

Political Media and Discourses of the American Right

ANTH/LING 635

3 credits

Prerequisites: Graduate standing or permission of the instructor.

Meeting times and location: MWF: 2-3 pm, alternate Wednesdays from 4-5 pm in Bunnell 309

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| Instructor: | Dr. Robin Shoaps |
| Office Hours: | TBA or by appointment in Bunnell 305B. Bring memory stick or laptop to discuss data |
| Phone: | 474-6884 |
| E-mail: | rashoaps@alaska.edu |

1. Catalog (Short) Description:

This class uses “hands-on” discourse analytic techniques of student-collected media data in order to examine whether or not there is a unified rhetorical style associated with the American Right; the nature of the relationship between a message, its form and persuasion; and how moral stances are taken in political contexts. Evaluation of the veracity, ethical or historical merits of conservative political stances is not part of the scope of the class.

2. Overview:

Talk radio, and increasingly, cable news programming, have provided a vibrant platform for conservative punditry and have played a major role in American political discourse. This course will provide students with a new perspective on the mediated political messages leading up to and in the wake of presidential and local and national midterm elections. In approaching political media from a discourse analytic point of view, the course will expose students to a broad analytic framework that is suitable for approaching all forms of political and public moral discourse. A major focus of the class will be on “hands-on” and workshop style analysis of media data and examination of the specific communicative practices found there. Students will be responsible for collecting and transcribing the media broadcasts that will comprise the material for class analysis and discussion. Larger questions to be considered in the class include whether or not there is a unified rhetorical style associated with the American Right; the nature of the relationship between a message, its form and persuasion; and how moral stances are taken in political contexts.

What this course WILL NOT prioritize:

This class is not a journalism or political science class. While we are concerned with identifying political stances, will not evaluate pundits based on the factuality of their statements nor whether their stances are “right” or “wrong.” Your and the instructor’s political opinions are irrelevant to analysis. Papers and discussion should not address whether or not you agree with the host. By divorcing ourselves from factual analysis and our political opinions we will be able

to learn a new way of listening, one that gives us training to go beyond what a blogger or opinion columnist can write.

Course Goals:

Students will:

- Learn a new framework for “listening” to political media
- Conduct analysis of political media that steps outside of evaluating facts or whether you agree with political platforms
- Recognize and identify the specific rhetorical strategies used by a particular conservative pundit and locate them broader trends in American conservative discourse strategies
- Contextualize political media with respect to American conservatism and extremism
- Collect data and become an “expert” on the language use of a particular conservative pundit
- Gain a mastery of current literature on discourse and politics inside and outside US contexts
- Produce original research suitable for a conference presentation and journal article draft

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Transcribe discourse data using Level 4 of the Santa Barbara system
- Be able to analyze political media with respect to semantic, prosodic and stylistic traits
- Be able to situate American conservative rhetoric with respect to at least two international examples or from the American Left.
- Recognize and analyze different units and levels of discourse structure.
- Demonstrate an ability to do original, interdisciplinary research on a topic in political media and relate it to larger themes the fields of media studies, anthropology, political science or linguistics.

Instructional Methods:

Regular class time will be divided into 3 formats: In general two days a week will be devoted to lecture and we will discuss the weekly reading assignments and your listening journals. On “lab days” we will discuss data (often provided by a student). Every 2 weeks graduate students will meet with the instructor for one hour to discuss additional readings.

3. Course Requirements:

Oral Participation:

20% of the course grade is based on your oral participation in data workshops and labs. Oral participation is evaluated on your speaking skills and your abilities to integrate class readings into presentations.

Each student will have multiple opportunities to discuss their data in class:

1. Data Workshop Presentation: Each student will do a formal presentation of their data. The presentation segment should be chosen for rhetorical characteristics (i.e., not necessarily the first few minutes of a show) and should not include commercials, theme music, etc. Plan to prepare a 3-5 minute segment, to be presented in 20 minutes, with copies of transcripts for class to facilitate the question and answer period. Students are required to bring their data to discuss it with me first.

