

Spring 2018

# Sociolinguistics II: Deviance, Dystopia, And Democracy (LING82) Syllabus

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# Sociolinguistics II: Deviance, Dystopia, and Democracy (LING82)

Professor Jamie Thomas  
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Monday 1:15-4pm, Pearson Hall 115

Spring 2018

*"...When enough people make false promises, words stop meaning anything.  
Then there are no more answers, only better and better lies. And lies won't help us in this fight."  
- John Snow, Game of Thrones (2017)*

*"We are taking language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view..."  
- Mikhail Bakhtin (1982)*

## Course description

This course builds upon foundational concepts in sociolinguistic theory to examine discourses of news and entertainment media, across science fiction and politics. Drawing upon contributions in applied linguistics, media studies, cultural studies, and archival research, we ask which realities are mirrored in our everyday language and in the fictional and sensationalized worlds we engage in through the media we consume. What role does science fiction play in our explorations of social difference, deviance, control, disability, sexuality, and normativity? Can science fiction assist the goals of social justice and democracy? How does language surface in the biopolitics of human and non-humans? Together, we will explore key film and television, and select novels by authors Max Brooks, Octavia Butler, and Philip K. Dick. Students will learn advanced methods and theories in multimodal critical discourse analysis and digital humanities.

## Course goals

1. Approach words and images as tools in communication, social construction, and domination.
2. Appreciate how social networks and group ideologies drive our interpretation of others.
3. Identify how privileged access to social resources (linguistic varieties, education, knowledge, and wealth) is reified or challenged through the everyday language and presentation of news and entertainment.
4. Examine works of radical imagining to challenge our existing concepts of 'power' and 'justice'.

## Required readings and materials

Any additional assigned readings and materials will be posted on Moodle. As you read and reflect, you should use the discussion forum feature on Moodle to engage your peers with questions of your own making.

### Key textbook:

- Machin, David, & Mayr, Andrea. (2012). *How to do critical discourse analysis: A multimodal introduction*.

### (Non)fiction works centering zombies, vampires, and other human(oid) bodies:

- Brooks, Max. (2006). *World War Z: An oral history of zombie war*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Butler, Octavia E. (2005). *Fledgling*. New York: Grand Central Publishing.
- Dick, Philip K. (1962 [2011]). *The man in the high castle*. New York: First Mariner Books.
- Northup, Solomon. (1853 [1970]). *Twelve years a slave*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications.

## Key assignments

- Weekly: Bring readings to class & artifact of news reporting or entertainment for us to discuss
- 3 Short essays: 700-word analytical responses to news/entertainment
  - We will collaborate together as a seminar to publish your 3<sup>rd</sup> short essay online as part of the [ZOMBIES REIMAGINED] digital humanities project.
- Final project: Write your own fictional dystopic story that addresses & critiques a real-life problem

**Office hours (Mondays, 4-5:30p or by appointment, Pearson 107)**

Drop by and say hi!

**Course grade**

Seminar attendance and participation	25%	In-class and other assignments	30%
• leading discussion in class		Midterm exam	15%
		Final project	30%

*\*\*Students who attend linguistics and/or literary events (talks, presentations) and do a 1-pg write-up can obtain extra credit.*

**For students with disabilities**

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (Parrish 113W) or email [studentdisabilityservices@swarthmore.edu](mailto:studentdisabilityservices@swarthmore.edu) to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs. As appropriate, the Office will issue students with documented disabilities a formal Accommodations Letter. Since accommodations require early planning and are not retroactive, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services as soon as possible. For details about the accommodations process, [visit the Student Disability Service Website](http://www.swarthmore.edu/academic-advising-support/welcome-to-student-disability-service) at <http://www.swarthmore.edu/academic-advising-support/welcome-to-student-disability-service>. You are also welcome to contact me—Prof. Thomas—privately to discuss your academic needs. However, all disability-related accommodations must be arranged through the Office of Student Disability Services.

**Tentative Course Outline – Deviance, Dystopia, Democracy (LING82) - Prof. Thomas**

*\*\*Students lead discussion on select days – updated schedule posted to Moodle*

Among the topics we may explore:

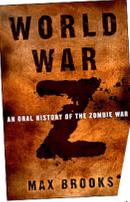
- dialects
- resistance movements
- fake news
- Israeli occupation
- enslavement
- racialization
- disabilities
- gender(s)

