

Hoenes del Pinal, Eric (NYU) - Language and Religion

Language and Religion V14.0801 (V90.0130);

Fall 2009 1 Mon/Wed 9:30 - 10:45 a.m.

Silver Hall, Room 512

Dr. Eric Hoenes del Pinal

OH: Tuesday 1 - 3 p.m., by appointment

Rufus D. Smith Hall, Room 710

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Course Description:

This course brings together anthropologists' long standing interests in the nature of religion across cultures and in the interrelationship between language and culture. Through close readings of several case studies we will ask what role language plays in constituting people's religious experiences, and how these in turn can be said to shape people's communicative practices. By attending closely to specific communities' uses of spoken and written language, as well as to their discourses about the nature of language, we hope to gain greater insight into how religion functions to organize people's social worlds and give meaning to their lives. Among other topics, we will be examining: the nature of ritual language; charisma and the institutionalization of religious authority; the transformative power of language; the relationship between the material objects, sound and the supernatural; and the uses of sacred texts.

Course requirements:

My goal for this class is to provide you with a forum in which to have interesting and lively discussions about the topics that we will be covering, but we will only be able to do that if everyone comes to class prepared. Thus, I ask that you do the readings before you come to class. To facilitate discussion, each student will complete a short commentary or set of questions (about ½ to 1 page, typed) about the day's readings once per week. It is entirely up to you if you want to prepare your comments for Monday or Wednesday, but you must turn one in each week from Week 2-14. Please come prepared to share your comments and questions with the class. If you find that you are having trouble understanding the readings or otherwise falling behind in the class, please come see me during our office

hours as soon as possible. I also ask that you be respectful of other students during our discussions.

I expect you to attend classes regularly and be on time. I know that sometimes absences are unavoidable, but I ask that you try to be here for every class and to please let me know if you will be absent. You'll also need to make the necessary arrangements to make up the class work. Attendance and participation will factor into your final grade.

In addition to two papers meant to test your understanding of the readings (due October 12, and November 23), throughout the semester you will be working on a small ethnographic project about a religious group in NYC. This exercise is meant to give you a taste of what ethnographic fieldwork is like as well as bring to life the course material. You are free to choose any religious group so long as it is not one with which you presently identify (or have recently identified with). Preferably students will work in teams of two, but other arrangements may be made if you can justify them to me. You will be expected to attend the religious functions of your chosen group as a participant observer on a fairly regular basis and to write two short field reports (due October 28 and December 2) along the way and a final paper about your experience and findings (due December 12). Although you'll be working in teams, all written work must be your own. More details on written assignments will be given as we progress through the course.

I will be scheduling a few film screenings throughout the semester. Dates and times are TBD. If you cannot attend the screenings you may watch the films on your own at the library. Films should be treated as required texts.

Assignments:

Attendance and participation	10%
Weekly discussion questions/comments(x13, <1 page each)	10%
Papers (x2, approx. 5-6 pages each)	30%
Field project reports (x2, approx. 3 pages each)	20%
Final paper based on field project	30%

Texts:

Bauman, Richard. *Let Your Words Be Few: Symbolism of Speaking and Silence among Seventeenth-century Quakers*. Tucson: Wheatmark, 2008. (Originally

published 1983 by Cambridge University Press, any edition is fine)

Bielo, James. *Words upon the Word: An Ethnography of Evangelical Group Bible Study*. New York: New York University Press, 2008.

Engelke, Matthew. *A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. (Also available as an eBook via BobCat.)

Fader, Ayala. *Mitzvah Girls: Bringing up the Next Generation of Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

The books above have been ordered at the NYU bookstore and will also be available at the Bobst Library Reserves. All other articles and book excerpts will be available on-line via BlackBoard. Note: Book excerpts have been uploaded as PDFs and can be downloaded very easily. However, to access journal articles from off-campus, you will need to use a proxy. Information can be found here: <http://library.nyu.edu/help/proxy.html>. Readings listed as "Recommended" are not required, but I have included them because I think they will enhance your understanding of other materials. Please take a look at them as your schedule allows, even if you just skim them. I may add other recommended readings as we progress through the course.

