

N.Y.U. / GALLATIN

Fall 2008
K20 1157
Thur 3:30 – 6:10
Silver 821

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Gallatin 417

SPEECH, SILENCE, AND THE STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY

We know a great deal about speech and its role in the formation and transformation of identity for both individuals and groups. We know less about silence in such matters: whether silence complements or subverts speech, hence how it ultimately affects our identity and access to power. Speech and silence can be seen as conflicting strategies used selectively by women and men, blacks and whites, immigrants and indigenous people, rich and poor for the maintenance of self and the silencing of others. Why? What are the psychic and social costs of these strategies? What myths do they help perpetuate? Finally, what are the ideologies that affect our understandings of both?

Required Readings

available at **Bluestocking Bookstore** 172 Allen St. @ Stanton [1 block South of Houston] 212 777-6028 [www.bluestockings.com]

Peter Trudgill's *Sociolinguistics*,
Maria-Luisa Achino-Loeb's *Silence: The Currency of Power*,
Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*,
Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*,
Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation*,
Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

Required Readings

On Reserve in **Bobst Library**
The Emergence of Language by William S.-Y. Wang

Sept 4 **Introduction:** What is Human Language and how it includes both speech and silence

Part I Dimensions of Speech

Sept 11 The Acquisition of Speech: When? Why? How?
3 Articles in *The Emergence of Language* by William S.-Y. Wang
on reserve in Bobst Library:
"Introduction" by Wang
Cha. 9, "The Perception of Speech in Early Infancy" by Eimas
Cha. 10, "The Acquisition of Language" by Moskowitz

- 18 Language and Group Identity: Social Class and Ethnic Group
Trudgill's *Sociolinguistics*, chas 1, 2, 3
- 25 Language and Sex, Language and Nation
Trudgill's *Sociolinguistics*, chas. 4, 7, 9
- Oct 2 Film and Wrap-up
Trudgill's *Sociolinguistics*, cha. 10

Part II Dimensions of Silence

- Oct 9 What is Silence?
Beeman [cha.1], Achino-Loeb [cha.2]
in *Silence: The Currency of Power*
- 16 Silence in Cross-cultural Perspective
Cook [cha.3], Kingsolver [cha.4], Barber [cha.5], Sheriff [cha.6], Sider [cha.7],
Fernandez [cha.8] in *Silence: The Currency of Power*
[selective assignment by group]
- 23 Frontline Documentary
Due: Paper
- 30 The Framing of Public Discourse
[Groups look-up the Rockridge Institute and present Pro / Con arguments of 1
or 2 issues raised]

Part III Views from Within

- Nov 6 Hoffman, *Lost in Translation*
- 13 Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*
Discussion of Final Projects
- 20 NO CLASS [we will schedule make-up]
- 27 THANKSGIVING
- Dec 4 Woolf, *a Room of One's Own*
Due: In-class presentations
- 11 Beckett *Waiting for Godot*
Due: In-class presentations

Make-up class: Final Thoughts
Due: In-class Presentations

Requirements and Grades

We will divide our class into several groups of 4 students or so. Each group will keep in close touch via e-mail, telephone or even in person! The object will be to discuss the issues raised by our readings and to help one another find the issues' relevance to the whole topic under discussion. A volunteer from each group will type the outcome of his/her group's discussions, make one copy for each group and one for me, hand out the copies at the start of each class, and lead his/her group's discussion.

Midterm Paper [40%]; Final Presentation [40%]: To be discussed.

Participation [20%]: This will include attendance, in-class discussion, group work and weekly write-up of issues.