

HUM 17000: LANGUAGE AND THE HUMAN

POWER

Autumn Term X

Time:

Instructor: XXX
Email: XXX
Office: XXX
Office Hours: XXX

Writing Intern: XXX
Email: XXX
Office: XXX
Office hours: XXX

We acknowledge with respect the Myaamia, Illinois, and Potawatomi people on whose traditional, ancestral, and unceded land we work and whose historical relationships with that land continue to this day.

Language is at the center of what it means to be human and is instrumental in all humanistic pursuits. With it, we understand others, persuade, argue, reason, and think. This course aims to provoke critical examination of common assumptions that determine our understanding of language, texts, and the ways language is used and understood via three interconnected processes: *power*, *identity*, and *thought*. Focusing on these processes and their representation in art, literature and film, we will consider How does language support structures of power and privilege? How does language shape our assumptions and beliefs? How does language motivate us to act or keeps us from acting? Is language a basic human right? How does language influence the ways we think about race, gender, sexual orientation, and species? How do we use language to project their own identity? How do we use it to perceive or shape the identity of others?

REQUIRED READINGS

Margaret Atwood, [*The Handmaid's Tale \(Anchor\)* ISBN: 9780385490818](#).

Claudia Rankin, [*Citizen* ISBN: 978-1555976903](#).

William Shakespeare, [*The Tempest \(Bedford\)* ISBN: 9780312457525. 2nd Edition](#)

George Bernard Shaw, [*Pygmalion \(Penguin\)* ISBN: 978-0140437898](#).

Texts are available for purchase at the Seminary Co-op Bookstore. Please do your best to purchase the correct editions, using the provided ISBN, so that page numbers are in common. With the exception of *Citizen*, all other readings are available in digital format on Canvas.

REQUIRED FILM SCREENING:

- *Sorry to Bother You*
- *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation

You are expected to attend every session, to be on time, and to be present in mind, body, and spirit. Reading assignments must be completed advance of class. This keeps you engaged, helps you get the most out of the course, and provides an enjoyable discussion environment. In other words, a warm body in front of a camera is not enough for attendance. Absences are allowed in cases of family emergency, sickness, and other life *crises*. Yet, these must be communicated to me in advance. Similarly, if you have a religious obligation that requires you to miss our session, you must inform me now at the beginning of the quarter. In other cases, I will not follow up with you if you are absent. If you miss a session and do not communicate with me in a timely manner, it is a miss.

Class Format

We will meet on Zoom once a week for a live discussion, on Tuesdays. For these Tuesday discussions, you will be placed into a group that meets either from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM CST or 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM CST. Weekly reading assignments should be completed whenever possible by class time on Tuesdays. On Thursdays, you will retrieve (via Canvas) asynchronous instructional materials to be used in lieu of a live class session.

Slack

We will use Slack for ongoing conversations with both shared channels for informal conversations about the readings and private channels for communication with the instructor and peers. For all course related questions, you should contact me via Slack INSTEAD of email. You can join the class workspace on Slack using the link below if you have not already received an invitation from me:

https://join.slack.com/t/lathfall2020/shared_invite/zt-hlp8apr4-Kdf20ZMzu1eo5_kEDRnApQ

Overview of Weekly Class Structure:

On Tuesdays: Zoom meetings

- We will meet in two discussion groups during our regularly scheduled class time. You will be assigned to a group of 8 or 9 students that meets either from 10:00 AM -11:00 AM or 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM weekly. This is, of course, an experiment in making everyone comfortable and encouraging participation. If you just can't get enough of class discussion, you are welcome to "attend" both discussion groups. I would simply ask that when you are attending the group to which you were not assigned, you make room for those assigned to the group to do most of the talking. Please be sure to allow for time zone differences. These discussions will not be recorded, so please plan your schedule accordingly. If it turns out there is a strong desire for more synchronous discussion, I might open up another hour of discussion time for those who want to attend.
- Discussion meetings will last ~an hour and may vary in form. See below for Zoom etiquette.

To Be Assigned on Thursdays—due on Mondays

- Engagement with the assigned materials
 - The assigned materials may come in many forms. They may be short recordings made by myself or by other instructors in the sequence (~20-30 minutes total) or they may be podcasts or videocasts made by online content producers. They will all be posted under “Modules” on Canvas by noon CST on Thursday at the latest. These materials may serve as introductions to the text for the week. Alternatively, they may supply ideas and questions to get you engaging with the material. Please engage actively with these before you make your discussion posts.
- Canvas Discussion Posts--due Monday at midnight CST
 - Make at least two (2) posts on the Canvas discussion board for the course. At least one post should be a reply to a thread that I start. At least one post should engage meaningfully with something a classmate has said.
 - See further instructions below.