2. Comparative Case Study Presentation:

Each student will do two class presentations of case studies of conservative discourse outside the US or published studies on political rhetoric from different ideological viewpoints or historical periods in the US. Students are responsible for finding their own published case studies. Please prepare a handout and annotated bibliography of the case studies you present so that it can be uploaded on Blackboard and become part of the collective knowledge of the class.

2. Project Presentation: At the end of the semester, each student will present his or her final paper research topic and findings. This presentation will last 20 minutes and provide an opportunity for peer and instructor questions and feedback.

Attendance:

Because much of the methodological framework introduced in the course will be presented in lecture and data workshop format (not through readings), regular attendance is very important in acquiring the skills necessary for a successful presentation or paper. Students may miss two class periods without it affecting their attendance grade.

Weekly Assignments:

Each week you are required to hand in either hand in a transcript OR a journal entry (see more below).

Radio, television and internet data collection:

Each student will be assigned a talk radio, vlog or television program to observe to for the duration of the quarter. On alternating weeks, you will be assigned to listen to/watch one hour of your program (it can be in chunks over several days, or from a single broadcast) and keep a journal. I will provide details on my expectations for this journal in class. Similarly, on alternating weeks you will record and transcribe a 3-5 minute segment of your program. Listening journals, transcriptions and sound files should be handed in via the course website on Blackboard (and hard copy) and are due before lab sections.

Final Paper: Details will be given in class, however an outline will be due several weeks before the deadline. Students are required to visit my office hours to discuss their final papers/data during the semester, before the outline is due (see schedule).

Grade Distribution:

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| Oral participation in data workshops | 15% |
| Research presentation | 15% |
| Written Listening/viewing journals and media ethnography | 10% |
| Transcription assignments | 15% |
| Corpus | 10% |
| Final Paper | 25% |

Grading is based on the following scale:

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| 95-100% | A |
| 90-94% | A- |
| 86-89% | B+ |
| 83-85% | B |
| 80-82% | B- |
| 76-79% | C+ |
| 73-75% | C |
| 70-72 | C- |
| 66-69 | D+ |
| 63-65 | D |
| 62 and below | F |

Grading is not done on a curve.

4. University Policies and Resources:

Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism is a form of cheating in which you use anyone else's ideas and/or words (both published or personally communicated) without proper citation of the source. Whether from a printed source, the Internet, a lecture or a friend or family member, you must cite the source properly, if you got the idea from someone else—and this is true even if you are not using the source's exact wording. Be aware of the University's policies on academic dishonesty.

When academic dishonesty is documented on any assignment or exam, you will receive a zero and the matter may be turned over to the Dean of Students for inquiry, with the recommendation of a failing grade in the course.

You should familiarize yourself with the Student Code of Conduct
(http://www.uaf.edu/catalog/current/academics/regs3.html#Student_Conduct)

and the University statement on Plagiarism
(<http://library.uaf.edu/lis101-plagiarism>).

For information on how to properly cite sources see: <http://library.uaf.edu/lis101-citing>

Support Services:

Student Support Services are available at UAF: <http://www.uaf.edu/sssp/>

These services include: free tutorial services; academic advising, mentoring, and personal support; direct financial assistance to qualified low-income participants; use of laptop computers, labs, and other technology resources; and cultural and social engagement. The office is located at 512 Gruening building.

See also http://www.uaf.edu/catalog/catalog_10-11/services/servo1.html

Writing Center:

Graduate students are encouraged to visit the writing center (Gruening 802)

<http://www.alaska.edu/english/studentresources/writing/>

You can make an appointment (474-5314) to go over a paper with someone at any stage in the writing process, from rough outline to final draft. You can also print up to 25 pages at a time for free. This is an excellent service to take advantage of at any stage of your student career.

Speaking Center:

Graduate students strongly encouraged to seek assistance at the Speaking Center before presenting the final paper. The Speaking Center is located in Room 507 in the Gruening Building. Call 474-5470 for Speaking Center hours and to schedule an appointment. Walk-ins are welcome, but it is best to make an appointment.

