English 392: Discourse Analysis and the Textually Mediated Human Experience

Professor Thia Wolf     Tuesday, 4-6:50 p.m.
Office: TLR 214     TLR 203
Office Hours: Tuesday  9:30-11:30 & 2-4;
            Thursday, 11:15-12:15
E-mail: cwolf@csuchico.edu

This is a “hybrid” course employing five class meetings and an extensive online component during those weeks that we do not meet as a group. The class provides an introduction to discourse analysis, looking first at the classic work of Renato Rosaldo on *Culture and Truth*, then at introductions to discourse analysis by Norman Fairclough and by writers collected in an edition overseen by Charles Bazerman. Additional readings from academic journals are found online. Each student will develop her/his own project, selecting (or developing, through interviews or transcription) a text or texts that mediate human participation, roles, and identities in a social/institutional context. This text will be subjected to rigorous analysis using the tools gained from the first part of our coursework; students will present their work during our final group meeting. While there is only one major project for the term, the course includes shorter reading responses and a number of application assignments, many of them written collaboratively and/or posted and shared online.

**Required Texts:**

- Fairclough, Norman. *Critical Discourse Analysis*.
- Rosaldo, Renato. *Culture and Truth*.

*Additional readings are found online; these are listed in the Calendar, below.*

**Course Calendar**

*Please note:* Dates with an asterisk indicate a “live” class meeting in TLR 203. The rest of this course is completed online and in individual conferences with the course instructor.

*August 24: Introduction to course. Discussion of Rosaldo and Fairclough. Introduction to the WebCT component of the course.*

*For August 31: Read *Culture and Truth* (1-108). Read “The Rhetorical Management of Dangerous Knowledge in Kpelle Brokerage” by William P. Murphy. This article, published in *American Ethnologist*, can be found through a JSTOR search. If you have difficulty finding the article, contact your instructor through the WebCT classroom e-mail.*

Do steps one through three on the course discussion boards. **Please do step one before reading Rosaldo’s work!**

Your WebCT classroom will permit you to enter a group with a number and a group designated by a color. Please enter the group designated by a color for
Week One.

August 31: We do not meet face-to-face, but you have been working with Rosaldo’s *Culture and Truth* on your discussion boards and you have read Murphy’s study of Kpelle Brokerage practices, a fascinating look at how secret knowledge becomes power. On this “class” day, please e-mail your instructor with your thoughts on ways that secret knowledge is used in environments you inhabit in order to produce or maintain structures of hierarchy. You will do quite a bit of reading this week, so get started right away.

For September 7: Finish *Culture and Truth*. Read in Fairclough (27-53) and post to discussion boards, Step One and Step Two *under the group designated by number!* Read in Bazerman (33-56) and read and post under Step Three.

September 7: At the beginning of this week, you will still be posting to Step Three from Week Two. Keep up with the reading assignments for this week, however, and be prepared to post back to your “color” group after September 10.


If you are not yet thinking about the project you would like to undertake in the second half of this course, begin to consider this carefully now. When we meet together on September 21, Human Subject permission forms will be distributed, and part of our class meeting will be devoted to helping you set up an engaging research project.

September 14: At this point in the semester, you have read about several approaches to discourse analysis, you have considered the role of the researcher and the effects of the researcher’s own discourse on what s/he sees, hears, reports, and comes to “know” and convey to others. You are actively engaged in thinking about a discourse analysis project you might pursue. As you do your reading this week, pay close attention to the articles from professional journals which are assigned. Skim all of them; select one or two that might serve as a model for the work you are planning to do and/or look again at an essay by Fairclough or by one of the writers we read earlier in the term. Closely study the text or texts that could serve as a model for you. What are the parts of the text? How has the author introduced her/his project? How has discourse analysis been explained? What forms do the presentation of evidence and the analysis take? How does the writer conclude the argument? We will discuss in class on the 21st not only what you might do for a major project, but also how you might “translate” your work into a polished piece of academic prose.

There is no online component to the course this week; use your time to read and to plan your own project.
For September 21: Read in Fairclough (130-166); read in Bazerman (123-163). Using Academic Search, find and read “Reading Through the Basics: Towards a Visual Analysis of a Newspaper Advertisement on Education” by Sue Thomas, Published in *Language and Education*. Using Academic Search, find and read “Procedure Manuals and Textually Mediated Death” by Beverleigh Quested and Trudy Rudge, published in *Nursing Inquiry*. Using JSTOR, find and read “Organ Wars: The Battle for Body Parts” by Donald Joralemon, published in *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*. Using JSTOR, find and read “Namechasers” by Marco Jacquemet, published in *American Ethnologist*. Check your e-mail for comments from your instructor about Dorothy E. Smith’s argument regarding texts and social relations.

