Discourse Analysis

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PhD Programme
Winter semester 2016-17 (2 credits)
Class meetings: Friday 13:30-15:10
Office hours: tbc

Course description

This course aims to introduce the students to social science discourse analysis, and in particular to interpretive discourse analysis as a family of approaches that emphasise the constructed nature of politics and the importance of struggles over interpretive and definitory hegemony for political processes and for the definition of political “realities”. Such approaches have become popular in various fields of political science, including policy studies, social movement research, international relations, organisational studies, etc. They allow to raise research questions that ask how worldviews are constructed, how discourses emerge and change, and how they influence political processes.

The course starts out on a more general overview of the field of discourse analysis (including more positivist strands such as discursive institutionalism), with the aim of zooming in more precisely on what various kinds of discourse analysis can and cannot do. Subsequently, for the major part of the course, we will then focus on post-structuralist discourse analysis: its epistemological bases, its various uses (such as the analysis of systems of meanings, discourses and counter-discourses, genealogical analysis, etc.). We will go over the most important bases and methodological tools of this type of analysis (tools from linguistics, socio-linguistics and post-structuralism for instance), some of its more practically-oriented manifestations (such as critical frame analysis), and some more general methodological issues proper to qualitative-interpretive research.

By the end of the course, the participants should have gained an understanding of the importance of language in politics and of discourse analysis as a conceptual and methodological approach. Through practical work in- and outside of the classroom, they should also have acquired some practical skills enabling them to begin to use discourse analysis for their own purposes, and to find their way through the literature in discourse theory and analysis.

Public and pre-conditions

This course is designed for PhD students of the Doctoral School of Public Policy, Political Science and International Relations, and of other CEU Departments, who wish to use discourse analytical methods in their work, or wish to gain some experience with this kind of methodology to decide whether it is useful to them or not.

MA students who are interested in discourse analysis may be admitted if there is space available and if they receive permission of their Head of Department. Interested students should please contact the instructor, providing a brief explanation as to why
they would like to attend this course. MA students need to be aware of the fact that
the workload for this course is higher than for an equivalent MA level course.

Auditors may be accepted into the course under the condition of participating
regularly and handing in the most important assignments.

**Learning outcomes**
By the end of this course, the students should:

1. Understand the rationale, theoretical basis and key concepts of discourse
   analysis as used in social and political analysis, and its limitations;
2. Be able to apply a discourse analytical approach to a (limited) object of their
   choice, and to present their findings in an appropriate manner, in writing as
   well as orally;
3. Be able to critically assess discourse analytical work done by others

**Course requirements and assessment**
The course consists of weekly sessions consisting in lectures, class-room discussions
in connection with the readings (and assignments), and practical exercises.
At the end of the semester, every (regular) participant will present his or her final
paper to the class. Depending on the number of participants, we may need to extend
this presentation sessions beyond the usual duration of the class (a schedule will be set
up by mid-semeste or so).

The assessment will be based on the following:

- A final paper demonstrating a conceptual understanding of discourse analysis
  and the application of a discourse analytical approach to an object of the
  student's choice (ca. 6000 words) (70%) (learning outcomes 1 and 2)
- Intermediate assignments (20%) to be handed in the day before class, or be
  brought along to class (learning outcomes 1, 2, 3). They will not be graded
  individually, but taken as a whole.
- Active participation and a short oral presentation of the student's own final
  paper at the end of the semester (10%) (learning outcomes 2, 3)

A suggestion for a topic for the final paper will have to be submitted by week 4, a
more developed 2-page proposal by week 6 and a draft version of the paper by week
10 (ahead of the oral presentation). Deadline for the final paper: Friday 7th April.

Team-work is possible for final papers and assignments.
Course Outline

Week 1 (13 Jan)

Introduction to the course

- Overview of the course and course requirements
- The analysis of political discourse – traditions and developments

Required reading:

Suggested readings:

Week 2 (20 Jan)

Discourse: linguistic and socio-linguistic perspectives
- Language and communication
- Linguistic perspectives: semantics, pragmatics, socio-linguistics
- Language as saying, doing and being

Required readings:

Suggested readings:
Week 3 (27 Jan) – Beyond language: discourse as structure

- Discourse as "ideological" power
- Discourse as structure and system

Required readings:

Supplementary readings:

Week 4 (3 Feb) – Discourses as (negotiated) systems of meaning

- Discourse as a "narrowing of perspectives" and competition for definitory power

Required readings:

Supplementary readings:


**Week 5 (10 Feb) – Doing discourse analysis**

- The problem of “operationalising” discourse theory
- Problem definitions
- The discursive constructions of hierarchies, boundaries, (dis)continuities and temporalities

**Required readings:**


**Supplementary readings:**


Week 6 (17 Feb) – Critical Frame Analysis

- Frames and frame analysis

Required readings:


Supplementary Readings:


Week 7 (24 Feb) – Time and Discourse

- Emergence and evolution of discourses
- Genealogical analysis
- Narratives and subject positions/structure and agency in discourse

Required readings:


Special issue of the Greek Review of Social Research, 117.


Supplementary Readings:
Week 8 (3 March) – Discourse and discursive institutionalism

- Discourse vs ideas
- Discourse and causality

Required readings:


Supplementary readings


Week 9 (10 March)
*** no class ***

Week 10 (17 March) - An example: Analysing parliamentary discourse

- Reconstructing vs measuring discourse
- Organisational discourse

Required readings:


Supplementary readings


Week 11 (24 March) – Interpretation and validity

- Building up interpretations and writing up
- Validity, reliability and generalisability
- What we see it what we look for – the problem of reification

Required readings:


Supplementary readings:


Week 12 (31 March) – Student presentations

*** double class 13:30-15:10 and 15:30-17:10 ***
• Slides to be submitted by **Wednesday** evening before the presentation

  End of semester

  **Friday 7**\(^{th}\) April: Deadline for the final papers