Optional

- Tentatively, I will hold official office hours on Wednesdays from 12:30 to 1:30 and Fridays from 11-12, at least during the first week. It might change later if these slots turn out not be optimal.

Grade distribution

1) Engagement and Canvas Discussion posts.....	35 %
2) Paper 1 (2-3 pages)	15 %
3) Paper 2 (4-5 pages)	20%
4) Paper 3 (5-6 pages)	30%
TOTAL.....	100%

Further Explanations of Course (and Grading) Components

Engagement--Overview:

- Plan to read and to read carefully. Plan to participate weekly in discussion boards on Canvas. Use the list of “Conversational Moves” (below) to help make this a good conversation. Over the quarter, use as many of the conversational moves as you can. I may ask you to reflect on your use of these and what you have learned from shaping the discussion in these ways. Plan to participate in the live Tuesday discussions. Try to say something each time.
- Please be sure to stay in contact should anything interfere with your class participation. I will not know what is going on unless you tell me. So please make me aware of tech issues, illness, personal circumstances, etc. and we will try to find workarounds and ways to adapt to circumstances where that is needed.

- It may be that I may become ill during the quarter. In that event, I will do my best to find someone to cover any instruction I cannot complete myself.

Engagement—Recorded Material:

- Listen actively to the recorded material. Have your books and a means of taking notes ready. Think of this listening as a compressed version of some of what happens in a live class session. Take notes. Pause to think. Mark up your text if that seems fitting. Jot down questions. There is an actual advantage to this mode of communicating (despite all the disadvantages), in that you can rewind if you missed something, and you don't need to be responsive on the spot. You can jot something down and then write a Canvas post about it later, or bring it up in a Zoom session.

Engagement—Canvas Discussion Posts:

- You are asked to contribute at least two entries to the Canvas Discussions every week. You are welcome to contribute more.
- Unless I specified otherwise (i.e. if I indicate that a particular task that week is required), you can engage in Canvas discussions in 3 ways: (1) By responding to a topic that I post; (2) by starting a topic of your own; or (3) by responding to a classmate's topic or a classmate's post in my topic. Let's start by focusing on (1) and (3).
- Regarding (1) and (3):
 - When you are responding to a classmate's post (or one of mine), be sure to engage with the passage that your classmate has chosen. You may introduce a passage you feel is related, but first consider the passage. Your post should employ one of the following "conversational moves" (below) to engage with your classmates. Try out as many of these as you can during the quarter, and see if you think they improve the quality of the conversation! You should feel free to engage with one another in threads that I start.
 - For the conversation to go somewhere, it will need to be the case that you read the thread through to the point where you are posting. This may mean you are not answering my questions directly, but conversing about answers that have been proposed. Think of this as a very slow, but also more precise version of what we do in class—democratized for those who like to think before they talk.
- Regarding (2):
 - If you are starting a new discussion topic, please choose a passage (no more than a page; it can be as short as a sentence) from the week's readings that you find particularly interesting, problematic, difficult, important, funny, strange, enigmatic, etc. Then state an observation about what you found striking in this passage. Was it an element of language—a salient or ambiguous word, a metaphor or motif, an image, or some combination of these and other features—that drew your attention to the passage? When we are working on more theoretical texts (notably Bourdieu, but also Greenblatt and Fanon), it may be that a sentence illuminates a concept in a way you find particularly helpful—or jars your sense of how ideas are fitting together. (These suggestions are, of course, suggestive rather than exhaustive.) Pose at least one discussion question for your classmates. Do you want to explore an idea? Work towards clarification on a concept? Find other information from the text that might complicate or support a

hypothesis or claim about the passage? Tell the group what sort of collaboration you would like. It is fine—even encouraged up to a point—to make use of the recorded lecture material in framing questions.

- If you are starting a topic, you might need to write a paragraph or so (~100-300 words). Other posts can be shorter as long as they are substantive.
- This quarter, please refer to texts by their most universal indexing features. (Act and scene numbers mostly translate across editions, though not always—and for interesting reasons. Page numbers of course are not useful for anyone reading a different edition.) Ask a clear question of your classmates.
- Your posts might also be (or contain) responses to questions in the recorded material for the course or subjects we discussed in a live Zoom meeting. Just lead by saying so and contextualize what, exactly, you are referring to. Bear in mind that your classmates won't all be in the same Zoom meetings.
- Posts you design, or the manner in which you respond to questions, can be textually specific reflections on larger course themes.
- Read all of your classmates' posts and responses. If you'd like to respond further, you can! Two posts are the minimum, not the limit. If you contribute two substantial posts, it is okay to also write briefer remarks on other threads. However, don't just "agree" or "disagree." Always say why.
- It is good to be serious and scholarly in these posts, but also feel free to have fun. If you contribute two substantive posts and then want to say something briefer, that is completely fine.

