



# Language, Symbols, and Society

ANTH 5631 (Fall 2020)

Instructor: Dr. Venera R. KHALIKOVA  
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Time: Monday, 6:30 pm – 9:15pm

Location: online or YIA 505

Office Hours: Mon 14:00-16:30  
 NAH 322

## Course Description

This course examines the nature of language and symbolic systems within human social worlds. It explores the nature and structure of language, the underlying meanings and rules of conversation, the shaping of language by gender and social class, formal language and foul language and what they mean, and how the structure of enculturated consciousness is shaped by language. It also examines a range of symbols in society, the language not just of words but of everyday goods and everyday life, popular culture and mass media, political discourse and propaganda, and computers and cyberspace, to understand how cultural symbols are socially constructed, performed, and contested. Language, symbols, and their cultural construction and social usage form a central topic of anthropological inquiry; this course will explore and explicate this topic.

## Expected Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- describe the scope of linguistic anthropology
- name and explain leading scholars, theories, and concepts in anthropological studies of language
- identify and explain distinctive characteristics of language and how language differs from animal communication
- define and give examples of language ideology, linguistic relativity
- define and analyze symbols and their use in daily life
- identify and analyze language in its complex socio-cultural and political contexts, including gendered and classed dimensions of language

## Learning Material

All readings will be available on Blackboard, but you may want to purchase hard copies of the following textbooks:

- *Language, Culture, and Society: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology*. By Zdenek Salzmann, James Stanlaw and Nobuko Adachi, 2014
- *The Routledge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology* by Nancy Bonvillain. Taylor & Francis Group, 2015

## Assessment Criteria

### Participation:

As this is an MA-level class, it is expected that you keep up with the readings and come to class prepared to discuss them. Exchange of ideas is the foundation of learning, but if you prefer to participate in writing, rather than speaking, let me know, and we will find a solution.

### Reading notes

For 10 weeks (Week 2 – 11), you will need to submit a reading summary and analysis of the assigned readings. Notes should be no longer than 400 words and submitted to me by email BEFORE the class. Name the articles and authors; explain key arguments and ideas; provide a personal opinion.

### Language in use: Class presentation

In one week of your choosing, you will lead a discussion of the assigned readings, by generating two discussion questions and illustrating the discussed concepts with a real-world example of language in use (a video from YouTube, a social media post, a newspaper article, a podcast excerpt, an interview transcript, etc.).

## Grading Scale

Grade	Participation	Reading notes	Class presentation
A	You participate in all classes. Your comments demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings and have an excellent understanding of the class material	Your notes show a nuanced understanding of class material and all concepts; information is factually accurate; arguments are convincing. The writing is original, of a required length and format, and submitted on time	Your discussion questions are sharp and relevant, the chosen example is excellent, and your presentation is coherent, engaging, and factually accurate
A -	You participate in almost all classes, with one or two classes missed or inactive. Your comments demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings and have a good understanding of the class material	Your notes show a nuanced understanding of class material and almost all concepts; information is factually accurate; arguments are convincing, even if occasionally contain minor errors. The writing is original, of a required length and format, and submitted on time	Your discussion questions are sharp and relevant, the chosen example is excellent, and your presentation is coherent and engaging, with a few minor issues

B+	You participate in the majority of classes, with three classes missed or inactive. Your comments demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings, and have a sufficient understanding of the course material	Your notes demonstrate an overall good understanding of class material but may lack clarity, contain several minor errors, and / or slightly deviate from required length and format. The writing is original and submitted on time	Your discussion questions are relevant, the chosen example is good, and your presentation is somewhat coherent, but lacks full engagement or has several errors
B	You participate in the majority of classes, with four classes missed or inactive. Your comments demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings, and have a sufficient understanding of the course material	Your notes demonstrate an overall good understanding of class material but may lack clarity, contain many minor errors, and / or deviate from required length and format. The writing is submitted on time. It is original, although there might be minor problems with citations and attribution	Your discussion questions are relevant, the chosen example is good, and your presentation is somewhat coherent, but lacks full engagement and has several errors
B -	You participate in the majority of classes, with five classes missed or inactive. Your comments demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings, and have a sufficient understanding of the course material	Your notes demonstrate an overall good understanding of class material but lack clarity, contain minor errors and a few major logical flaws, and / or deviate from required length and format. The work is submitted on time. It is original, although there might be minor problems with citations and attribution	Your discussion questions are relevant, the chosen example is good, and your presentation is somewhat coherent, but lacks full engagement and has many errors
C +	You participate in about half of the classes, with six classes missed or inactive. Your comments demonstrate that you have read some of the assigned readings, so your understanding of the course material is partial	Your notes show an acceptable level of understanding of class material, but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws, and/or often deviate from required length and format. The work is submitted on time or a day late. It is original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution	One of your discussion questions is not relevant; the chosen example is appropriate, but you did not make it clear how it relates to the readings, and your presentation lacked clarity, full engagement and contains several errors
C	You participate in about half of classes, with seven classes missed or inactive. Your comments demonstrate that you have read some of the assigned	Your notes show an acceptable level of understanding of class material, but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws.	One of your discussion questions is not relevant; the chosen example is appropriate but you did not make it clear how it relates to

