

N.Y.U. / GALLATIN

Spring 2009
K 20.1342
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Rm 210

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Language, Globalization and the Self

This course is intended as an exploration of language as vehicle for processes of globalization. What role did language play in the changes wrought by early capitalist transformations and the colonial expansion? Conversely, how have these global changes affected localized communities and the languages that identify them? And why should we care?

To answer these questions we will examine how the colonial experience has given rise to value-laden linguistic practices that mirror and sustain the racializing of privilege; and how the experience of language-loss encountered by voluntary and involuntary migrants can attack the integrity of the self. While ultimately concerned with language, our discussions will have a wide scope ranging from issues of political economy to collective consciousness and individual psychology.

Required Readings

Eric Wolf *Europe and the People Without History*
Benedict Anderson *Imagined communities*
Maria-Luisa Achino-Loeb *Silence: The Currency of Power*
Eva Hoffman *Lost in Translation*
Tsitsi Dangarembga *Nervous Conditions*
Richard Rodriguez *Hunger for Memory*

**As well as material on reserve

Part I LANGUAGE, GLOBALIZATION AND THE SELF: BROAD CONNECTIONS

Issues:

- Universality of language and its implications
- Is language the creator or mirror of experience?
- Language classification: Fiction or reality?
- Language and change: How do the arrows of connection go?
- Is identity inherited or invented?
- Is Globalization a new phenomenon?
- What happens to group identity in a globalized world?
- Is globalization a positive or negative development? Why?

Jan 22 Introduction

Jan 29 *Language* by Edward Sapir [in Sapir's Culture, Language and Personality pp. 1-44 –**on reserve** in Bobst lower floors]
and *The Wild Child* [film]

Feb 5 *Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue* by Frederic Jameson [in Jameson & Miyoshi's The Cultures of Globalization pp. 54-77 –**on reserve** in Bobst 10th floor non-circulating Library, (call # HM101.C399)]

Part II ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATIONS AND THEIR REPERCUSSIONS

Issues:

- What have been the “push” and “pull” factors in the world-wide contacts between different peoples?
- Who has encountered whom? When? Why?
- What have been the economic, political and social consequences of these encounters?
- What was new and different about “capitalism”?
- What is the connection between the industrial revolution and capitalism?
- What have been the social / human consequences of these economic/political changes?

Feb 12 Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*
[Chas. 2, 3 everyone; chas. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, assigned to different groups]

Feb 19 Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*
[Chas. 9, 10, 11, 12, all groups, selectively.]

Part III LANGUAGE TRANSFORMATIONS, THEIR REPERCUSSIONS

Issues:

- What are “truth languages” and why are they relevant to our discussion of identity?
- How is linguistic change tied to new conceptions of self?
- How do the perception of time and the use of language foster novel views of self?
- What are the factors that produce change in either?
- What is the evidence for any of this?
- What is the relationship between/among nationalism, patriotism, and racism?

Feb 26 Anderson, *Imagined Communities* [Chas. 1, 2, and 3, everyone]
Plus discussion on *The Tailenders* [on reserve in Avery Fisher]

Mar 5 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*
[Chas. 8, and 9, everyone; chas. 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, assigned to different groups]

Mar 12 Documentary: *Public Hearings, Private Pain*
Due: Midterm Paper

Mar 19 **Spring Recess**

.....AND THE ROLE OF SILENCE

Issues:

--Found by students

Mar 26 *Silence: The Currency of Power*

[Chas. 3 (Cook), 4 (Kingsolver), 5 (Barber), 6 (Sheriff), 7 (Sider) assigned to different groups]

Part IV INDIVIDUALS IN A GLOBALIZED ENVIRONMENT

Issues:

--What is the author's central theme/thought?

--The who/what/when/where for each piece

--How do any or all of the "issues" discussed so far this semester illuminate our understanding of this literary work?

Apr 2 Hoffman, *Lost in Translation*

Apr 9 Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

Apr 16 Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory*

DUE: Final Presentations

Apr 23 **DUE: Final Presentations**

Apr 30 Conclusion

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 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.

Let's have a great semester!