Week 1

9/9/09 Foundations : The Anthropological Study of Religion

Recommended: Lambek, Michael. "General Introduction" *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, M. Lambek, ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing. Pp 1-16. 2002

Geertz, Clifford "Religion as a Cultural System" *The Interpretation of Culture* (Selection reprinted in Lambek 2002)

Week 2

9/14/09 Foundations for Studying Language and Religion

Samarin, William. "The Language of Religion" *Language in Religious Practice*. W. Samarin, ed. Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers. Pp. 3-13. 1976.

Bauman, Richard. *Let Your Words Be Few*. Ch1-4. (Pp. 1-62)

Highly Recommended: Bielo, James. *Words Upon the Word*. Pp. 21-33

9/16/09

Bauman, Richard. Let Your Words Be Few Ch 5-8 (Pp. 63-136)

Recommended: Bauman Let Your Words Be Few Ch 9

Week 3

9/21/09 Languages and Religions

Watson-Gegeo, Karen Ann and David Welchamn Gegeo "The Impact of Church Affiliation on Language Use in Kwara'ae (Solomon Islands)" *Language in Society* 20: 533-555. 1991.

McAlister, Elizabeth. "The Madonna of 115th Street Revisited: Vodou and Haitian Catholicism in the Age of Transnationalism" *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*. R. S. Warner, ed. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Pp 123-160. 1998.

McIntosh, Janet "Baptismal Essentialisms" *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15(2): 151-170. 2005.

9/23/09

Wirtz, Kristina. "Where obscurity is a virtue": The mystique of unintelligibility in Santería ritual" *Language & Communication*. 25(4): 351-375. 2005.

Malinowski, Bronsilaw. "The Magical Word" *Coral Gardens and Their Magic Vol II*. Pp 213-231. 1935.

Samarin, William. "Variation and Variability in Religious Glossolalia" *Language in Society*. 1(1): 121-130. 1972.

Film: Jesus Camp

Week 4

9/28/09 Language and Religion through a Lifecycle

Fader, Ayala. *Mitzvah Girls: Bringing Up the Next Generation of Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn*. Pp 1-86

9/30/09

Fader, Ayala. *Mitzvah Girls: Bringing Up the Next Generation of Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn*. Pp 87-178.

Recommended: Fader. Mitzvah Girls Pp. 179-219

Week 5

10/5/09 Socialization and Ritual Participation

Capps, Lisa & Ochs, Elinor. "Cultivating Prayer" *The Language of Turn and Sequence* C Ford, B Fox & S Thompson, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp 39-55. 2002

Moore, Lorena C. "Body, Text, and Talk in Maroua Fulbe Qur'anic schooling" *Text & Talk*. 28(5), 643-665. 2008

10/7/09

Wharry, Cheryl. "Amen and Hallelujah Preaching: Discourse Functions in AfricanAmerica Sermons." *Language in Society*. 32(2): 203-225. 2003.

Keeler, Ward "Style and Authority in Javanese Muslim Sermons" *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 9(2): 163-178. 1998.

Week 6

10/12/09 First paper due.

Ritual Language: Tradition and Creativity

Wheelock, Wade T. "The Problem of Ritual Language: From Information to Situation" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. 50(1): 49-71. 1982.

Recommended: Hanks, William F. "Joint Commitment and Common Ground in a Ritual Event" *Roots of Human Sociality: Culture, Cognition and Interaction*. N J Enfield & S Levinson, eds. New York: Berg Press. Pp. 299-328. 2006.

10/14/09

Csordas, Thomas J. "Genre, Motive, and Metaphor: Conditions for Creativity in Ritual Language" *Cultural Anthropology*. 2(4): 445-469. 1987.

Keane, Webb. "From Fetishism to Sincerity: Agency, the Speaking Subject, and their Historicity in the Context of Religious Conversion. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 39(4): 674-693. 1997.

Shoaps, Robin. "'Pray Earnestly': The Textual Construction of Personal Involvement in Pentecostal Prayer and Song" *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*. 12(1): 34-71. 2002.