	readings, so your understanding of the course material is partial	Your work does not follow the required length and format. The work is submitted on time or a day late. It is original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution	the readings, and your presentation lacked clarity, full engagement and contains many errors
C -	You participate in about half of the classes, with eight classes missed or inactive. Your comments demonstrate that you have read some of the assigned readings, so your understanding of the course material is partial	Your notes show an acceptable level of understanding of class material, but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws. Your work does not follow the required length and format. The work is submitted a day or two late. It is original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution	One of your discussion questions is not relevant; the chosen example is somewhat appropriate, but you did not make it clear how it relates to the readings, and your presentation lacked clarity, full engagement and is factually incorrect
D +	You participate in a small number of classes, with 9-10 classes missed or showing a low level of engagement. Your comments are confusing, demonstrating that you have not read the assigned readings, and you do not understand what is being discussed	Your notes show a minimal understanding of class material. It lacks effort, hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints. It is original, but citations are absent. It considerably deviates from the required length and format (answers are too short), and/or are submitted a few days late.	Both of your discussion questions are not relevant; the chosen example is inappropriate, does not illustrate the readings, while your presentation is confusing, not engaging and factually incorrect
D	You participate in a small number of classes, with 11-12 classes missed or showing a low level of engagement. Your comments are confusing, demonstrating that you have not read the assigned readings, and you do not understand what is being discussed	Your notes show a minimal understanding of class material. It lacks effort, hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints. It is original, but citations are absent. It considerably deviates from the required length and format (answers are too short) and submitted many days late.	Both of your discussion questions are not relevant; the chosen example is inappropriate, does not illustrate the readings, while your presentation is confusing, not engaging and factually incorrect
F	You almost never participate, you miss all class sessions or come unprepared	Your notes are submitted more than a week late or not submitted at all. They are extremely short, factually incorrect, biased, and/or contain instances of plagiarism	You do not sign up for the class presentation, miss your turn, or come unprepared

# Weekly schedule

\*Subject to change. Stay tuned on Blackboard

## 1. September 7: Linguistic Anthropology

- Chapter 1: Introducing Linguistic Anthropology. In *Language, Culture, and Society*, pp. 1 – 15 (you may skip pp. 8–11 Brief History of Anthropology)
- Chapter 2: Methods of Linguistic Anthropology. In *Language, Culture, and Society*, pp. 21 – 38

## 2. September 14: The Nature and Origin of Language

- Chapter 6: The Development and Evolution of Language. In *Language, Culture, and Society*, pp. 143 – 179
- Jeffrey V. Peterson, Semiotic Communication in Nonhumans Primates

## 3. September 21: Nonverbal Communication

- Chapter 5: Communicating Nonverbally. In *Language, Culture, and Society*, pp. 109 – 137
- Zdenek SALZMANN, “Nonverbal Communication and Writing.” In *Language, Culture, and Society* (Boulder CO: Westview, 2004), pp. 246 – 268

## 4. September 28. Symbols and Signs

- Ferdinand de Saussure (1959) *Course in general linguistics*, edited by Saussy and Meisel. Columbia U Press, pp. 6-23, 65-78
- Peirce, Charles Sanders (1894) What is a Sign? In *The Essential Peirce, Vol. 2: Selected Philosophical Writings, 1893-1913*, Indiana University Press, 1998

## 5. October 5. Language and Cognition

- Chapter 12: Language, Culture and Thought. In *Language, Culture, and Society*, pp. 143 – 179
- Lera Boroditsky, How the Languages We Speak Shape the Ways We Think <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGuuHwbuQOg>

## 6. October 12. Language Socialization

- Chapter 7: Acquiring Language(s). In *Language, Culture, and Society*, pp. 189 – 209
- Ochs, Elinor, and Bambi Schieffelin. Language acquisition and socialization. In *Culture theory: Essays on mind, self, and emotion* (1984): 276-320

## 7. October 19: Ethnography of Communication

- Chapter 10: Ethnography of Communication. In *Language, Culture, and Society*, pp. 265 – 282
- John J. Gumpertz: The Speech Community. In *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader*, edited by Alessandro Duranti, 2009, pp. 66 – 73

