Politics/Polity/Power of Words (ANT 320L [31415])

Monday & Wednesday 10-11.30 am, SAC 4.118
Instructor: James Slotta

Course Description

Politicians are often decried as being “all talk and no action,” a criticism that draws on a familiar view of language that contrasts “real” actions—the proper concern of politics—with “mere” words. And yet, “real” political actions, from the founding of nation-states (“We the People…” to the transformation of polities (“I have a dream…”), rest on the power of “mere” words. In this course, we look at the place of language in a variety of different political settings—from oblique oratory in small-scale egalitarian communities to ritual “poetry” in cosmic polities to procedural prose in mass bureaucratic states—to come to a better understanding of the power of words. Working with a broad understanding of politics, we look at the varied ways language sustains and transforms power relations in different political contexts, and thereby takes on a power of its own. In the process, we explore a variety of political situations, different modes of political communication, as well as different theories of the “performativie” power of words.

Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

* indicates days when there are presentations
All readings and all reading questions will be available on Canvas: https://utexas.instructure.com/

A Philosophical Legacy: Logos vs Rhetoric

8-30 - Politics & the Power of Words
   Optional Reading - Malinowski: An Ethnographic Theory of the Magical Word
   (from Coral Gardens and their Magic)
   - Favret-Saava: Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage (Part 1)

9-6 - Constraining the Power of Words in the Athenian Crucible
   Reading - Conley: Rhetoric in the Athenian Tradition (pp. 4-13)
   - de Romilly: Magic & Rhetoric in Ancient Greece (Chapter 1 & 2)
   Participation - Bring in a contemporary news article, editorial, whatever that contrasts “rhetoric” or “talk” with something else
   Optional Reading - Plato: Gorgias

9-11 - Enchanted Language in the Middle Ages
   Reading - Rhetoric Science and Magic in Seventeenth-Century England
   Group A: Chapter 3
   Group B: Chapter 4
   Participation - Group-led class
   Optional Reading - Favret-Saava: Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage (Part 1)

9-13 - Disenchanting Language in the Enlightenment
   Reading - Stark: Rhetoric, Science, and Magic in Seventeenth-Century England (Chapter 2)
   Participation - Politics & the English Language (Orwell)
Optional Reading - Stark: *Rhetoric, Science, and Magic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chapt 1)
- Pocock: Enthusiasm: The Antiself of Enlightenment
- Williamson: The Restoration revolt against enthusiasm
- Sprat: History of the Royal Society
- Bacon: Advancement of Learning
- Miller: The New England Mind

9-18 - Re-enchanting Language in the 20th Century: Performativity
Reading - Austin: *How to Do Things With Words* (Lectures 1-2, 5-7)
Participation - Identify and describe a contemporary performative

9-20 - Where is Performativity?: Indirectness in Small-scale Polities
Reading - Weiner: From Words to Objects to Magic
Participation - “Indirectness” in speech
Optional Reading - Strathern: Veiled Speech
- Rumsey: Oratory and the politics of metaphor in the New Guinea Highlands
- Brenneis: Straight Talk and Sweet Talk
- Myers: Reflections on a Meeting
- Atkinson: Wrapped Words

9-25 - Politics, Polity and the Sense of Performativity: the Words of the Sovereign
Reading - Butler: Sovereign Performatives (pp. 71-82, 96-102)
Participation - Free Speech

The Re-enchantment of the World: The Language of Ritual Oratory

9-27 - In-Class Film: *Yes We Can! The Lost Art of Oratory*

*10-2 - Language in the Here & Now: Deictics
Reading - Benveniste: The Nature of Pronouns
- Jakobson: Shifters, Verbal Categories and the Russian Verb
Participation - Analysis of texts
Start of Initial Presentations

*10-4 - Doing Things With Text: Parallelism
Reading - Sebeok: Cheremis Charms
Participation - Analysis of texts
Initial Presentations

*10-9 - Ritual Oratory: Cosmic Realities in the Here & Now
Reading - Silverstein: Death and Life at Gettysburg
Participation - Analysis of texts
Initial Presentations

10-11 - Podcast Workshop (Media Center Introduction)
*10-16 - Initial Presentations

*10-18 - Initial Presentations
10-23 - The Ritual Poetry of Power in a Cosmic Polity
   Reading - Lansing: Priests and Programmers (Intro, Chapter 1, 3 & 4)
   Optional Reading - Geertz: Negara: Theater State