Disability Services:

The University of Alaska is committed to providing equal access for students with disabilities. If you experience a disability and will need special accommodations, please contact me during my office hours. I will work with the Office of Disabilities Services (208 WHIT, 474-5655) to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities.

5. Policies:**Communication:**

Do not expect instant turn-around on emails. I do not check my email frequently on weekends or at night. I would prefer face-to-face interaction and I am passionate about discussing data and readings with you during my office hours or another pre-arranged time—please take advantage of this.

Electronic devices: No cell phones in class. Students should bring laptops on transcription days (to be announced in class) and may bring laptops on workshop and presentation days.

Late assignments

Will be docked half a letter grade for each day late. I do not accept listening/viewing journals or transcription assignments that are more three days late. Handing an assignment in after class counts as late.

Acceptable assignment submission formats:

Do not email electronic copies of assignments to me. Please hand in hard copies of transcriptions and listening journals, in addition to electronic submission under "Discussions" on Blackboard.

I have very specific file naming properties, the importance of which will become evident when it is time to compose the class corpus. I will explain these in class and subtract 10% from your assignment grade for failing to follow formatting and file-naming instructions.

6.Course Materials (Tentative):**Books:**

The following required texts are available on reserve at Rasmuson library and at the UAF campus bookstore:

David C. Barker, 2002. *Rushed to Judgment: Talk Radio, Persuasion and American Political Behavior*. Columbia U Press, ISBN 0-231-11807-4

Chilton, Paul. 2004. *Analysing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice*. Routledge

Diamond, Sara. 1995. *Roads to dominion: Right-wing movements and political power in the United States*. Guilford.

Edsall, Thomas. 2007. *Building Red America: The New Conservative Coalition and the Drive for Permanent Power*. Basic Books. ISBN 10: 0-465-01816-1

Lakoff, George. 2002. *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*. University of Chicago Press. ISBN 0-226-46771-6.

Mickelthwait, John. and Adrian Woolridge, 2004. *The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America*. Penguin. ISBN 0-14-303539-8

Pierson, Paul and Skocpol, Theda, eds. 2007. *The Transformation of American Politics: Activist Government and the Rise of Conservatism*. Princeton University Press.

The following three texts will be discussed during additional 1 hour meetings every other week for the course of the semester:

Hodges, Adam, ed, 2013. *Discourses of War and Peace*. Oxford University Press.
Hodges, Adam, 2011. *The "War on Terror" Narrative: Discourse and Intertextuality in the Construction and Contestation of Sociopolitical Reality*. Oxford University Press.

Mulloy, D. J. 2004. *American Extremism: History, Politics and the Militia Movement*. Routledge.

Articles and Book Chapters:

All other readings will be available or, in the case of library resources, linked on Blackboard under "course documents."

Blackboard:

You will hand in your transcripts, journal entries and recorded segments on Blackboard. The course site will also have links to streaming broadcasts, transcription conventions, transcription software, assignment guidelines and the course schedule.

7. Topics, Deadlines and Schedule:

Because the course is really a research team, much of your training will be sensitive to the sorts of issues that arise organically from our data. Thus, I may tailor latter aspects of the syllabus around particular issues that arise. Similarly, depending on how quickly or slowly we make our way through material, some readings may be moved to "recommended" status or lecture topics may be dropped altogether. Please check Blackboard announcements (and your email) for updated syllabi; I will also announce changes in class.

Unless otherwise noted, readings are required.

