

## ENG 359: Discourse Analysis

Spring 2017

Monday/Wednesday, 3:35-4:50pm

Marianist 205

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Humanities 275 | 937-229-3463

Hours: M/W 1:30-3:30pm and by appointment

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### Catalog Description:

Across all domains of life, language constructs human experience. Understanding how both individuals and social groups employ language to construe experience, make knowledge, and exert social power is the primary function of discourse analysis. Consequently, this analytic method problematizes language as a means of construing reality, focusing instead on language as a locus of social struggle and transgression.

This course is a CAP Crossing Boundaries - Inquiry course, which means that it will introduce students from outside the Humanities to key methods of investigation, interpretation, exploration, and ways of knowing in English studies. Students will examine various discourse analytic approaches, their theoretical orientations and methodological concerns, and apply these approaches to the study of multiple types of discourse. Based on these approaches, students will conduct their own extended discourse analytic projects and compare the methodological approaches of discourse analysis to the methods of knowledge-making in their own discipline.

**Goals:** Students will be able to:

1. identify different theories of language and discourse.
2. apply various approaches to discourse analysis to naturally occurring linguistic data from a range of social groups.
3. examine how contextual factors (linguistic, social, cognitive) shape discourses among dominant and non-dominant social groups.
4. evaluate approaches to discourse analysis in English for their application to scholarship in their own disciplines.
5. produce cogent analyses of written, spoken, and multimodal discourse.

### Required Materials:

Access to UD Email and Course Isidore Site

Printed copies of course readings

### Assignments:

Analysis Papers (3 total): For each course unit, you will practice employing a discourse analytic approach to the treatment of data. You will discuss your topic, analytic procedure and findings in a 4-5 page analysis paper. While aimed at helping you develop your abilities to report on research practices and data analysis, these papers can also help you work toward a semester research project of your choice (see below).

Analysis Paper 1: Understanding Discourse as Linguistic Performance: A Speech Act Analysis  
Individual, Individual data set

Analysis Paper 2: Understanding Discourse as Interaction: A Conversation Analysis  
Collaborative, Shared data set

Analysis Paper 3: Understanding Discourse as Institutionalized Practice: A Critical Analysis  
Individual, Shared data set

These papers should reflect your best attempt at applying new analytic procedures, rather than a reflection on the meaning of your data or, less so, a brain dump of whatever comes into your mind after reading through the data. Focusing on systematic, justifiable methodological choices and showing the results of those choices – even if the results are something that you did not expect – are central to the development of your writing and research skills (not only in this course, but in future projects as well).

Semester Research Project: This project will take the form of an original analysis using an analytic approach and data set of your choosing. You might begin with an issue we didn't cover in depth, something that's still puzzling you, or a question that remains for you at this point in the semester. Your individual semester project can go in several directions:

- a. you can develop a previous analysis paper into a more detailed and robust project
- b. you can develop an new project of your own, quite separate from the previous analysis papers
- c. you can propose a new project about a new type of discourse altogether!

Presentation: This will happen either April 28<sup>th</sup> or finals week (your choice). This will provide you with an opportunity to visualize your work and discuss the results of your efforts on the project, as well as solicit feedback for future work on the analysis.

### **Grading:**

*Final Grade Breakdown:*

30% Participation (daily writing, participation in class discussion and activities)

30% Data Analysis Essays (3, graded individually)

40% Semester Project (proposal, presentation, report)

### **Unit I: Discourse as Linguistic Performance (weeks 2-4)**

In this introductory unit, students will read germinal texts in language performance to examine the concept of speech acts as a means for conceptualizing language functions. Students will identify basic elements of speech acts (locutionary, illocutionary, & perlocutionary acts) using examples of linguistic data from their home disciplines. Students will analyze truncated samples of spoken and written discourse - comparing how speech act theory can be applied to each - to examine linguistic functions such as politeness, promotion, indirectness, cooperation, implicature, and intention.

Methods of Evaluation: Short Analysis Paper, Written Annotations

### **Unit II: Discourse as Interaction (weeks 5-7)**

This unit will introduce students to discourse as social interaction, focusing primarily on contextual features impacting language use within individual discursive events (e.g., doctor-patient interactions, familial interactions, corporate interactions, teacher-student interactions, etc.). Students will record and transcribe naturally occurring discursive events within a setting relevant to their own discipline and analyze them for linguistic functions such as sequencing, turn-taking, preferences, conversational action, and silence. Based on these analyses, students will make arguments concerning the ways discursive interactions reflect social positions, hierarchies, and power.

Methods of Evaluation: Transcription Activity, Short Analysis Paper, Written Annotations

### **Unit III: Discourse as Institutionalized Social Practice (weeks 8-13)**

In this unit, students will examine the nature of and relation between language-in-use and institutionalized practices, specifically in social institutions relevant to their home disciplines that condition social power (companies, governmental agencies, educational settings, social media). Students will read a number of critical analyses of political discourse, media discourse, economic discourse, advertising discourse, and educational discourse focusing on (a) the linguistic and social processes through which meaning is represented and (b) how linguistic representations construct social relations of power and hegemony and result in (primarily racial and gendered) inequalities. Students will select a type of discourse from their home disciplines and analyze a set of linguistic data to uncover how social hierarchies are legitimated through linguistic representations of constituent groups.

Methods of Evaluation: Short Analysis Paper, Written Annotations, Discussion Lead

### **Unit IV: Applying Models and Reflecting on Discourse Analysis (weeks 14-16)**

In this final unit, students will select a method of discourse analysis from the various approaches examined in the course and conduct their own extended analyses of a set of texts within their home discipline. Students will prepare a project proposal to describe and justify their choices of data and analytic approach, present their findings in the form of an extended research report. Finally, students will write a final reflection on the application

of their analytic approach to the study of discourse within their own disciplines, focusing specifically on the comparisons between discourse analysis and research methods from their major disciplines.

Methods of Evaluation: Project Proposal, Extended Analysis Report, Written Reflection