This semester we will examine three approaches to studying politics through language: Wittgenstein’s and Austin’s ordinary language analysis, Skinner’s “recovery of intentions,” and Foucault’s genealogy. What these approaches share is a recognition that language is constitutive of social and political reality. This starting point opens up exciting possibilities for studying politics by way of language.

The main goals of this course are for you to (1) understand and critically assess the premises of each approach; (2) see how each approach has been used to study politics, broadly construed; (3) practice using the tools of each approach; and (4) put together and deploy what you have learned, perhaps in ways that the founders and/or practitioners of these approaches did not intend. The emphasis in this course will be on figuring out how to adapt and use these tools to answer empirical questions that you yourself find important.

Course logistics

A major goal of this course is for you to learn how to conduct research – and to do so thoughtfully – by adapting each of the three approaches to your own intellectual agendas. To achieve this goal, I have designed the course to have the following features:

User guides

Each seminar member will prepare (alone or in pairs – depending on course enrollment) a “user guide” for the week(s) you are responsible. You should use the week’s readings to prepare the guide, which should have three parts:
1. Premises
   a. The major premises of this mode of analysis (in a few sentences).
   b. The two or three most fundamental questions that you have about these premises.

2. How-to
   a. step-by-step guide of how to do the analysis (in no more than 2 or 3 pages).
   b. The two or three most fundamental questions that you have about how to do this analysis.

3. Uses
   a. The major things that we can learn by using this mode of analysis (in a few sentences).
   b. The two or three most fundamental questions that you have about what we can learn by using this mode of analysis.

Please always use MS Word in preparing the user guides so that we can use its “track changes” feature. There are a total of 9 sessions for which a user guide needs to be prepared:

Whoever is responsible for weeks 2,4,6, or 9 will need to prepare the user guide from scratch.

Whoever is responsible for weeks 3,7,10,11, or 12 will revise a guide already prepared by your peers. Each revision you make to the user guide should use “track changes” so that the class can see what revisions you made to the original or previous revisions of the user guide. When distributing to the class, distribute print-outs showing the tracked changes.

Bring enough hard copies to class for everyone to have his or her own copy, and be prepared to make a 5- to 10-minute presentation of your guide to the class.

Also email a copy of the guide (in doc or docx format – not pdf) to the entire class by 9 pm the next day. If you wish, you may revise the guide based upon feedback you received during our class meeting, though you are not required to do so. If you do make changes, please use “track changes” so that the class can see what revisions you made.

Practice analyses

Each member of the class will prepare a practice analysis for each of three major approaches we will be studying, taking your general direction from the final version of the user guide prepared for that approach.

I ask that you choose one word, which you will focus upon in each of the three analyses (you need to focus on the same word in all three). The word need not be in English, nor do your
analyses of that word necessarily have to be historical. Please do not choose any of the words that we will be examining together during the course of the semester (democracy, liberty, freedom, the n-word, power, state, worker, sexuality).

Each analysis should be accompanied by a short (no more than one-page) statement discussing the extent to which you followed the “how-to” section of the user guide, and explaining the reasons for any departures that you chose to make from that section.

We will discuss in class your ordinary language analysis on week 5, you Skinnerian analysis on week 8, and your Foucauldian analysis on week 13. So that everyone in the class has an opportunity to read everyone else’s analyses, the analyses will be due a day or so before each of these three class meetings (we’ll decide together exactly when). Each analysis should be no more than 2,500 words long.

To encourage you to be bold, explore, and take chances, I will not grade these practice analyses, though you will receive feedback during our class sessions devoted to discussing them. You will have an opportunity to re-use (suitably revised) or build upon these analyses in your final paper.

**Final paper**

Your final paper should be no more than 8,000 words long (double spaced, please). You have three template options for the paper, which I list below. You may also propose a different option, but it will need my approval.

Option 1. Three Analyses + Commentary

In this option, you will revise each of your practice analyses and then provide a commentary on those analyses. The main theoretical question that I ask you to grapple with in this commentary is: “What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of each mode of analysis for understanding the word that you have analyzed?”

Option 2. Expanded Analysis

In this option, you will revise and expand one of the three practice analyses that you prepared. The main theoretical questions that I ask you to grapple with are: “What does this analysis teach us? What is the pay-off?”