The Circulation of Words & the Making of Polities: the Nation & Nationalism

10-25 - Performative Foundations & Popular Sovereignty
   Reading - Lee: Performativity of Foundations
   Participation - Analysis of the Declaration of Independence and US Constitution
   Optional Reading - Warner: Textuality and Legitimacy in the Printed Constitution

*10-30 - The Ritual Renewal of the Nationalist “We”
   Reading - Warner: An American Sacred Ceremony
   Start of Second Presentations

*11-1 - The Everyday Creation of the Nation
   Reading - Anderson: Imagined Communities (pp. 5-46)

11-6 - Podcast Workshop
   Due - Annotated Bibliographies

The Circulation of Words & the Making of Polities: Publics & the Public Sphere

*11-8 - The Public Sphere & the Power of Reason
   Reading - Habermas: Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (pp. 1-43)

*11-13 - Republicanism & the Power of the Printed Word
   Reading - Warner: The Res Publica of Letters

*11-15 - Creating the Voice of the People in the 20th Century
   Reading - Fishkin: The Voice of the People (Chapters 1-3)

The Circulation of Words & the Making of Polities: Bureaucracy & the Administrative State

*11-20 - Language and Power in the Administrative State
   Reading - Hull: Government of Paper (Chapter 2)

11-22 - No Class (Thanksgiving)

*11-27 - The Circulation of Files and Bureaucratic Agency
   Reading - Hull: Government of Paper (Chapter 3)

11-29 - In-class Film

12-4 - In-class Workshop
   Assignment - Exchange podcasts with group members, listen to other group members’ podcasts, and prepare comments to discuss in class
Course requirements and general policies

**Required Materials** — There are no books you will need to purchase at the bookstore. All the readings are available electronically through Canvas at: https://utexas.instructure.com/

**Reading as an Anthropological Practice** — Though anthropologists and linguists often spend some period of time doing research “in the field,” we gain access to other social and linguistic environments largely through reading the accounts of other scholars. This course will be no different; we will glimpse other social and linguistic worlds only through careful reading. That means paying close attention to the evidence we are presented with, the interpretation of that evidence, and the claims the evidence is used to support. Reading is not a passive activity, it is an argument that we are taking part in. We should train ourselves to constantly be outlining the argument of the readings and assessing the evidence and reasons supporting the argument. What is the main claim of the reading? What position is the author arguing against? What is surprising in the author’s account? Why did it surprise you? What evidence does the author supply to support this claim? Is it possible to interpret the evidence in a different way? What additional evidence would it be useful to have? As you do the readings, keep these question in mind.

**Preparation for Class** — To assist your reading for each class session, questions for each reading will be posted on the Canvas website. You should use these questions to guide your reading; they point out the particular issues and data that you need ultimately to take away from the reading. I recommend that you do your best to answer these questions as you do the reading before class. You are welcome to work with classmates to develop your answers to these questions. Then, bring your answers along with the reading to the class, where the reading will be discussed further. Following class, you should be comfortable answering the questions on the reading. Again, I encourage you to speak with your classmates about the answers to these questions before and after class. If you are uncertain how to answer some of the questions, please raise your questions in class. I am not here to provide answers to these questions, though I will facilitate discussion and ask questions that help you to answer the reading questions.

**Student Evaluation** — Your grade consists of a number of components:

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation (including participation exercises)</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Project</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>Initial Presentation</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Second Presentation</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Podcast (+ Script &amp; Revised Bibliography)</td>
<td>25</td>
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**One-question quizzes:** There will be 5 pop quizzes over the course of the semester. These quizzes will consist of one reading question selected from the readings for that day’s class. Quizzes will be given at the end of class, so there will be time to discuss the material first. You are allowed—encouraged, in fact—to discuss the questions ahead of time with classmates. Quizzes will be graded with either a check, check plus, check minus, or zero. A check is given for responses that offer a satisfactory but not particularly developed response to the question. A check plus is reserved for responses that are particularly thoughtful: they draw connections to other readings or larger themes discussed in the class; they insightfully discuss data and its relationship to the question; they outline key parts of the argument made in the reading that are relevant to answering the question. A check minus is given for answers that are not, for the most part, satisfactory but show some familiarity with the reading. A zero is given for missed quizzes and answers that show no familiarity with the reading.
Check Plus - A (96)
Check - B (86)
Check Minus - C (76)
Zero - 0

There will be 5 quizzes over the course of the semester and your lowest quiz grade will be dropped before calculating your final grade. Your 4 best quiz grades compose 20% of your final grade.

