

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

Sociology 715Q

QUALITATIVE METHODS: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

WIN 2010

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CLASSROOM: SS 921
TIME: Thursdays 12:30 – 3:15
NOTE DATE OF FIRST CLASS: FEB. 25

OFFICE HOURS: TBA

This course is an introduction to discourse analysis in some of its many varieties. As it is a methods course, I emphasize examples of discourse analysis in action rather than purely theoretical or programmatic discussions, though I have also included some of the latter. Good examples also offer the best way to understand how to do discourse analysis, as setting out a method or recipe is notoriously difficult. In the papers below, therefore, you are asked to focus on the approach the author has taken -- on the way that the analysis proceeds -- rather than on the paper's substantive content.

What binds most (but not all) examples of discursive research is their common commitment to the linguistic or discursive turn. This is the assumption that the world is (only) available to us through language -- through the ways we have to think and talk about it (or to represent it photographically, as in the paper below I have added for interest sake). Another widely shared assumption is that our talk is *interested* -- that is, we are constructing preferred versions of the world and ourselves when we talk or write (or in the parlance of social constructionists, we are "making claims" about the world). This gives rise to the question Why are we constructing the world in this way rather than that? and Whose account counts? For this reason discourse analysis tends to be a highly politicizing approach, and the issue of power runs through much of this work.

The best way to see these assumptions is by way of an example. In the first class we shall look at one paper only (by me), which provides an occasion to illustrate some of these assumptions. I shall lecture for most of this class (but not for the others) and I shall be explicitly contrasting the discursive approach with more conventional approaches to language in research. *This is the most important single class in the course and it is very important that all students attend. Please prepare this paper for the class, and review, as well, the chapter by Holstein and Gubrium ("Phenomenology...") as background.*

My preferred way to proceed thereafter is to collectively discuss that week's material without imposing a structure (and after the first class I shall not lecture). The success of this format obviously depends on being well prepared for each class, and I may also assign readings to participants for presentation. In this first class we shall also discuss practical matters related to the reproduction and distribution of readings

A note on the selections. First, you will see that there are several of my own papers (or with collaborators) on the list; these show but one approach to discourse analysis, and as we move on, we will look at other approaches that are quite far from my own, especially in the kinds of data that they use. (My empirical work tends to use conversational interview-based data but we also look at papers that use historical documents, for example.) Second, you will also note that I have chosen a number from the late eighties to mid-nineties; this was a time when many authors explicitly contrasted their (discursive) approach with a more conventional one, and so those papers are especially useful pedagogically. Thirdly, I have construed discourse analysis broadly here; not all the approaches are equally familiar to me, but I felt that the exposure would be worthwhile.

Assignments. The sole requirement -- in addition to weekly participation -- will be a paper, due well after the final class (exact date TBA). Here I ask you to attempt a discourse analysis, using any of the models we encounter in the course; however, before beginning you should clear your approach with me. An important part of your task will be to find a good body of data. The deadline for this paper will be far enough after the end of our class that you are able to get a look at the range of approaches before choosing. Participation will not be graded per se, but I will use my discretion in awarding the final mark; strong, consistently prepared participation (or not) can tilt your grade by a little (+ or -). *Note that the expectations placed on any student auditing the course (with my permission) will be identical to those for enrolled students, with the sole exception of the final paper.*

A note on the class dates. As you know, this is a 6-week quarter course, and there are in fact 8 weeks after our reading week in February. Class 1 will be in the first week after reading week (Feb. 25) and the other classes will follow in the remaining 5 weeks; this means that our last class will be Thursday, April 1. This will give us two weeks before the end of term (which is April 16 this year) to get you started on your paper.

List of readings (I may add or delete one or two along the way)

Notes.

- 1) Journal articles are available electronically.
- 2) Distribution/availability of book chapters (marked *) will be discussed in the first class. Note that the asterisked material for class 1(only) is available in the main office, so you can prepare these for the first class.
- 3) Readings designated "optional" are additional materials you may want to consult or include when you come to do your paper.
- 4) Also very helpful is long list of other articles using (or about) discourse analysis on **googlescholar** (then type in "journal articles on discourse analysis").

