V14.0017 ANTHROPOLOGY OF LANGUAGE
Tuesday and Thursday
9:30am – 10:45am
SILV 405
4.0 CREDITS

Professor Sonia N. Das
Office: Rufus D. Smith Hall #710
Office Hours: Tuesday 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM and by appointment
sd99@nyu.edu
212-992-7476

This course introduces students to linguistic anthropology, the study of human language and its use across cultural and social contexts. Topics to be explored include language socialization, multilingualism, pidgins and creoles, linguistic identities, language-based discrimination, and literacy and other media practices. We will also examine seminal texts in the development of an anthropological perspective about language and its creative functions in everyday life. Finally, we will examine how to employ methods of linguistic analysis to investigate actual language use in diverse ethnographic contexts, including Papua New Guinea, the Canadian Yukon, and Nepal.

This is a preliminary draft of the syllabus and may be changed as the instructor’s discretion.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS


COURSE TOPICS AND SCHEDULE

January 25: Introduction

January 27: Language and Culture
⇒ Boas, Franz
⇒ Sapir, Edward

February 1-3: Language and Thought
⇒ Whorf, Benjamin Lee
⇒ Conklin, Harold
⇒ Levinson, Stephen

Case Study # 1: Learning Language in Papua New Guinea
February 8-10: Language Socialization
⇒ Schieffelin, Bambi B.

February 15-17: Ethnography of Communication
⇒ Schieffelin, Bambi B.
⇒ Hymes, Dell
⇒ Tedlock, Dennis.

February 22-24: Speech Communities
⇒ Schieffelin, Bambi B.
⇒ Jackson, Jean
⇒ Woolard, Kathryn

Quiz 1

March 1-3: Language Typology
⇒ DeJean, Yves
⇒ Garrett, Paul
⇒ Kulick, Don

Case Study #2: Building Community in Indigenous Canada

March 8-10: Language Contact and Revitalization
⇒ Meek, Barbra
⇒ Gumperz, John

March 15-17: No class

March 22-24: Language and Identity
⇒ Meek, Barbra
⇒ Urciuoli, Bonnie

March 29-31: Language Ideology
⇒ Meek, Barbra
⇒ Irvine, Judith and Susan Gal

Quiz 2

April 5-7: Language and Racism
⇒ Hill, Jane
⇒ Bucholtz, Mary
⇒ Alim, H. Samy

Case Study #3: Modernizing Language in Nepal

April 12-14: Linguistic Nationalism
⇒ Ahearn, Laura
⇒ Jaffe, Alexandra

April 19-21: Language and Media
Ahearn, Laura
Spitulnik, Debra

April 26-28: Literacy
Ahearn, Laura
Heath, Shirley.

May 3-5: Multilingualism and Globalization
Ahearn, Laura
Eisenlohr, Patrick.

Quiz 3