

Discourse Theory and Practice

For my IAP project, I am leading a joint honors option reading group for two sections of MC 112: Identity and Community. It is aimed at offering students a brief introduction to the study of discourse theory and practice, extending on readings and assignments in the MC 112 courses related to rhetoric, representation, and public discourse. Many features of our late modern society demand a greater critical awareness of language and a greater understanding of how language shapes our knowledge of the social world and our interactions with it. Thus, how language permeates human affairs is being more and more closely scrutinized and is requiring more interdisciplinary work. It is no longer only of interest to linguists or critical theorists but also to geographers, philosophers, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, social psychologists, and many others. In the honors option, we are reading several classic texts from different traditions of discourse studies as well as studies by contemporary discourse specialists which show what discourse analysis is able to achieve. These are some of the questions which we are exploring:

What is discourse?

What is its relation to rhetoric?

Why has there been a rise in its importance across disciplines?

How do various disciplines approach the analysis of discourse?

What is discourse analysis able to achieve, particularly in the study of public affairs?