Introduction to Discourse Analysis
Ed 737-005/Ed 835-125

Fall 2006
Thursdays 4-7 pm & Mondays 1-3 pm
2320 SEB

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The course workload
This is a five credit hour course with both a weekly seminar and lab. We read discourse theories from a number of traditions, approaches to discourse analysis, and discourse analytic research and you select methods for working with your own data. In addition to writing page-long, informal “think pieces” about a concept or technique from the reading, you select a study from the library’s electronic data base and explain its method of discourse analysis to the class; you also explain a sample analysis of your own data before writing up a complete analysis.

Prior students advise that you think of this as an intensive two-course workload.

Who should take this course?
The course is applicable for you if you are a graduate student who has taken an introductory qualitative research course and/ or you have experience with analyzing discourse in a particular field (e.g., literary studies, linguistics). You will find the course most useful if you wish to apply either discourse analysis and/or qualitative research in your doctoral work. Since you will conduct mini-studies that engage a self-selected DA approach, you should meet in advance with me to arrange to collect, borrow, or share data for the course.

I assume that if you are beginning your doctoral studies you are most likely producing your first research report in the course, one that you could develop into a scholarly benchmark paper. If you are further along in your program—for example, on the threshold of your dissertation—you may apply this methodology to a pilot study or to your dissertation data.

Course objectives
The term “discourse analysis” has an extensive range of meanings. There is wide variance among the assumptions and interests of discourse analysts, and among the
models of discourse analysis they apply, which precludes generalizations about what they have in common. Any introductory course in discourse analysis is necessarily only a partial view, and therefore, a particular perspective. This course, because of its interest in the applications of discourse for studying education, focuses on theories of language in structuring social behavior, activities, and identities as well as social institutions, and on how discourse refers to particular methods of analyzing spoken and written language texts.

Aware of the need to establish boundaries on what can be represented as discourse analysis and what can be learned within one introductory course, I have designed this one for beginning researchers to focus on approaches and methods of discourse analysis that describe language-in-use in social life related to researchable issues in education. The materials for the course were chosen in response to the question, “What would a beginning researcher in education benefit from knowing about discourse analysis?” Each time I teach the course, I update the readings to reflect important new publications, and developments in theories and methods, as well as the interests of all the students in the current class.

The design of the course evolved from considering a corollary question: “What learning phases would first time discourse analysts in a doctoral program go through in applying discourse analysis to their own research project?” My answers to these questions produced a course with the following objectives:

To read and discuss descriptions and illustrations of leading approaches, methods, and applications of discourse analysis, both outside and within the field of education. (See list of books and related readings below.) From these readings, class members will focus on those approaches and methods best suited to their individual research interests. These they will apply to a research project for the course.

To transcribe and analyze data according to the discourse methods they have selected to support a mini research study. For the study they will frame an orienting question, select appropriate data, evolve questions to guide data transcription and analysis, and complete an analysis that produces study results.

To present and write up the study in a format suitable for a beginning scholar.

The organization of the course

We will meet for seminar on Thursdays from 4-7pm in SEB 2320 to discuss the readings and the studies. On Mondays we will meet for a two-hour lab from 1pm to 3pm (also in SEB 2320). Lab time is set aside for study groups to meet and work on their in-progress mini-studies with instructor assistance. I will also be available through individual appointments to confer with students about their projects.

The design of this course, which is to say its chronology of events and participation structures, is based on three assumptions about learning: 1) that knowledge is learned more thoroughly and meaningfully when it has an authentic purpose, hence students will conduct a mini-study with a question and data they select; 2) that problem-solving interactions with others involved in similar learning issues enriches and reinforces as well as expands learning, hence students will work in small study groups as well as full class discussion; and, 3) that the learning of abstract, complex, context-related
knowledge requires redundancy and variety over an extended time period, hence students will revisit and reapply foundational discourse analysis knowledge as the class engages with it through three chronological stages: reading and discussion; application to data; and, presentation in study reports.

In concrete terms, that means the class will spend the first nine weeks reading, discussing, and writing about ways of observing and analyzing that discourse analysis makes possible. During the first weeks, you will review your data through multiple new lenses from the readings. You will also form a question to drive your study and begin to evolve more focused questions for transcription and analysis. Please keep in mind that only a small portion of what is read can be discussed. The material will also usefully shape your individual project and your later research work. A third purpose for the extent of the readings is to provide a field of knowledge from which we can draw as a class to address particular issues that arise as studies develop.