Option 3. Core Concept Analysis

In this option, you will choose one of the core words that we have examined: “democracy” (as discussed in *Democracy in Translation*), “liberty” (as discussed in *Liberty Before Liberalism* and “Are Freedom and Liberty Twins”), or “power” (as discussed in *Discipline and Punish*) and then
conduct an analysis using one of the alternative approaches. Thus you might do some kind of genealogical analysis of democracy or an ordinary language analysis of power. The main theoretical question that I ask you to grapple with is: “What does each of the two analyses (the one Schaffer/Skinner/Pitkin/Foucault conducted on the one hand and the one you conduct on the other) reveal and obscure about the concept?” Note that if you choose “liberty” your only choice will be to do a genealogy, which you can contrast to either Skinner or Pitkin or both.

Course grade

Your grade will be calculated as follows: class participation (30%), user guide preparation (20%), final paper (50%). Note that the final paper will be penalized one third of a grade (for instance, A to A-) for each day, or portion of a day, late.

Required readings

Always be sure to bring the texts assigned for the given week with you to class, in either print or electronic form, because we will be examining them closely together.

Material marked with an asterisk [*] is available on the course website in Moodle. The books listed below are not available in the course website. I have placed one copy of each on reserve at the circulation/reserves desk of the library. Discipline and Punish and Visions of Politics are also readable in ebook form through the library website, though they are not printable or downloadable. All of the books are available at the Textbook Annex if you wish to purchase your own copies.


[http://fcaw.library.umass.edu/F/2KN8MSMNCVSGPKFJP7CXCQX6DE1C2UXUEIRIVAXY7JKISQALHE-00200?func=item-global&doc_library=FCL01&doc_number=011111978&year=&volume=&sub_library=UMDUB]


**Other resources**

Here are a few tools, resources, and starting points that you may find helpful in locating a word for your practice analyses. They may also come in handy in conducting those analyses:

*Online*


Eighteenth Century Collections Online (via UMass Amherst Libraries Research Databases: [http://www.library.umass.edu/ndl/view/](http://www.library.umass.edu/ndl/view/))

The Urban Dictionary ([http://www.urbandictionary.com/](http://www.urbandictionary.com/))


*In print*


Williams, Raymond. 1983. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, revised edition*. New York: Oxford University Press. [good for locating a word to analyze, but treat Williams’ own analysis with great caution]
Bennett, Tony, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris, eds. 2005. *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society.* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. [ditto]


You may also get some ideas by looking over the supplemental bibliography attached to the end of the syllabus.

**Class schedule**

**January 24 (Week 1). Introduction and logistics**


Please read over this syllabus too!

**January 31 (Week 2). Ordinary Language Analysis I: Meaning as Use**


_Wittgenstein and Justice,* pages 1-115, 264-86.

Person/Group 1: “Ordinary language analysis I: meaning as use” user guide 1.0

**February 7 (Week 3). The Meanings of Freedom and Liberty, and of Democracy in Translation**


Democracy in Translation, pages ix-xii, 1-115, 139-46.

Person/Group 2: “Ordinary language analysis I: meaning as use” user guide 2.0

(If we had more time, we would also read Pitkin’s The Concept of Representation and my “Thin Descriptions: The Limits of Survey Research on the Meaning of Democracy,” available at: www.concepts-methods.org/Files/WorkingPaper/PC_45_Schaffer.pdf)

February 14 (week 4). Ordinary language analysis II: speaking as acting


How to Do Things with Words

* “Taliban Note Grounds Boston-Bound Plane,” Yahoo News December 1, 2005. [try to use Austin’s framework to think about this article]


Person/Group 3: “Ordinary language analysis II: speaking as acting” user guide 1.0

(If we had more time, we would also read Judith Butler’s Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative)

February 21 (week 5). Discussing your practice ordinary language analyses

Read the practice analyses of your peers

February 28 (week 6). Skinner’s methodological writings: “The recovery of intentions”


Visions of Politics, chapters 4, 5, 6, 9.
Person/Group 4: “The Recovery of Intentions” user guide 1.0

(If we had more time, we would also read works by other members of or adherents to the “Cambridge School” of which Skinner was a founding member. Among them: J.G.A. Pocock, Terence Ball, John Dunn, James Farr, Russell Hanson, Anthony Pagden, Richard Tuck, and James Tully)