Engagement—Zoom Meeting Guidelines:

- You will be able to access our Zoom meetings via Canvas. The meetings will be password protected. The passwords will be available via Canvas. (This is to keep out trolls.) Please feel free to tune in a few minutes early if you would like; I will be there at least 5 minutes before the session time and happy to chat.
- Keep your microphone muted while others are speaking. Use headsets if at all possible, as they help filter out background noise.
- There is an expectation that students in this course will be actively engaged and on camera while on Zoom. If you require an exception, please reach out to me directly.
- Use the chat if you have something to say. I will try to attend to questions as we go. You can also try raising your hand (literally; wave at me). Since each group is small enough, it should not be difficult for me to notice you raising your hand.
- Try to contribute at least once per Tuesday Zoom session. If you are talkative, try to make sure there is space for everyone to contribute. All of this is harder on screen, so be extra polite. Make an effort to validate and show appreciation for the contributions of others. It is much harder to "feel" that a comment went over well, or met interested skepticism, when we are all tiny screen heads.
- While use of technology is unavoidable in a remote learning setting, I would nonetheless encourage you to minimize the number of electronic devices opened during class time. Slowing down is an increasingly difficult thing to do in our time; but we contend that it is of vital intellectual importance. We all live in a state of being barraged by information and distractions, all vying for our attention. But our class is not a time for such a barrage.

Conversational Moves¹

- Ask a question or make a comment that shows you are interested in what another person has said.
- Ask a question or make a comment that encourages someone else to elaborate on something that person has said.
- Make a comment that underscores the link between two people's contributions. Make this link explicit in your comment.
- Make a comment indicating that you found another person's ideas interesting or useful. Be specific as to why this was the case.
- Contribute something that builds on or springs from what someone else has said. Be explicit about the way you are building on the other person's thoughts.
- Make a summary observation that takes into account several people's contributions and that touches on a reoccurring theme in the discussion.
- Ask a cause-and-effect question – for example, “Can you explain why you think it's true that if these things are in place, such and such a thing will occur?”
- Find a way to express appreciation for what you have gained from the discussion. Try to be specific about what it was that helped you understand something better.
- Disagree with someone in a respectful and constructive way.

Writing Seminars

Your class will be divided into **SIX** groups, and your writing intern will hold three writing seminars throughout the quarter for each group. Participating in these seminars fulfills the requirements of HUMA 19100, which is a graduation requirement. Let me repeat: **ATTENDING THESE SEMINARS IS REQUIRED TO GRADUATE.**

The purpose of the seminars is to teach you the craft of academic writing, which we will do by workshopping the writing you do for your assignments in this class. Either by offering each other recommendations for revision of in-progress drafts or by analyzing already-completed assignments in-depth, you will learn principles of academic argumentation, organization, and style. These skills will serve you throughout your career as university students, as well as after you graduate. Your writing intern will work out the scheduling with you to ensure that each group is able to attend all three seminars.

Etiquette and Technology Policy

Let me begin by emphasizing that the general approach for this course is to foster intellectual nourishment, social connection, and personal accommodation across time zones, technological variability, and personal contexts. I will seek feedback from you and will remain flexible in order to adjust to what works and what doesn't. I would invite you to prioritize supporting each other, seek simple solutions, share resources, and communicate clearly. I invite you to share your experiences and contact me with any concerns and questions anytime. Since this is all very much an experiment, we might make changes when needed.

¹ From Brookfield & Preskill, 2005. *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms*. San Francisco Jossey-Bass.

Great discussion is characterized by deep respect and an environment in which all people have the freedom to agree and disagree, clarify and challenge, be heard and speak. The general expectations of conduct for the university, of course, apply to the remote learning as well; you may refer to these guidelines in the student handbook. Occasionally in this class we will discuss difficult topics related to race, gender, inequality, class, and oppression. Each of you comes into this class with a different perspective that can be shared to enhance our understanding of these issues. I ask that you enter these conversations with respect, curiosity, and cultural humility. You should be open to alternative perspectives and willing to revise beliefs that are based on misinformation. As a general rule, your ideas and experiences can always be shared during these conversations but please refrain from dismissing the experiences of others. Personal attacks of any kind will not be tolerated.