Week 1 (Feb. 25)

them

- “Talking Bodies: Women Bodybuilders Colonize a Male Preserve”. Leslie Miller and Otto Penz. *Quest* 43(2).
- short excerpt from Potter, *Representing Reality*. *Pp 11-13. (I have made enough copies of this for everyone and will leave on the shelf above the mailboxes in the main office in the next few days).
- Phenomenology, Ethnomethodology and Interpretive Practice.* (esp. pp. 266-270). James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium. Chapter 16 in *Handbook of Qualitative Methods*. Copies available in main office, as above.

Week 2 (March 4)

two more good, clear examples -- both, coincidentally, in the area of gender:

- “Producing Gender Effects: Gender Depictions and Accommodations in the Civil Commitment Process”. James A. Holstein. *Social Problems* 34(2). 1987
- “Jockeying for Position: The Construction of Masculine Identities”. Nigel Edley and Margaret Wetherell. *Discourse and Society* 8, Pp. 203-216. 1997.

Tools and terms

- “A Model of Discourse in Action”. Jonathan Potter, Derek Edwards and Margaret Wetherell. *American Behavioural Scientist* 36(3). 1993

other useful chapters (all **optional**):

- “Discourse Analysis and the Identification of Interpretive Repertoires”.* Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter. Ch. 12 in C. Antaki (ed.), *Analysing Everyday Explanation: A Casebook of Methods*. 1988.
- “Vernacular Constituents of Moral Discourse: An Interactionist Proposal for the Study of Social Problems”*, esp. from p.33 on. Peter Ibarra and John Kitsuse. * Chapter 2 in *Reconsidering Social Constructionism: Debates in Social Problems Theory*. 1993. (I have included this reading primarily for its discussion of various “rhetorical idioms”, “styles” and “motifs” -- the authors’ terms -- that actors use when making arguments or “claims”, here in connection with social problems, but useful more broadly).
- “At the Margins? Discourse Analysis and Qualitative Research”. Julianne Cheek. *Qualitative Health Research* 14(8). 2004

Week 3 (March 11)

Discourse and Power

Social

- “Claims-making from the Underside: Marginalization and Problems Analysis”. * Leslie Miller. Ch. 8 in *Reconsidering Social Constructionism: Debates in Social Problems Theory*. 1993.
- “Managing Multiple Identities: Discourse, Legitimacy and Resources in the UK Refugee System”. Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy. *Organization* 4 Pp. 159-185. 1997.
- “Celebrating Culture” -- Constructing Meaning at Aboriginal Festivals”. * Pp. 213-215 and 236-255 in *In Search of Winnetou: Constructing Aboriginal Culture in the Tourist Encounter*. Siegrid Deutschlander. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Calgary. 2006.
- [and see also Doran, below]
- **optional**. “A Discourse of the Social: Medical Talk/Power Talk/Oppositional Talk?” Sue Fisher. *Discourse and Society* 2(2). Pp. 157-182. 1991.
- **optional**. “The Political Rhetoric of Photography”.* Michael . J. Shapiro. In *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography and Policy Analysis*. 1988.

Week 4 (March 18)

Discourses of victimization and medicalization.

- “Rethinking Victimization: An Interactional Approach to Victimology”. James A. Holstein and Gale Miller. *Symbolic Interaction* 13 (Spring). 1990
- Video: *Internet Porn*.

Week 5 (March 25)

Foucault, Genealogies and Historical Data.

- “From Embodied ‘Health’ to Official ‘Accidents’: Class, Codification and British Factory Legislation 1831-1844. Nob Doran. *Social and Legal Studies* 5(4). 1996
- “Unmarried Motherhood 1830-1990: A Genealogical Analysis”* Jean Carrabine. Ch. 7 in *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*. 2001.

Week 6 (April 1)

The Discursive Construction of Identities

- “Oppositional Identities and Rhetoric in Divorce”. Joseph Hopper. *Qualitative Sociology* 16(2). 1993.
- “Strategically Speaking: The Problem of Essentializing Terms in Feminist Theory and Feminist Organizational Talk”. Leslie J. Miller and Jana Metcalf. *Human Studies* 21. 1998. (This paper will be provided. I have included it as an example of the

argument that a discursive approach can shed new light on current theoretical issues -- in this case in feminist theory).

- [also see Phillips and Hardy, above.]
- **optional.** "Liberal Humanism as an Ideology of Social The Regulation of Lesbian Identities".* Celia John Shotter and Kenneth Gergen (eds.). *Texts of*

Control:
Kitzinger. In
Identity. 1989.