UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

ENGLISH 407: LANGUAGE AND POLITICS
WINTER 2011
SYLLABUS

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:00-2:30; Thursdays, 2:00-2:30, or by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: In this course we explore the intersection between language and politics. By this I mean the way in which political conflicts and political structures shape the language of a society and the way in which linguistic structures and practices shape political conflict and political life. In particular we are interested in how language can aid and embody the exercise of political power in a society and in how an apparently common language can in fact be divided in significant ways. Three kinds of political conflict are explored in depth: conflict between social classes, conflict between genders, and conflicts between and within nations. The topics are explored almost exclusively with reference to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and we explore them by reading significant critical and theoretical texts (and one significant play).

AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES:
The aims of this course are:

- to examine in depth the principal issues at stake in the intersection of language and politics
- to provide students with a good grounding in the most important critical and theoretical texts dealing with these issues
- to show students how the sphere once covered by rhetoric – analysis of and training in the political use of language – is treated in modern linguistic thought.

By the end of this course you will:

- understand the most important debates and issues in the study of the political dimension of language
- be acquainted with a wide range of seminal critical works dealing with language and politics
- be prepared to pursue independent research in this area

ORGANIZATION AND CONDUCT OF CLASSES:
The class will be conducted in a seminar format. Each class one or more class members will introduce the topic or texts with a 10-minute presentation; discussion will follow. You are expected to read the material carefully before class and come prepared to participate in discussion.
COURSE TEXTS AND READINGS
Readings will be available as hard-copy (and occasionally electronic) reserves in the Porter library. The one exception is the play *Translations* by Brian Friel, which you should purchase. Students who wish to may also purchase Deborah Cameron’s *The Feminist Critique of Language*, which we will draw on extensively.

ASSESSMENT:
Assessment is on the basis of the following pieces of work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class attendance and participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long essay</td>
<td>50%</td>
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Attendance and class participation:
*Form:* You are expected to attend every class and to participate in class discussion.
*Submission methods and dates:* Attendance will be taken for every class and class participation noted. If you have no excuse for missing a class, please leave email me or leave me a note. You can miss classes for medical reasons and for unforeseeable personal difficulties. Every excused absence must be documented.
*Grading criteria:* If you attend every class but say absolutely nothing, you will receive a 50 for this part of the assessment; if speak occasionally, a 70, if you speak frequently and brilliantly, a 90, etc., etc. If you have more than three unexcused absences, you lose 20% from this part of your grade; more than six classes, 40%, and so on (which means 3% off your cumulative mark for the course for 4 absences, 6% for 7 absences, and so on). Class participation is graded on how well and how often you contribute. Contributions to discussion should demonstrate that you have read the material carefully and will be assessed on their relevance, interest, and originality.

Presentations:
*Form:* You will deliver two 10-minute presentations on course texts during the term. The presentation can be delivered from notes or read out.
*Grading criteria:* Presentations should not be summaries of the reading, but critical responses to it. The presentation will be graded on its clarity, the insight and detail of its commentary, and its success in provoking useful discussion.

Short essay:
*Form and submission:* The short essay will be 2000 words long and should be submitted to the appropriate dropbox on LEARN at 12 noon on Monday, February 27\textsuperscript{th}. It will be a critical commentary on one or more of the texts we have read in class, exploring its implications or scrutinizing its claims.
*Grading criteria:* The essay will be graded on the quality of the writing and the clarity of the argument; the sophistication, persuasiveness and

Long essay:
*Form:* The long essay will be 5000 words long. It will focus on a general issue raised in the course and should use several texts (and may include reading outside what we have read in class). The topic should be agreed with me beforehand.
*Submissions:* The essay should be submitted as a Word document in the LEARN dropbox by 12 noon on April 20\textsuperscript{th}. 
Grading criteria: The sophistication, inventiveness and persuasiveness of the analysis; the lucidity and elegance of the writing; the organization and presentation of the argument.

Late essays: Late essays will be penalised 3% for the first day late, and 1% for each successive day, up to a maximum of 20%. However, essays submitted after April 28th may not be marked (meaning a 0 will be assigned for that assignment). Extensions are given for genuine medical difficulties and for unpredictable and severe personal difficulties.

Please note the following
Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.
Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Graduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm
Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 – Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm
Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm
Academic Integrity website (Arts): http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html
Academic Integrity Office (UW): http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/

WEEK-BY-WEEK

January 3-5:
Tuesday: Introduction

Thursday: Some general considerations

January 10-12
Tuesday: Politics Lecture

Thursday: Language Lecture
January 17-19
Tuesday: Standardization: nation and class in language

Thursday: Standardization II
- Website: “Views of Standard English”: [http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/dick/standard.htm](http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/dick/standard.htm). Read the pieces by Peter Trudgill and Richard Hogg

January 24-26
Tuesday: Standardization III

Thursday: Dictionaries and academies

January 31- February 2
Tuesday: Subeditors and grammar mavens

Thursday: Colonialism

February 7-9
Tuesday: Ireland

Thursday: Africa and English

February 14-16
Tuesday: Global English

Thursday: Education
February 21-23: Reading week

February 28 – March 1
Tuesday: Saussure and the idea of the sign

Thursday: The sign and politics

March 6 – 8
Tuesday: Semiotics and politics

Thursday: semiotics and politics

March 13 – 15
Tuesday: Feminism and Language

Thursday: Feminism II

March 20-22: NO CLASS

March 27-29
Tuesday: Feminism III
- Anne Leclerc, “Woman’s Word”; Luce Irigaray, “Women’s Exile”, in Cameron, *Feminist Critique*

Thursday: Feminism IV
- Robin Lakoff, *Language and Woman’s Place*, Pamela Fishman, “Conversational Insecurity”; in Cameron, *Feminist Critique*