

Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics

The Florida State University

Division of Spanish and Portuguese

Discourse and Discrimination: A Pragmatic Examination of Language and Human Rights

LIN4930

LIN 5932

Fall 2001

Course information:

Instructor: Dr. Shonna Trinch

Time: 3:35p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

Location: 202 Diffenbaugh

Office hours. 304B Diffenbaugh, Tuesdays 10:00-11:00; Thursdays 12:30-1:15

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Course Description:

In this course we will take a pragmatic approach to the study of language as it relates to human rights. *Pragmatics* is the study of how language is used by people in context. Our concern will focus on how language is used both to perpetrate human rights violations as well as how activists use it to construct an act as a ‘human rights violation.’ More specifically, we will confront both the practical and theoretical problems involved in the way language is employed by oppressors to subjugate others either through official language policies or through more subtle discursive techniques that have dehumanizing effects on the oppressed. Conversely, we will also examine how those who are often considered to be subaltern (i.e., people who are perceived to be oppressed and powerless) use language itself as a resource (e.g., linguistic minority rights, cultural preservation through language) as well as the discursive practices available in language (i.e., subaltern discourses of resistance) to combat those who hold and withhold power.

The course will focus on narrative from a sociolinguistic and anthropological point of view, where narrative is a linguistic resource that people use pragmatically in order to represent themselves and others politically. Course topics will include how this mode of representation is employed as a discursive strategy by victims and their defenders to seek justice, as well as how it can be easily undermined by others who wish to maintain their own privilege to represent reality.

Required Texts:

- 1) Burgos-Debray, Elisabeth. 1984. *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian woman in Guatemala*. Verso: New York.
- 2) Duranti, Alessandro. 2001. *Key terms in language and culture*. Blackwell: Malden, MA. (You will use this book as a reference book).
- 3) Scollon, Ron and Suzanne Scollon. 2001. *Intercultural communication: A discourse approach*, (second edition). Blackwell: Malden, MA.
- 4) A 'professor's packet' of required readings is on reserve at Strozier Library, and you can access these readings through the web as well. You may use the language laboratory of the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics (Rm 126) if you take a ream of paper to the lab to do your printing.

In addition, you must have an ACNS account in this class to receive email and to access the course Web site. A more up-to-date syllabus, reading guides, announcements and assignments will be posted on the Web. If you use hotmail or another provider, have your mail forwarded from your garnet or mailer account to your hotmail account. You can do this on the CARS page.

Course Objectives:

- 1) To create an awareness of the power of language to produce and construct contexts of repression and sites of resistance.
- 2) To show students how to approach the issue of "human rights and representation" critically using the tools of discourse analysis, narrative theory, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics.
- 3) To foster an understanding that critical analysis is not 'criticism' for the sake of 'criticizing,' but rather a way of questioning the status quo.
- 4) To explore with students the ethical question of *analyzing* human rights issues through 'intellectual criticism'.
- 5) To provide practitioners (NGO leaders, activists, volunteers) with an academic forum to reflect on and critique their own work experiences with language and human rights.

Attendance:

In order for you to meet these objectives, it will be necessary for you to attend all classes. You will be allowed up to two (2) absences with no questions asked. Please use them wisely. Excused absences include the following: (a) participation in a scheduled event as a member of a university-sponsored athletic/scholastic team, but official absence form is required, (b) religious holidays, (c) accident or illness, but accident report or FSU health center/doctor's note required, (c) death in the immediate family.

***Students are responsible for making up all work missed during absences. Students may not make up graded work for unexcused absences.

*Each unexcused absence after the first two will reduce the final grade—to be calculated on a scale of 100%--by five (5) percentage points.

* Excuses for absences must be submitted within two (2) days of the time of return.

* This class meets two days a week in the classroom, unless otherwise noted.

* Please be aware of the fact that this syllabus is ‘tentative’. Due to pedagogical considerations, it may be necessary to modify it during the course of the session. Changes will be minimal.

Students with disabilities:

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should register with and provide documentation to the *Student Disability Resource Center* (SDRC) and bring a letter to the instructor from the SDRC indicating a need for academic accommodations. This should be done the first week of classes. This syllabus and other course materials are available in alternative format upon request.