As the first nine weeks continue, while you transcribe and analyze your data, you will also be reading examples of DA studies and about topical issues in the field of discourse research. Finally, you will select an article from library accessible electronic journal archives, such as *Discourse and Society*, to closely observe the use of discourse analysis relevant to your particular area of interest. Each student will talk about his/her article and its DA methods with the class. At this point assigned reading for the course will discontinue, although references to readings will be a regular occurrence as work on your study evolves. As a precursor to writing your paper, you will prepare a mini-presentation of your study-in-progress for the rest of the class. This involves presenting your question(s) and data corpus, explaining your methodology (logic of inquiry) and DA method, and walking the class through a transcript and analysis from your data to represent the current condition of your study. Finally, to assist you in writing up your project, we will walk through an analysis of the rhetorical and argument structure of a published study. During the final three weeks of the course, we will focus completely on assisting each other with the drafting of your study reports.

**Access to support technology**

The course relies for its effectiveness upon a number of technological resources for managing and transcribing data, searching for literature, and working with your drafts. All those you will need are available in the School of Education. Computers in the SEB grad lab and the Media Center on the 3rd floor are equipped with software for working with your data. If you have questions, Technology Services can assist you during regular hours of operation. Wireless laptops will be provided for each class and lab.

**Course readings**

We will read two books, a collection of articles from debates among discourse analysts about the value and quality of various schools of DA, research articles using DA (to be determined once I know each person’s interest), and selections from electronically archived journals in the order listed below. Electronic journal archives can be accessed on the web immediately through UM library data bases via Mirlyn. The two books (both new and used paperback copies) are immediately available on line at
http://www.amazon.com and other web-based book dealers and will soon be available at the following bookstores: Michigan Student Union; Michigan Book and Supply; Ullrichs.

**Required Books**


We will begin by reading Erickson so that we can become familiar with the social theories that inform the application discourse analysis. The book lays out a relationship between local talk and general societal processes. It uses examples of local discourse practices situated within the circumstances of society and history in which they take place. Erickson is an eminent scholar in this area and writes in an engaging and readable style that makes complex concepts quite accessible.


I selected Johnstone’s text because she explains discourse analysis by treating it as a systematic way of thinking to address research questions in the social sciences and humanities. Since your first step will be to formulate a research question for analyzing your data, understanding DA as ways of thinking that implicate particular phenomena and methods for studying them is a useful way to begin. Johnstone draws from work done by scholars in linguistics, anthropology, sociology, education, and rhetoric who study discourse as kinds of texts that can be analyzed. She synthesizes their DA scholarship by using six “heuristics” and provides a multitude of richly illustrated examples to explain how discourse texts are shaped and can be analyzed to render meaning.

**Recommended Book**


This popular compact book is in its fifth printing. Be sure to get the latest 2004 paperback edition. Mills’ representation of Discourse, through a more critical and postmodern lens, provides a provocative complement to Johnstone’s version.

**Articles & Chapters**

I will select readings that relate to the interests of the class members and provide masters of these for you to copy: I will also select readings that present multiple, sometimes contested, views among discourse analysts along with:


To provide you with an opportunity to study discourse analytic research that can directly inform your own unique work, the remainder of the course readings will come from library accessible on-line journal archives. For example, Linguistics and Education is a premier international journal in education devoted entirely to studies whose methods involve discourse analysis. Other available journals besides Linguistics and Education—volumes from 1991/ full text from volume 7 (1995)—include:

- *Journal of Sociolinguistics*—volumes from 2002 full text
- *Discourse and Society*—volumes from 1998 full text
- *Discourse Processes*—volumes from 2000 full text
- *Discourse Studies*—volumes from 1999 full text
- *Language in Society*—volumes from 1998 full text

At the beginning of the course, education librarian, Marija Freeland, will demonstrate how to access the journal archives through the new Mirlyn and search for specific articles. At the designated point in the course, you will select an article whose discourse analysis most usefully relates to your own research, and lead the class in an analytical read through of the method.

**Supplementary texts**

Though we will not read them as a class, I recommend you consider additional texts that specialize in traditions, methods, or studies that may be informative for your particular area of study. Some of these are as follows.