*September 21: We meet in TLR 203. Bring any materials you have available that connect to the project you plan to undertake for the rest of the term. We will discuss the reading assignments for this week and will take a good portion of class time to discuss and set up the necessary permissions for the project each of you chooses to pursue. Please note that three weeks from now, during the week of October 12, we will not meet as an entire group, nor will we meet online. Instead, each of you will meet individually for one half-hour with your instructor to discuss your progress on your major project. A writers’ workshop is scheduled on November 16 so that you can receive peer feedback on your research and your rough draft. Significant progress on the project must be evident by this time.*

For September 28: Read in Fairclough (217-232). Read in Bazerman (239-277). Using JSTOR, find and read “Safe Houses in the Contact Zone: Coping Strategies of African-American Students in the Academy” by A. Suresh Canagarajah, published in *College Composition and Communication*.

**September 28: Your discussion board for this week is in your numbered group space. You will spend some time describing your thoughts about your individual project to your group members before you turn to steps two and three, which ask you to examine the reading together. Within two weeks, the instructor-generated reading assignments for this course will disappear, to be replaced by reading assignments of your own selection (see assignments beginning October 19) and extensive work with your own and others’ research projects. Your work online will sometimes continue in the discussion board area and sometimes take the form of e-mail to your instructor. As you continue course reading during the next two weeks, continue to look at how these texts say what they say. Remember that you are searching for models you can use when writing up your own project.**

October 5: Your discussion board for this week is in your color-designated group. You will remain in this group until October 26, when you will shift for the last time to your number-designated group. This will allow you to work with an array of readers, but also to have some continuity in considering readers’ responses to your work, as well as some continuity in responding to the work of others. Group membership for this part of the course will be determined based on the kinds of projects undertaken by class members; the number of members in a group may increase at the instructor’s discretion once the project phase of the course has begun.

For October 12: Read in Fairclough (233-252). Read in Bazerman (309-339). Contact your instructor by e-mail in order to set up a one-to-one appointment during the week of October 12.

October 12: You will meet with your instructor for a conference about your project. You should come to this meeting with materials, notes, ideas, resources you are using—especially those which help you to think about and explain what discourse analysis is and how it is of use in your investigation. If you have parts of a draft written, your instructor will be happy to read them. Questions and problems as well as insights and successes will be discussed during this period. Please use the conference to show your instructor what you have been able to accomplish, where you are having difficulty, and what you hope to achieve in the coming weeks.

For October 19: Find and read at least one article in a professional journal where discourse analysis is used in a way that interests you. Step one of your discussion board asks you to post a bibliographic entry and a one-paragraph summary of the article for your colleagues and your instructor not later than October 22.

Consult the discussion boards for information about how to work online with your group on your research project.

October 19: Continued work on your project and postings in the online discussion area. Remember to e-mail your instructor or to see her during office hours if you run into difficulties as you work on your project.

For October 26: Find an everyday text NOT related to your individual research project, read it with a discourse analyst’s eye, and write an account of the text and of your reading experience as your first posting to your group this week. (See Step One in the discussion board area.)

October 26: Switch groups by moving from your color-designated group to your number-designated group. This will be your online group until the end of the term. Check the discussion board for postings from group members and for instructions about online and e-mail work to be done on your project this week.
For November 2: Find and read at least one article in a professional journal where discourse analysis is used in a way that interests you. Step one of your discussion board asks you to post a bibliographic entry and a one-paragraph summary of the article for your colleagues and your instructor by this date (November 2).

November 2: Find a text that IS related in some way to your individual research project but which you are unlikely to use directly in the project itself, read it with a discourse analyst’s eye, and write an account of the text and of your reading experience as your first posting to your group this week. (See Step One in the discussion board area.)

Consult the discussion boards for instructions. You are urged to make an appointment for another individual conference with your instructor during the week of November 9. Bring any portions of your draft with you for instructor feedback.

For November 9: No online work is required this week, though your group may decide to stay in contact online as you finish your draft for the peer workshop in class on November 16.

*November 16: We will meet in TLR 203 for a writers’ workshop and a whole-class discussion of our experiences as readers this term. Bring copies of your draft for your group members. The number of copies will be determined and e-mailed to you by your instructor prior to this class meeting. Check the discussion board at least two days before our class meeting as your instructor will post a message about preparing for the workshop.

For November 30: Consult the discussion boards. You will post a bibliographic entry and a one-paragraph summary of any text you have read about language use this term that you found interesting. The text need not be, strictly speaking, a discourse analysis, but it should be a piece of interest to discourse analysts.

Continue to work on your project.

*December 7: We will meet in TLR 203 for presentations of your projects.

*December 14: We will meet in TLR 203 for presentations of your projects during our scheduled final exam time (6-7:50 p.m.).