Topics and readings subject to revision.

| Date | Topic | Reading Assignment or note |
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| Week 1 | Introduction & class business | |
| Week 2 (no lab) | Conservatism and American exceptionalism; Receive host assignment and journal guidelines Guide to contemporary major political figures | Mickelthwaite & Wooldridge Ch 12-13 David Foster Wallace Harper's article (for fun) |

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| | First homework assignment handed out: Host Profiles Overview of accessing and capturing data | American electoral system and government: selections from Shively (2011) |
| Week 3 | The formation of contemporary conservatism Units of discourse transcription | Edsall Ch 5, 6, 7 Pierson & Skocpol, 2007)Ch 5 |
| <i>Lab Session</i> | <i>Practice transcription</i> <i>Host profiles and listening/viewing journals due</i> | <i>Bring headphones and laptop with Transcriber installed. Download sample soundfile from Blackboard</i> |
| | Formation of conservatism (cont'd) Transcription | M & W: Ch 1, 5, 6, 7 |
| Week 4 | Talk Radio: history, policy, partisanship | Hartley Hillard and Keith |
| <i>Lab session</i> | <i>2 minute transcription due</i> | <i>bring memory stick with transcript and sound clip, post to Blackboard before class</i> |
| | Talk radio genres | Douglas Holland |
| Week 5 | Political engagement of the religious right | Brown Chs 7-9 |
| <i>Lab session</i> | <i>Listening/viewing journal due</i> <i>Discussion of student transcripts</i> | |
| | Political engagement of the religious right Cont'd discussion of transcription conventions | Brown 11, 13 |
| Week 6 | Religious radio and broadcasting | Diamond Hangen |

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| <i>Lab Session</i> | <i>3 minute transcription due</i> | <i>bring memory stick with transcript and sound clip, post to Blackboard before class</i> |
| | Representation in political discourse | Chilton |
| Week 7 | Call-in radio, debate and "hot talk" | Hutchby Ferenchik Capella et al |
| <i>Lab session</i> | <i>Listening/viewing journal due</i> <i>Data discussion</i> | |
| | Presenting the "facts" and speaking with authority Linguistic resources in English for marking evidentiality and epistemic stance | Chafe Philips |
| Week 8 | Evidentiality and epistemic stance cont'd | TBA |
| <i>Lab session</i> | <i>5 minute transcription assignment due</i> | <i>bring memory stick with transcript and sound clip, post to Blackboard before class</i> |
| | Evaluation, assessments and explicit stance-taking | Linde Goodwin |
| Week 9 | Rhetorical strategies for implicit evaluative stance-taking Part 1: Changes in footing and participant roles as resources contributing to authority and expert status | Goffman, Wortham Urban |
| <i>Lab Session</i> | <i>Listening/viewing journals due</i> | |
| | Part 2: Reported speech and double voicing | Tannen 1995 Voloshinov |
| Week 10 | Part 3: Transposition, sarcasm and the burlesque | Shoaps |

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| | | Clift |
| <i>Lab Session</i> | <i>5 minute transcription assignment, data discussion</i> | <i>bring memory stick with transcript and sound clip, post to Blackboard before class</i> |
| | "Style as substance:" non-referential messages and their conservative appeal | Silverstein |
| Week 11 | The fit between form and content: Persuasion and the power of tropes | Lakoff 3-64 Agha |
| <i>Lab session</i> | <i>Listening/viewing journals, data discussion</i> | |
| | Persuasion and the power of tropes, cont'd | Lakoff 65-107 |
| Week 12 | The fit between form and content: tropes, "concepts" and hegemonic discourse | Lakoff 143-196 Cohn, TBA |
| <i>Lab session</i> | <i>6 minute transcription due</i> | <i>bring memory stick with transcript and sound clip, post to Blackboard before class</i> |
| | Conservative mobilization: putting rhetoric to work? | Edsall Ch. 1 |
| Week 13 | Anger points and polarization | Edsall Ch 2, 3 |
| <i>Lab Session</i> | <i>Listening/viewing journals due, Student-led data discussion</i> | <i>Student presenter should bring soundclip on a memory stick and printed transcripts</i> |
| | THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY | |

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| Week 14 | Conservatism in the public sphere: Media personalities, political commentary and the danger to democracy? <i>Hand in outline and proposal for final paper</i> <i>You must have met with me before this date</i> | Barker: Chs 1-4 Bennett Hall |
| <i>Lab session</i> | <i>6 minute transcription due</i> <i>Student-led data discussion</i> | <i>Student presenter should bring soundclip on a memory stick and printed transcripts</i> |
| | Media personalities and danger to democracy, cont'd | Barker Ch 6-8 |
| Week 15 | Dangerous persuasion? | Jacobs Lippman |
| <i>Lab session</i> | <i>Listening/viewing journal</i> <i>Student-led data discussion</i> | <i>Note: Student presenter should bring soundclip on a memory stick and printed transcripts</i> |
| | New forms of "political commentary," and the health of public discourse and democracy | Lule Hart Hariman Bennett (very short readings) |
| Week 16 | Student research presentations | |

Partial and tentative bibliography of book chapters and articles (please note that required and recommended books are cited above):

Apostolidis, Paul. 2002. Scanning the "stations of the cross": Christian Right radio in post-Fordist society. In M. Hilmes and J. Loviglio, eds., *The Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*, pp. 461-483. Routledge. .

Cohn Carol. 1987. Sex and death in the rational world of defense intellectuals. *SIGNS* 12 (4), pp. 685-718.

Diamond, Sara. 1989. To rule and to reign. In *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right*, pp. 45-81. South End Press.

Douglas, Susan. 2002. Letting the boys be boys: Talk radio, male hysteria and political

- discourse in the 1980s. In M. Hilmes and J. Loviglio, eds., *The Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*, pp. 485-503. Routledge.
- Frank, Thomas. 2004. Persecuted, powerless and blind. In *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*, pp. 113-137. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Goffman, Erving. 1981. Footing. In *Forms of Talk*, pp. 124-159. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hariman, Robert. 2007. In defense of John Stewart. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24(3): 273-277.
- Hart, Roderick and EJ Hartelius. 2007. The political sins of John Stewart. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24(3): 263-272.
- Hilliard, Robert and Michael Keith. 1999. The genesis of bitter air. In *Waves of Rancor: Tuning in the Radical Right*, pp. 3-35. M.E. Sharpe.
- Hutchby, Ian. 1999. Power in discourse: The case of arguments on a British talk radio show. In A. Jaworski and N. Coupland, eds., *The Discourse Reader*, pp. 576-588. Routledge.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*, pp. 3-32. University of Chicago Press.
- Larsen, Jonathan. 2001. Rush Limbaugh: Talk radio's big mouth. *Columbia Journalism Review*.
- Laufer, Peter. 1995. *Inside Talk Radio: America's Voice or Just Hot Air*, pp. 38-67. New York: Birch Lane Press.
- Linde, Charlotte. 1997. Evaluation as linguistic structure and social practice. In Gunnarsson, Linell and Nordberg, eds., *The Construction of Professional Discourse*, pp. 151-172. Addison Wesley Longman.
- Lippmann, Walter. [1922] 1949. Selections from *Public Opinion*, pp. 41-49, 150-158. The Free Press.
- Lule, John. 2007. The wages of cynicism: John Stewart tried for heresy at NCA San Antonio. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24(3): 262.
- Seib, Philip. 1997. *Rush Hour: Talk Radio, Politics and the Rise of Rush Limbaugh*. Summit Group.
- Shoaps, Robin. 1999. The many voices of Rush Limbaugh: the use of transposition in constructing a rhetoric of common sense. *Text* 19(3): 399-437.
- Silverstein, Michael. 2003. *Talking Politics: The Substance of Style from Abe to "W,"* pp. 1-16. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.
- Tannen, Deborah. 1995. Waiting for the mouse: constructed dialogue in conversation. In Mannheim and Tedlock, eds., *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture*, pp. 198-217. University of Illinois Press.
- Tannen, Deborah 1987. Repetition in conversation: toward a poetics of talk. *Language* 63(3): 574-605.
- Urban, Greg. 1989. The 'I' of discourse. In Lee and Urban, eds., *Semiotics, Self and Society*. Mouton de Gruyter.
- Voloshinov, V.N. Selections from *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. University of Texas Press.
- Warren, Donald. 1996. *Radio Priest: Charles Coughlin, Father of Hate Radio*. Chapter 9

Free Press.