*Participation*: This course depends on your engagement and participation to succeed. Participation will be graded on the same check, check plus, etc. scale as the quizzes. Regular participation will receive a check. Informed and engaged participation in nearly every class meeting will receive a check plus. Occasional participation that is not particularly well-informed will receive a check minus. Irregular attendance and failure to participate will receive a zero. Throughout the first part of the semester there are participation assignments designed to encourage participation.

*Project*: Over the course of the semester you will develop an independent research project on a piece of political language of your choosing. This could be anything from a political speech, debate, or ad campaign to an administrative form or a genre of speaking particular to a political context. The end product of this project will be a 10-15 minute podcast that analyzes this piece of language to develop an argument about its significance as part of a certain kind of politics or polity.

We will have media lab sessions twice during the semester where you will be introduced to and have the opportunity to work with the equipment you need to create this podcast. Initial presentations of your topic will begin on October 2, so the sooner you start considering what you would like to work on the better.

There are additional steps in this semester long project designed to help you produce a high quality final project:

**Initial Presentation:** A 5-10 minute presentation introducing us to the piece of language you will be analyzing, the political context in which it occurred/occurs, and why you think it is worth studying in more detail. You will receive feedback from us that will help you to think through the direction of your project at an early stage. (Check Grading)

**Annotated Bibliography:** Identify and discuss 8 sources that will inform your podcast, including primary and secondary materials, materials we have discussed in class and materials you have uncovered on your own. (Letter Grading)

**Second Presentation:** A 10 minute in-class presentation that will serve as a “rough draft” of your podcast script. You will received feedback from us that will help you develop your podcast further. This is also your chance to present images or video that you won’t be able to include in the final product. (Letter Grading)

**Podcast + Script:** A 10-15 minute podcast along with the script and a revised annotated bibliography. (Letter Grading)

More details about each of these stages will be provided at the appropriate time in class.

The grade ranges are as follows. Decimal values will not be rounded up when calculating final grades.

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<td>A</td>
<td>93-96</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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Excused Absences & Make-ups — The only absences that will be considered excused are for religious holidays and for extenuating circumstances due to an emergency (with a note from a doctor, nurse, or university official documenting the emergency). If you plan to miss class due to observance of a religious holiday, you must notify the instructor at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of the religious holiday. You will be given an opportunity to complete missed work within a reasonable time after the absence. Otherwise, there will be no make-up quizzes or exams without a note from a doctor, nurse, or university official excusing your absence.

Inside & Outside the Classroom — Computers, phones, and other electronic devices may not be used in class. You should be sure to print out readings for the day’s class so that you can reference them during our discussion. If you miss a class, you should speak with your classmates to catch up on course announcements and notes. If you attend class and still have questions about class materials, please see me during office hours. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are keeping up with all that is being done in class. Do not hesitate to ask questions in class or during office hours.

Academic Integrity — Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code:

“As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.”

This means that work you produce on written assignments, quizzes and presentations is all your own work, unless it is assigned as group work. You are welcome to work with and consult classmates to prepare for quizzes and, more generally, to get a better grasp on what is going on in the readings and the course. Copying other people’s work or using their words or suggestions without acknowledgement is a serious offense and you will be subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course.

You are responsible for understanding UT’s Academic Honesty Policy which can be found at the following web address: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

Students with Disabilities — Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259, http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/

- Please request a meeting as soon as possible for us to discuss any accommodations
- Please notify me as soon as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible
- Please notify me if any of the physical space is difficult for you
University Policies

Religious Holy Days — By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Q Drop Policy — If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you'll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline, which typically occurs near the middle of the semester. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information, see: http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdro

University Resources for Students — The university has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning. Use these to help you succeed in your classes.
· The Sanger Learning Center: Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center’s classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit: http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).
· The University Writing Center offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT student, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing. The assistance we provide is intended to foster students’ resourcefulness and self-reliance. http://uwc.utexas.edu/
· The Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) provides counseling, psychiatric, consultation, and prevention services that facilitate students' academic and life goals and enhance their personal growth and well-being. http://cmhc.utexas.edu/
· Student Emergency Services: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/
· ITS: Need help with technology? http://www.utexas.edu/its/
· Libraries: Need help searching for information? http://www.lib.utexas.edu/
· Canvas help is available 24/7 at https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/student-tutorials

· Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
· Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
· Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
· In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.
· Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
· Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050
· Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: utexas.edu/emergency.