Week 1	<p><b>Monday, Jan. 22</b></p> <p>What about culture is intrinsic to language? How does study of language use and communication connect to studies of popular culture?</p>
Week 2	<p><b>Jan. 29</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> (Ch. 1-8)</li> <li>• Intro + Ch. 1 of <i>How to do CDA</i> (Language as a set of resources)</li> </ul>
Week 3	<p><b>Feb. 5 - Semiotics and Speculative Violence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Man in the High Castle</i>, Ch. 9-12</li> <li>• Bakhtin on "Discourse and the novel"</li> <li>• Chapter from <i>Conquest</i> by Andrea Abrams</li> <li>• (optional) Dell Hymes on the SPEAKING mnemonic</li> </ul> <p><i>**Fieldtrip: Black Lives Matter community discussion and Precious Knowledge documentary screening event (LaSalle Univ.)</i></p> <p>Homework for Week 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Essay 1:</b> 600-word essay that takes up the standpoint of a "politics of intersectionality" to describe what 1-2 elements of Philip K. Dick's novel you find most meaningful in illuminating our current (actual) societal situation.</li> <li>• To do this, you should also identify 1-2 social problems IRL as suggested by Dick's novel, or your own observations/experiences.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Somewhere within your essay you should take a gander at offering a tentative solution to one or more of the social problems you focus on.</li> <li>• Your essay should include (1) a bibliography/references, (2) citations to at least 2 texts we've discussed.</li> <li>• Please, Times New Roman font, 12-pt., double-spaced. Word limit is strict.</li> </ul>
Week 4	<p><b>Feb. 12 - A closer look at MCDA as theory</b>  <b>**Essay 1 due today</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bucholtz &amp; Hall (2008)</li> <li>• Ch. 2 of <i>How to do CDA</i></li> </ul>
Week 5	<p><b>Feb. 19 - A closer look at MCDA as method</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 3 of <i>How to do CDA</i></li> <li>• Bucholtz (2011)</li> <li>• Discussion of the <u>memes</u> you created for homework!</li> </ul> <p>Homework for Week 6: Your first attempt at a critical short story</p>
Week 6	<p><b>Feb. 26 - Encountering the short story as discourse genre</b></p> <p><b>**Fieldtrip to Kelly Writers House at the University of Pennsylvania for lunch and talk by novelist, Rebecca Entel; afterwards seminar discussion in library at Penn. (Use regional train for transportation to/from Swarthmore...details TBA)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delgado (1989) on counterstories and narratives for social change</li> <li>• LA Book Review interview (2017) with author Rebecca Entel</li> <li>• Entel (2013) "Perfect Companion" (short story)</li> </ul> <p>Homework for Week 7: With Delgado (1989) in mind, create a snapshot (brief profile, or paragraph) of what the counterstory (resistance narrative) is for your short story's main character</p>
Week 7	<p><b>Mar. 5 - Considering intention in our radical imagining through the voice of Grace Lee Boggs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentary on Grace Lee Boggs (Netflix)</li> <li>• Yoon (2016) on racialized memes as communication</li> <li>• Discussion of your counterstory snapshot--please bring 4 printed copies so you can receive written feedback</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"> <i>"You cannot change any society unless you take responsibility for it, unless you see yourself as belonging to it and responsible for changing it."</i>  </p>
	<p><i>Spring break</i></p>
Week 8	<p><b>Mar. 19 - Vampire Week: <i>Fledgling</i> by Octavia Butler</b></p> <p><b>**Take-home Midterm Exam</b></p> <p>(1) Take the <u>midterm take-home exam</u> (this includes review of key concepts/terms, 2<sup>nd</sup> essay)  (2) Complete your reading of the novel <i>Fledgling</i></p> 