Deadlines

The due dates for all papers are listed below. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of them as well as of dates for presentations and writing workshops. I will allow an automatic 1-day extension for ONE essay, but ask you to please make your request before the deadline has passed. For each day that your assignment is overdue, I will deduct 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., A- becomes a B+). Please plan accordingly.

Accessibility and Accommodation

Students with disabilities who have been approved for the use of academic accommodations by Student Disability Services (SDS) and need a reasonable accommodation(s) to participate fully in this course should follow the procedures established by SDS for using accommodations. Timely notifications are required in order to ensure that your accommodations can be implemented. Please meet with me to discuss your access needs in this class after you have completed the SDS procedures for requesting accommodations. For more information, visit disabilities.uchicago.edu.

Mental Health and Wellness

Your success in this class and overall wellness at the University is important to me, and I recognize that the transition to college poses challenges to all students. Should you feel in need of mental health or wellness support, remember that you have in place here a network of people who are ready and willing to help. Your College Advisor, your Resident Heads and Resident Assistants, and the staff at Student Counseling are available to you should you need or want to talk. You can find a description of the services offered here: <https://wellness.uchicago.edu/>.

Plagiarism

Your work needs to be your own. The Student Handbook statement on academic honesty is efficient in explicating the point:

It is contrary to justice, academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit another's statements or ideas as one's own work. To do so is plagiarism or cheating, offenses punishable under the University's disciplinary system. Because these offenses undercut the distinctive moral and intellectual character of the University, we take them very seriously. Proper acknowledgment of another's ideas, whether by direct quotation or paraphrase, is expected. In particular, if any written or electronic source is consulted and material is used from that source, directly or indirectly, the source should be identified by author, title, and page number, or by

website and date accessed. Any doubts about what constitutes "use" should be addressed to the instructor.

Cases of academic dishonesty are taken very seriously by the College and by me.

DATE	TEXT/READING ASSIGNMENT	WORKSHOPS/SCREENING/PAPERS
WEEK 1 T 9/29	Introduction	
Th 10/01	Rita Dove, " Parsley " Rankine, <i>Citizen</i> , I (p.5-19)	Paper 1 prompt distributed (no later than 10/01)
WEEK 2 T 10/06	George Bernard Shaw, Pygmalion , Acts 1-2 Rosina Lippi-Green, English with an Accent (selections)	
Th 10/8	George Bernard Shaw, Pygmalion , Acts 3-5	Draft of Paper 1 due on 10/09
WEEK 3 T 10/13	Pierre Bourdieu, " The economics of linguistic exchanges " Patricia Smith, " My mother learns English "	Writing workshops
Th 10/15	Rankine, <i>Citizen</i> , II (p.23-36) Mona Eltahawy, " Civility Will Not Overturn the Patriarchy "	
WEEK 4 T 10/20	Jane Hill, " Mock Spanish " Rankine, <i>Citizen</i> , III-V (p.41-79)	Paper 1 due Movie screening this week
Th 10/22	Rickford and King, " Language and linguistics on trial: hearing Rachel Jeantel (and other vernacular speakers) in the courtroom and beyond " Jonathan Rosa, Looking Like a Language and Sounding like a Race: Chapters 4 & 5	Paper 2 prompt distributed
WEEK 5 T 10/27	Movie discussion: <i>Sorry to Bother You</i>	
Th 10/29	Shakespeare, The Tempest , Acts I-III Stephen Greenblatt, " Learning to curse "	Draft of Essay 2 due on 10/30
WEEK 6 T 11/03	Shakespeare, The Tempest , Acts IV-V. Read also " Sources and Contexts ," 116-212.	Writing workshops

	Frantz Fanon, <i>Black skin white masks</i> : Chapter One, The Black Man and Language .	
Th 11/05	Austin, How to do Things with Words: Lectures I, II, III, VIII, XI	
WEEK 7 T 11/10	Jenny Holzer Project Rankine, <i>Citizen</i> , VI-VII (p.81-161)	Paper 2 due
Th 11/12	Margaret Atwood, Handmaid's Tale , 1-135	Paper 3 assigned
WEEK 8 T 11/17	Margaret Atwood, Handmaid's Tale , 139-296	
Th 11/19	Margaret Atwood, Handmaid's Tale , 296-378 Audre Lorde – " The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action "	
WEEK 9 T 11/24	Study Week	Movie screening this week
Th 11/26	Thanksgiving Break NO CLASS	
WEEK 10 T 12/01	Movie discussion: <i>Aguirre, the Wrath of God</i>	Writing Workshops Draft of Essay 3 due on 12/01
Th 12/03	Final discussion/Wrap-up	Paper 3 due on December 11 by 11:59pm.