The following studies from my program of research illustrate a variety of discourse analyses. They demonstrate how different studies can be generated from the same data corpus in reference to different meta-theories by applying different epistemological approaches, research methods and methodologies in response to unique “conversations” in education. They can be downloaded from my web page link at

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Introduction to Discourse Analysis
University of Michigan
Rex, Fall 2006
http://www.umich.edu/~rex/publications.htm


**Proposed Course Schedule**

(8/3/06)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Seminar activities</th>
<th>Research activity</th>
<th>Homework reading &amp; writing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Thurs. 9/7</td>
<td>9/7 Introductions of class members, their data, and goals for the course. 9/11 Readings discussion: Considering the paradox—talk is unique to the local context and profoundly influenced by external contexts.</td>
<td>Organize into study groups. Explain data corpus and purpose. Begin to shape orienting research question.</td>
<td>READ for 9/11 Erickson: PART I READ for 9/14 &amp; 9/18: Erickson: PART II Philosophy &amp; Social theory appetizer WRITE: Draft your research question(s) Summarize an approach and/or method and its relationship to your research question(s)/interest (email to class members)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Readings Discussion</td>
<td>Review Data</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Thurs. 9/14 Mon. 9/18</td>
<td>What social theories connect local and global ecologies in talk? 9/18 Marija Freeland leads us through electronic journals</td>
<td>Review data.  Shape study's orienting question and design suited to data collection and analysis</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Thurs. 9/21 Mon. 9/25</td>
<td>How can approaching discourse analysis as a heuristic inform a methodology—or, how to proceed with a logic of inquiry?  How is discourse shaped by the world, and how does discourse shape worlds?  How is discourse influenced by structural conventions, and how are structural conventions influenced by what speakers use discourse for?</td>
<td>Review data.  Shape study's orienting question and design suited to data collection and analysis</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Thurs. 9/28 Mon. 10/2</td>
<td>How does identity influence discourse, and how does discourse position identity?  How is discourse shaped by prior discourses, and how does current discourse project future ones?  How is discourse shaped by its medium, and how does the choice of medium influence the discourse that is produced?</td>
<td>Review data.  Shape study's orienting question and design suited to data collection and analysis</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Thurs. 10/5 Mon. 10/9</td>
<td>Tackling the problem of agency and determinism. What is the role of purpose in discourse analysis?  Closure with Johnstone: What general themes about discourse seem important?  Observing DA research themes in Diana’s data.</td>
<td>Begin transcription of data</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Thurs. 10/12</td>
<td>How does one locate and conduct discourse analytic research?  How do we evaluate DA research?  What purposes, questions, and DA methods drove the studies?</td>
<td>Transcribe and analyze data.  Search for archived article</td>
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<td>Mon. 10/16</td>
<td>Study Break</td>
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<td>Thurs.</td>
<td>Mon.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>10/19</td>
<td>10/23</td>
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<td>Readings discussion: What are the intellectual traditions that have evolved into particular approaches to DA? What are the debates among DA researchers from different traditions?</td>
<td>Transcribe and analyze data.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>READ for 10/26 Revisiting key readings TBD</td>
<td>WRITE: Summarize an approach and/or method and its relationship to your research question(s)/interest (email to class members)</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Thurs. 10/26 Mon. 10/30</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reading discussion:</td>
<td>READ for 11/2 &amp; 11/6 Designated e article(s)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What are the intellectual traditions that have evolved into particular approaches to DA? What are the debates among DA researchers from different traditions?</td>
<td>WRITE: Email literature analysis grid (supplied), which summarizes an e-study related to your research interests. Prepare a “talk through” of one of the articles.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Thurs. 11/2 Mon. 11/6</td>
<td>Reading discussion: Presentation of e-article</td>
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<td>Complete analysis.</td>
<td>READ for 11/9 &amp; 11/13 Designated e article(s)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>WRITE: Email literature analysis grid (supplied), which summarizes three archived studies related to your research interests. Prepare a “talk through” of one of the articles.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Thurs. 11/9 Mon. 11/13</td>
<td>Reading discussion: Presentation of e-article</td>
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<td>Prepare presentation</td>
<td>Prepare presentation.</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Mon. 11/16 Mon. 11/20</td>
<td>Present study in progress for feedback by seminar members.</td>
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<td>Structural and rhetorical analysis of a published article.</td>
<td>READ for 11/27: Read Michaels article to observe its rhetorical structure and argument.</td>
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<td>WRITE: Analyze article’s structure and rhetorical features using handout.</td>
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<td>11/23</td>
<td>Thanksgiving—no meeting</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Mon. 11/27 Thurs. 11/30</td>
<td>Discussion: What are the rhetorical structure and argument of Michael’s article?</td>
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<td>Organize study for write up</td>
<td>WRITE: Write zero draft of transcript analysis and findings.</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Mon. 12/4 Thurs. 12/7</td>
<td>Responding to paper drafts</td>
<td>Drafting paper</td>
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<td>WRITE: Draft write up of mini-study Make appointment to meet with Lesley about your finished paper.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Mon. 12/12</td>
<td>Responding to paper drafts</td>
<td>Complete study paper</td>
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<td>Email your paper to Lesley at least two days before your meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/18 through 12/21</td>
<td>Meet with Lesley to discuss her response to your paper.</td>
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