## 8. October 26: Language Ideology

Public holiday – The day following Chung Yeung Festival

The class will be rescheduled

- Paul Kroskrity: Language Ideologies: Emergence, Elaboration, and Application. In *Routledge Handbook*, pp. 95 – 108
- Bambi B. Schieffelin and Rachelle Charlier Doucet: The "Real" Haitian Creole: Ideology, Metalinguistics, and Orthographic Choice. *American Ethnologist*, 1994, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 176-200

## 9. November 2. Media Ideology

- “Media Ideologies: An Introduction” by Ileana Gershon (2010). In *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 20(2), pp. 283 – 293
- “Breaking Up is Hard to Do: Media-Switching and Media Ideologies” by Ileana Gershon (2010). In *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 20(2), pp. 389 – 405

## 10. November 9: Language and Gender

- Chapter 13: Language, Identity, and Ideology I – Variations in Gender. In *Language, Culture, and Society*, pp.343 – 379
- Deborah Cameron: Speak up, I can't hear you. In Guardian, October 2, 2007 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/oct/02/gender.familyandrelationships>

## 11. November 16: Language, Identity, and Nationalism

- Chapter 14: Language, Identity, and Ideology I – Variations in Class, Race, Ethnicity and Nationality. In *Language, Culture, and Society*, pp. 389 – 416
- Eve Haque: Language and Nationalism. In *Routledge Handbook*, pp. 317 – 328

## 12. November 23: Language and Discrimination

- Elaine Chun (2013) Ironic Blackness as Masculine Cool: Asian American Language and Authenticity on YouTube. In *Applied Linguistics*, 34(5): 592–612
- Jane Hill (2007) Mock Spanish: A Site for the Indexical Reproduction of Racism in American English. In *Race, Ethnicity, and Gender: Selected Readings*, Joseph F. Healey, Eileen O'Brien, eds. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press,270-285.

\*or another reading will be recommended by a guest lecturer

### 13. November 30: Communication, Globalization, and the Future

- Chapter 15: Linguistic Anthropology in a Globalized World. In *Language, Culture, and Society*, pp. 421 – 444
- Marco Jacquemet: Language in the Age of Globalization. In *Routledge Handbook*, pp. 329 – 347

## Course Policies and Support

### Contacting me

Use your CUHK email (not your personal email), when communicating about class matters. For most situations, you should write to the Teaching Assistant first—the class TA is very knowledgeable and ready to help you. But feel free to email me as well, if there is something that the TA does not know, or if you want to contact me directly. In line with the convention of academic communication, you can address me as “Dr. Khalikova.” I will do my best to answer your email within 24 hours, with an understandable exception of weekends and public holidays.

### Educational technology

This class relies on the use of Blackboard and Zoom. All class communications, announcements, assignment guidelines, and homework submissions will be done through Blackboard. Note that it uses the email address assigned to you by the University, so it is your responsibility to have an electronic mail forwarded to your primary email address.

### Special accommodation

If you need special accommodations or classroom modifications, you need to notify both me and the University’s Wellness and Counselling Center (<https://www2.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/disability/en-GB>) no later than the third week of class.

### Academic Integrity

The University has recently updated its policy on Academic Integrity and the penalties for plagiarism and cheating: [http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng\\_hm\\_files\\_%282013-14%29/p06.htm](http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_hm_files_%282013-14%29/p06.htm)

Read it carefully: every student is expected to comply with the policy; otherwise, if you are suspected of violating these obligations, you will be subject to the outlined sanctions. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask me or your TA about this!

### Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, **you may not record** our discussions and activities during the class without my permission obtained in advance, and only

solely for your own private use. Typically, PowerPoint slides will be uploaded to Blackboard and available for review. For days, when the class cannot meet, a lecture will be pre-recorded and posted to Blackboard.

### **Late Work and Absence**

Late or incomplete assignments will be marked down: one point (1%) will be subtracted **for each late day**. Class attendance is not required, but if you miss a class, it is your responsibility to copy class notes and go over the PowerPoint presentations; otherwise, it will most likely result in poor understanding of class material and, ultimately, in a low grade. You are welcome to come to my office during office hours to go over the missed lectures!

### **Discussion Rules**

We will discuss many interesting, important and potentially controversial topics. I expect you to be **polite and respectful** of your classmates' opinions, limit your statements to academic (not emotional) arguments, and not use offensive language or judgmental statements.

### **Grade Review**

If you want to discuss and contest your grade, you can send me an email to set up an appointment during my office hours when we will go over your exam/written work and decide on a grade together. During this process, I can both mark your original grade up, if you demonstrate evidence that you know the material well, or mark it down.

### **Independent Learning Center**

If you need help with communication and learning skills, the University has an excellent resource for you. You can schedule a consultation or attend workshops on various strategies for improving learning outcomes  
<https://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/EN/mission.aspx>