	<p>(3) If you haven't already provided feedback to your peers on their short stories (counterstory snapshot), please reach out with your feedback.</p>
<p>Week 9</p>	<p><b>Mar. 26 - <i>Discourses of Vampires and Antislavery</i></b></p> <p><b>**We'll meet first in our usual meeting place, Pearson 115, to discuss your responses to the novel <i>Fledgling</i> (Essay 2).</b></p> <p><b>**Fieldtrip: For the final 2 hours of class, we'll move to the <i>Friends Historical Library</i> (McCabe Library on campus). At the library, we'll meet with archivist Celia Caust-Ellenbogen for a <u>workshop in examining antislavery discourses</u> from the Antebellum period of the U.S.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This workshop will serve as a way of introducing us to discourses from the historical period in which our next major reading is set: <i>Twelve Years a Slave</i>.</li> <li>• This opportunity should also give us firsthand experience working with primary source material/data that, like our examination of Thomas Jefferson's <i>Notes on the State of Virginia</i> (1781-83), pertain to discourses foundational to contemporary American democracy.</li> </ul> <p>In preparation for our visit to the archives, please prepare the following readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From our textbook on CDA, Ch. 4, "Representing people: Language and identity"</li> <li>• Caust-Ellenbogen on "White Slaves"</li> <li>• A look (and listen) at two speeches by former enslaved person and abolitionist activist, Sojourner Truth        &gt;&gt; <a href="https://www.thesojournertruthproject.com/compare-the-speeches/">https://www.thesojournertruthproject.com/compare-the-speeches/</a></li> <li>• As you read/listen, consider what key concepts in MCDA you can use to examine the semiotic choices of speakers/authors and others. <i>In what ways do their semiotic choices reflect their differing concepts of 'power' and 'justice'?</i></li> </ul>
<p>Week 10</p>	<p><b>April 2 - <i>More Antebellum Discourses (Twelve Years a Slave, Ch. 1-12)</i></b></p> <p><b>**Student presentations &amp; handouts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• REVIEW your contemporary cultural artifacts of significance (e.g., form news or entertainment); Remember to frame your informal presentation by explaining how your data illustrate a key analytical concept in MCDA (e.g., representation, agency, salience)</li> <li>• DISCUSS &amp; REFLECT on our experience in the Quaker archives, and what we've learned about the sociohistorical context of discourse and communication.</li> <li>• EXAMINE notions of 'power' and 'justice' within the first half of the narrative, <i>Twelve Years a Slave</i>. In order to do this, each student will read Ch. 5 from our CDA textbook (Representing Action) AND present on select chapters from <i>TYaS</i>, by preparing a HANDOUT that includes:       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) A brief summary of the general events transpiring in the selected chapters</li> <li>(2) 1-2 excerpts each from the book/narrative (as sources of data) that correspond to/or demonstrate aspects of any 3 of the following key concepts:           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. over- /underlexicalization</li> <li>2. habitus</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ul>



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. salience</li> <li>4. representation</li> <li>5. agency</li> <li>6. connotation</li> <li>7. structural oppositions</li> <li>8. suppression</li> <li>9. language ideology</li> </ol> <p>(3) 1-2 questions for discussion, that help us explore why/how Northrup's story challenges our imagining of 'power' and 'justice', or helpful in the exploration of MCDA as part of sociocultural linguistics.</p>
<p>Week 11</p>	<p><b>April 9 - More Antislavery (Twelve Years a Slave, Ch. 13-22)</b></p> <p><i>**Student presentations &amp; handouts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 6, <i>How to do CDA</i>, 'Concealing and Taking for Granted', and present informally on select chapters, by preparing a handout (see above for guidelines).</li> <li>• Read also, Mustakeem (2011).</li> <li>• Optional: You can read Cohen (2017), by Prof. Lara Cohen (English Lit, Swarthmore) on Solomon Northup's musical abolitionist discourse/songwriting as antislavery literature.</li> </ul>
<p>Week 12</p>	<p><b>April 16 - World War Z &amp; Critical Digital Humanities Workshop</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="flex: 1;">   </div> <div style="flex: 2; padding-left: 20px;"> <p><u>First half of seminar 1:15- 2:30p</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of World War Z - Please come prepared with 1-2 of your favorite excerpts from the novel, and comments on their persuasive value.</li> <li>• Presentation by zombie studies scholar Prof. Persephone Braham (English, Univ. of Delaware)</li> </ul> <p><u>Second half of seminar ~2:45p</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital humanities workshop &amp; introduction to <u>[ZOMBIES REIMAGINED]</u> online exhibit project. This is the website will be where we will publish your Essay 3, CDA of World War Z (700 words).</li> <li>• See project at: <a href="http://ds.swarthmore.edu/zombies-reimagined/">http://ds.swarthmore.edu/zombies-reimagined/</a></li> </ul> <p><u>Key Discussion Questions</u> to help us <b>DE-ZOMBIFY</b> our encounters with humanity and machines</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why is the kill shot necessary for zombies?</li> <li>2. What do zombies want from us (humans)?</li> <li>3. How might the digital humanities assist us in controlling the narrative, or taking power back?</li> <li>4. How do digital humanities projects allow us to engage and amplify different (marginalized) knowledges?</li> <li>5. In what ways do the digital humanities enable an opportunity to rethink our relationships to tech?</li> <li>6. What metaphors do we use in computing? And how might these also participate in (re)producing power?</li> <li>7. What is the <i>text</i> of text? What other layers and aspect of access and ownership govern our interactions with word processing?</li> </ol> </div> </div>

Week 13	April 23 - <i>Review of Key Concepts</i>
Week 14	April 30 - <i>[ZOMBIES REIMAGINED] Project Day + Short Story Workshop</i>  <i>**Essay 3 due today for in-class peer review</i>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We'll use this final day of class to workshop your final essays and short stories, and post these to Prose.io (via your Github account) and the <i>[ZOMBIES REIMAGINED]</i> online exhibit.</li></ul>
	Final short stories due - May 11 via email