Evaluation:

Except in the case of excused absences or extreme extenuating circumstances, the following will be the policy in this class: (1) late assignments will not be accepted, (2) there will be no make-up quizzes or exams, (3) no quizzes or exams will be given early. A passing grade for LIN 5932/LIN 4930 is a C- (70%). The final grade in this course will be determined from the following components:

Class Participation	50%
Midterm	15%
Homework and Quizzes	15%
Final Project	20%

Class Participation:

You will be given a daily participation grade that depending upon your performance can be as high as 20 points and as low as 10 points if you are in class but elect not to participate. These daily grades will be added together to come up with a weekly grade that you will receive every Monday. A heavy emphasis is placed on participation because this course will be conducted in a lecture/seminar format. Thus, to a large extent, the success of this course is dependent upon student involvement. Everyone is expected to contribute to class discussions in valuable and insightful ways, especially in relation to class lectures, readings and assigned exercises. Students are strongly encouraged to take notes in class. Weekly participation reports will be calculated with the following form.

Weekly Report # _____ Dates: _____ through _____

Name _____

Grade _____ You are graded, among other things, on the following factors:

- positive contributions to the class
 - evidence that materials assigned were read
 - evidence that any preparation necessary to digest the reading was done, for example, consultation of dictionaries, examination of paratexts, keyword search on Web Luis or the internet, etc.
 - evidence that you are making attempts to connect the readings with prior lectures and readings
 - regular participation in class
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Homework, written work and written exams:

1. In addition to reading and preparing to come to class for a discussion during every class meeting, students will work in pairs to devise a presentation that analyzes 'representation' with respect to some human rights issue. The in-class analysis should be of a text that the rest of the class can also read/see before the group's presentation. See the course web site for possible ideas. The analysis will include the linguistic features the text-producer brings together to make his/her point as well as those features of the context of interpretation/reading/listening that may be beyond his/her control. The presentation will last twenty minutes.
2. Occasionally, I may ask you to prepare a short essay that will be collected for a grade.
3. The midterm exam will test for comprehension of concepts and for recognition of linguists and analysts who have contributed to our study of language. The purpose of all written work is more instructional than it is strictly evaluative, as is reflected in the relative weight of the evaluative components. The midterm and writing assignments are designed to prepare you to be able to make valuable contributions in class discussions as well as to prepare you for your final analysis. Reading and preparing for class are the most important assignments as they will prepare you for successful class discussions as well as for success on your midterm and in your textual analyses.

Final Project:

The final project will be a ten-page analysis of a text that deals with human rights. While this project is similar to the group project presented in class, it will be slightly different in several ways. First, it is an individual and not a group project. Second, it will be written, as opposed to orally presented. Third, the analysis may build on the analysis presented in class, but students must go beyond the original project in both scope and depth. For example, there should be at least seven new sources on the bibliography that were not assigned for the class. **Two-page proposal due Thursday, November 1, 2001. Final write-up due in class December 6, 2001.**

Academic Honor Code**Honor Statement:**

The Academic Honor System of Florida State University is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in the student's own work, to refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the University community, and to foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the University community. Students are expected to uphold the Academic Honor Code published in the Florida State University Bulletin and the Student Handbook.

Meeting with the professor:

I am available to meet with you during my office hours and by appointment. If you are unable to see me during the times that I have scheduled, please arrange to see me at a mutually convenient time. If you are having problems with the course, see me as soon as possible so that we can get all issues ironed out to make for the best learning environment possible. You can reach me by e-mail or by phone (in my office and at home) at all (reasonable) times.

Grading scale:

A	94-100	C-	70-73
A-	90-93	D+	67-69
B+	87-89	D	64-66
B	84-86	D-	60-63
B-	80-83	F	0-59
C+	77-79		
C	74-76		

Course Schedule at a Glance

Semester weekS	Units	Class dates
1st week, August 28-30	Unit 1: Introductions/Definitions	Tuesday the 28th: Thursday the 30th:
2nd week, September 4-6	Linking language to human rights	Tuesday the 4th : Thursday the 6th:
3rd week, September 11-13	Unit 2: Narrative and Representation	Tuesday the 11th: Thursday the 13th:
4th week, September 18-20		Tuesday the 18th: Thursday the 20th:
5th week, September 25-27	Unit 3: Narrative: Other forms, other functions	Tuesday the 25th: Thursday the 27th:
6th week, October 2-4		Tuesday the 2nd: Thursday the 4:
7th week, October 9-11	Unit 4: What happens when the subaltern speaks?	Tuesday the 9th: Thursday the 11th:
8th week, October 16-18		Tuesday the 16th: Thursday the 18th:
9th week, October 23-25	Unit 5: What are the dangers of (not) representing?	Tuesday the 23rd: Thursday the 25th:
10th week, Oct. 30 –Nov. 1	Unit 6: Representations of Genocide, WWII	Tuesday the 30th: Thursday the 1st: Two-page proposal due
11th week, November 6-8		Tuesday the 6th: Thursday the 8th: MIDTERM
12th week, November 13-15	Unit 7: Truth and Reconciliation	Tuesday the 13th: Thursday the 15th:
13th week, November 20-22		Tuesday the 20th: Thursday the 22nd:
14th week, November 27-29	Unit 8: Human Rights paradigm for domestic violence	Tuesday the 27th: Thursday the 29th:
15th week, December 4-6		Tuesday the 4th: Thursday the 6th: Final Project
Last week, December 10-12	WEEK OF FINAL EXAMS	Tuesday the 10th: Thursday the 12th:

Week 1: Topics: Introduction, presentation, definitions

Tues., August 28: Linking pragmatics, human rights, representation, culture, discourse, intercultural communication

Thurs., August 30: How do we determine what constitutes a human rights issue? Who defines what counts as a human rights issue? What does language have to do with human rights?

Have Read:

1) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (on reserve at Strozier Library or on the Web at www.un.org/Overview/rights.html)

In class exercise: Search through *Time* magazines for reports or stories that you consider to be human rights violations. Defend the issue reported as human rights case.

Week 2: A pragmatic examination of representation vs. examining pragmatic representation.

Tues., Sept. 4: Language, identity and naming

Have read:

- 1) Safran Foer, Jonathan. "The very rigid search." *The New Yorker* June 18 & 25, 2001, pps. 116-128 (on reserve at Strozier).
- 2) Scollon and Scollon, 2000. Chpt. 1, What is a Discourse Approach? In *Intercultural Communication*, second edition.
- 3) Duranti, 2001: Read about the following keywords:
 - a) identity
 - b) translation
 - c) names

For class, think about how to use Scollon and Scollon to analyze the way that language is used to represent people, things, feelings, prejudice, accommodation, etc in the Foer's short story.

Thurs. Sept. 6: See *Erin Brokovitch* (part I) in class.

Have read:

Scollon and Scollon, 2000. Chpt. 2, How, When, and Where to Do Things with Language. In *Intercultural Communication*, second edition.

Week 3: Narrative and Representation

Tues., Sept. 11 See *Erin Brokovitch* (part II) in class

Thursday Sept. 13 Narrative, form, function, purpose. Be prepared to discuss the following reading in relation to *Erin Brokovitch*. Think about what Labov and Waletzky say narrative is and how narrative is used as a mode of representation in the movie. Identify places in the movie where communication is strained between conversationalists. Identify places where you see the way people narrate at odds with the way their listeners want to hear about it. How do Labov and Waletzky account for the divergent goals of narrators and their listeners? Are the litigants who are part of the class action suit against PG &E victims of human rights violations? Why or why not?

Have read:

- 1) Labov William and Joshua Waletzky. 1967. Narrative analysis and oral versions of personal experience. In *Essays on the verbal and visual arts: Proceedings of the 1966 Annual Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society*. June Helm (ed.). Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp. 12-45.

Week 4: Narrative manipulation.

Tues. Sept. 18, Topic: Whose story is it anyway?

Have read:

- 1) Guha, Ranajit. 1997. Chandra's death. In *A subaltern studies reader 1986-1995*. Ranajit Guha (ed.). Minneapolis: University of Michigan Press, pp. 34-62.
- 2) Duranti, 2001: Read about the following keywords:
 - a) Narrative
- 3) Scollon and Scollon, 2000. Chapter 3, Impersonal Politeness and Power.

Thurs., Sept. 20,

Have read:

- 1) Briggs, Charles. 1997. Notes on a 'confession': On the construction of gender, sexuality, and violence in an infanticide case. *Pragmatics* 7(2):519-546.
- 2) Duranti, 2001: Read about the following keywords:
 - a) conflict
 - b) expert

Week 5: Narrative, other forms, other functions

Tues., Sept. 25: Community, collaboration

Have read:

- 1) Norrick, Neal R. 1997. Twice-told tales: Collaborative narration of familiar stories. *Language in Society* 26, 199-220.
- 2) Duranti, 2001: Read about the following keywords:
 - a) community
 - b) participation
 - c) functions

Thurs., Sept. 27:

Have read:

- 1) Scollon and Scollon, 2000. Chapter 4, Conversational Inference: Interpretation in Spoken Discourse. In *Intercultural Communication*.

Week 6: Topic: Testimonio, Can people without power speak?

