploring Speech in Clinical Contexts – Exploring the role of communication and miscommunication in medical and clinical contexts.

- Woolhandler, S and Himmelstein, D. 1989. Ideology in Medical Science: Class in the Clinic. *Social Science and Medicine* 28(11):1205 - 1209
- Scheper-Hughes, N and Lock, M. 1987. The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon for Future Work in Medical Anthropology. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1(1):6-41
- Good, B. 1992. "A Body in Pain – The Making of a World of Chronic Pain." In Good, MJ., Brodwin, P., Good, BJ., Kleinman, A. *Pain as Human Experience: An Anthropological Perspective*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Week 5 (October 28, 30)

The Body Addicted – Introducing the organization of clinical care and "addiction talk."

- Messinger, S. Cooperation and Contention in Psychiatric Work. *Transcultural Psychiatry*. 48(3):284-298
- Carr, E. *Scripting Addiction*. Introduction and Chp. 1

Response Paper 3 Due Oct. 28

Week 6 (November 4, 6)

The Body Addicted – Process of intake, Use of forms, Chart descriptors

- Carr, E. *Scripting Addiction*, Chps 2 - 4

Week 7 (Cancelled November 11 – Veterans Day, November 13 for 4S)

The Body Addicted - The role of the administration.

- Carr, E. *Scripting Addictions*. Chp 5

Week 8 (November 18, cancelled on Nov. 20 for AAA)

Discourse and the Body (Addiction / Amputation) – How experience is mediated and classified by clinical science.

- Carr, E. *Scripting Addictions*. Chps. 6 & Conclusion
- Crawford, C. *Phantom Limb: Amputation, Embodiment, and Prosthetic Technology*. Chps 1 & 2.

Midterm Exam Due Nov. 18

Week 9 (Nov 25, Nov. 27. Classes cancelled for Thanksgiving)

Happy Thanksgiving – Continue to work on your research paper projects.

- Crawford, C. Phantom Limb. Chps 3

Week 10 (December 2, 4)

Discourse and the Body – New developments in medicine shaper experience and produce narratives.

- Crawford, C. Phantom Limb. Chps 4 & 5

Response Paper 4 Due Dec. 2

Week 11 (December 9, 11)

Discourse and the Body – New approaches to Limb-loss and new terrains of phantoms.

- Crawford, C. Phantom Limb. Chps 6 – 7

Final Paper Due Dec. 11