March 7 (Week 7). Skinner on “Liberty”

*Liberty before Liberalism*

Person/Group 5: “The Recovery of Intentions” user guide 2.0

(If we had more time, we would read any number of other studies by Skinner - some of which can be found in the other two volumes of *Visions of Politics*, also available electronically through the library website)

March 14 (Week 8). Discussing Your Practice Skinnerian Recoveries

Read the practice analyses of your peers

March 21. No Class. Spring Break

March 28 (Week 9). Foucault’s Archaeology (On Our Way to Genealogy)


*Archaeology of Knowledge*, pages 1-211.

Person/Group 6: “Foucauldian archaeology/genealogy” user guide 1.0

(In this book, Foucault explains his archaeological method. If we had more time, we would also read Foucault actually doing archaeology – in books such as *The History of Madness, The Birth of the Clinic*, and *The Order of Things*)
**APRIL 4 (WEEK 10). FOUCAL’T’S GENEALOGY**


  Person/Group 7: “Foucauldian archaeology/genealogy” user guide 2.0

**APRIL 11 (WEEK 11). FOUCAL’T’S GENEALOGY OF POWER**

* Discipline and Punish

  Person/Group 8: “Foucauldian archaeology/genealogy” user guide 3.0

**APRIL 18 (WEEK 12). FOUCAL’DIAN STUDIES OF WORK, SEXUALITY, AND THE STATE**


  Person/Group 9: “Foucauldian archaeology/genealogy” user guide 4.0

9
APRIL 25 (WEEK 13). DISCUSSING YOUR PRACTICE GENEALOGIES

Read the practice analyses of your peers

MAY 7. FINAL PAPER DUE

Email me an electronic copy and put a hard copy in my department mailbox by 2 pm.

Postscript

This semester we are examining three particularly generative approaches to studying politics through language, but there are other valuable approaches. If we had a few more weeks I would also include:

Bourdieu’s Reflexive Sociology


German Begriffsgeschichte


Also noteworthy is a Spanish-language project inspired by *Begriffsgeschichte* (I haven’t found anything written in English):


A helpful website: [http://www.historiaintelectual.net/](http://www.historiaintelectual.net/)

**Whorf’s Linguistic Relativity**


On still other ways of studying the language of politics (including additional references for the above approaches) see the supplemental bibliography below.
Frederic C. Schaffer
“Language of Politics” Supplemental Bibliography
Updated 1-27-13

What is Language? What is Political Language?


Writing and Political Organization


Speaking as a Form of (Political) Action


**Diglossia, Codeswitching, and the Politics of Language/Register Choice**


The Whorfian Hypothesis and Other Views of Language, Culture, and Translation


**Language, Culture, and Translation**

**Africa**


The Middle East


Asia


**The Soviet Union**


**The United States**


**Multiple locales**


**The Language of Domination**


**The Language of Resistance and Liberation**


**The Languages of Domination and Resistance**

*Race, Ethnicity, and Migration*


*Colonialism*


*Sexual Orientation*


*Communism and Authoritarianism*


**Nazism and Concentration Camps**


**Peasants**


**Workers and the Working Class**


**The Courts**


**The Helping Professions**


**Political Correctness**


Debates about Women’s Language


Lying


Machiavelli, Niccolo. The Prince


**Jargon, Propaganda, Rhetoric**


**The Language of (Partisan) Politics in America**


**The Environment**


The Languages of War and Terrorism


“Contested” Political Concepts


Historical/Conceptual Change

Overviews


The British “Cambridge School”


German Begriffsgeschichte


Spanish-language Begriffsgeschichte-inspired Conceptual Histories


Foucauldian Genealogy


Bourdieuian Historical Reflexive Analysis


Historicized Ordinary Language Analysis


Other


The Language of Political (and Other Social) Science(s)

Blumer, Herbert. 1954. “What is Wrong with Social Theory?” American Sociological Review 19,1: 3-10.


**Concepts, Categories, and Classification (this body of literature is large - here’s just a few starting points)**


Metaphor

Theories (just a few starting points)


Metaphors in Politics


Framing

Theories


Framing in Politics


If You Read French


Good for Procrastination