Tues., Oct. 2, The production of discourse

*****VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU Have read:**

- 1) Burgos-Debray, Elisabeth, 1984. I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala. Verso: London.
- 2) Duranti, 2001: Read about the following keywords:
 - a) orality
 - b) literacy
 - c) voice

Oct 4: Rigoberta's secrets: speaking, voice and silence

Have read:

- 1) Scollon and Scollon, 2000. Chapt. 5, Topic and Face: Inductive and Deductive Patterns
- 2) Duranti, 2001: Read about the following keywords:
 - a) acquisition
 - b) endangered

Week 7: What happens when 'powerless people' speak?

Oct. 9: Rigoberta's first opponent

Have read:

- 1) D'Souza, Dinesh. 1991. Travels with Rigoberta: Multiculturalism at Stanford. In *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus*. New York: Free Press, pp. 59-93.
- 2) Duranti, 2001: Read about the following keywords:
 - a) ideology
 - b) crossing

Oct. 11:

Have read:

- 1) Scollon and Scollon, 2000. Chapter six: Ideologies of Discourse. In *Intercultural Communication*, second edition.

Week 8: What happens when 'powerless people' are heard, over and over again?

Oct. 16: What counts as Truth? David Stoll's take on Menchú: The second opponent

Have read:

- 1) Stoll, All paratexts, and Chpts. 1, 5, 9
- 2) Duranti 2001: Read about the following keywords:
 - a) iconicity
 - b) reconstruction

Oct. 18:

Have read Stoll Chpts. 11, 13, 14, 17, 20

Week 9: What is culture? What dangers lie in (not) representing it?

Oct. 23: Finish with Stoll

Have read:

- 1) Stoll Chpts. 17, 20
- 2) Duranti 2001, Read about the following keyword and link it to Stoll's anthropological work about Rigoberta Menchú.
 - a) Reflexivity
- 3) Scollon and Scollon, 2000. Chapter seven: What is Culture? *Intercultural Communication and Stereotyping*. In *Intercultural Communication*, second edition.

Oct. 25: Link Rigoberta Menchú/Elisabeth Burgos-Debray with Pacific Gas and Electric's victims/Erin Brokovitch

Have read:

- 1) Scarry, Elaine. 1985. Chapter 1, "The Structure of Torture: The conversion of real pain into the fiction of power," pps. 27-59. *The Body in Pain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2) Duranti 2001, Read about the following keyword
 - a) healing

Week 10: 'Revisionists' and the distortion of truth from the other side

Tues, Oct 30: See World at War Series and Genocide 1941-1944

Have read: Excerpt from Anne Frank

Duranti, 2001

- a) power
- b) control
- c) gender

Thurs., Nov. 1: Holocaust deniers (reading to be announced)

*****(Two page proposals for final projects due)*****

Week 11: Why respond to Holocaust deniers?

Nov. 6**Have read:**

1) Lipstadt, Deborah. 1994. *Denying the Holocaust: The growing assault on truth and memory*. New York: Plume. Chapt. 1, “Canaries in the mine: Holocaust Denial and the Limited Power of Reason.” and “Appendix: Twisting the Truth: Zyklon-B, the Gas Chambers and the Diary of Anne Frank”.

- 2) Duranti
- a) repetition
 - b) indexicality
 - c) genre

Nov. 8: Midterm.**Week 12: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission****Nov. 13**

Have read and explored:

<http://www.truth.org.za/index.html> (Official Truth and Reconciliation Commission Website)

Nov. 15

Have read:

Duranti, 2001:

- a) truth
- b) act

Other readings to be announced

Week 13: State Sponsored Violence, Representation and Gender**Nov. 20**

Have read:

Duranti,

- a) gender
- b) agency

Swiss, S. and J.E. Giller. “Rape as a crime of war”, JAMA Vol. 270, No 5 1993.

Nov. 22 NO CLASS, Thanksgiving Break**Week 14: Human Rights Paradigm for other issues: Domestic Violence****Nov. 27****Have read:**

1) Romero, M. 1985. A comparison between strategies used on prisoners of war and battered wives.” *Sex Roles*: vol. 13, nos. 9(10): 537-547.

Nov. 29

1) Beasley, Michele E. and Dorothy Q. Thomas. 1994. Domestic Violence as a Human Rights Issue. In *The Public Nature of Private Nature of Private Violence: The Discovery of Domestic Abuse*, pps. 323-346. New York: Routledge.

Week 15: Representing domestic violence in the U.S. Legal System**Dec 4.** Protective order affidavit workshop

Have read:

Duranti, 2001

- a) interview (b) intentionality (c) heteroglossia

Dec 6. Protective order affidavit workshop continued (**Final Projects are due**)