Week 7

10/19/09 Why Does it Work? Authority and Evidentiality

Du Bois, John W. "Self-Evidence and Ritual Speech." *Evidentiality: The Linguistic Coding of Epistemology*. W. Chafe and J. Nichols, eds. Pp. 313-336. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation. 1986.

Hoenes del Pinal, Eric. 2009. "How Q'eqchi'-Maya Catholics Become Legitimate Interpreters of the Bible: Two Models of Religious Authority in Sermons" *The Social Life of Scriptures*. J Bielo, ed. Newark: Rutgers University Press. 2009.

Szuchewycz, Brian. 1994. "Evidentiality in Ritual Discourse: The Social Construction of Religious Meaning" *Language in Society* 23: 389-410. 1994.

Recommended: Asad, Talal. "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category" *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1992.

10/21/09 Language and the Transformation of the Subject

Harding, Susan F. "Convicted by the Holy Spirit: The Rhetoric of Fundamental Baptist Conversion" *American Ethnologist*. 14(1): 167-181. 1987.

Stromberg, Peter. G. "Ideological Language in the Transformation of Identity" *American Anthropologist*. 92(1): 42-56. 1990.

Week 8

10/26/09

Hanks, William. "Dialogic Conversions and the Field of Missionary Discourse in Colonial Yucatan." In *Les Rituels du Dialogue*. A. Monod Becquelin and P. Erikson, eds. Nanterre: Societe d'Ethnologie. Pp. 235-254. 2000.

Robbins, Joel "God is Nothing But Talk: Modernity, Language and Prayer in a Papua New Guinea Society." *American Anthropologist* 103(4): 901-912. 2001.

10/28/09 First field report due.

Confession

Robbins, Joel. "On Not Knowing Other Minds: Confession, intention, and Linguistic exchange in a Papua New Guineas Community" *Anthropological Quarterly* 81(2): 421-429. 2008.

Rumsey, Alan. "Confession, Anger and Cross-Cultural Articulation in Papua New

Guinea" *Anthropological Quarterly* 81(2): 455-472. 2008.

Recommended: Robbins, Joel & Alan Rumsey. "Introduction: Cultural and Linguistic Anthropology and the Opacity of Other Minds" *Anthropological Quarterly* 81(2): 407-419. 2008.

Week 9

11/2/09 Reading and Writing in Religion

Bielo, James. *Words upon the Word: An Ethnography of Evangelical Group Bible Study*. Pp 1-92

11/4/09

Bielo, James. *Words upon the Word: An Ethnography of Evangelical Group Bible Study*. Pp 93-168

Lehtinen, Esa. "Conversation Analysis and Religion: Practices of Talking about Bible Texts in Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Study" *Religion* 39(3): 233-247. 2009.

Week 10 11/09/09

Cannell, Fanella. "Reading as Gift and Writing as Theft" *Anthropology of Christianity*. F Cannell, ed. Durham: Duke University Press. Pp 134-162. 2006.

Shoaps, Robin. "Ritual and (Im)Moral Voices: Locating the Testament of Judas in Sakapultek communicative ecology" *American Ethnologist* 36(3): 459-477. 2009.

Recommended: Besnier, Niko. "Between Literacy and Orality: The Sermon" *Literacy, Emotion and Authority: Reading and Writing on a Polynesia Atoll*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 116-139. 1995.

11/11/09 Translation and the Missionary Encounter

Rafael, Vicente. *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule*. Durham: Duke University Press. Pp xviii, 1-22. 1993.

Handman, Courtney. "Speaking to the Soul: On Native Language and Authenticity in Papua New Guinea Bible Translation" *Consequences of Contact: Language Ideologies and Sociocultural Transformations in Pacific Societies*. M Makihara & B Schieffelin, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 166-188. 2007.

Recommended: Rafael. *Contracting Colonialism*. Pp. 84-109

Week 11

11/16/09

Schieffelin, Bambi. "Found in Translating: Reflexive Language Across Time and Texts in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea" *Consequences of Contact: Language Ideologies and Sociocultural Transformations in Pacific Societies*. M Makihara & B Schieffelin, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 125-139. 2007.

Schieffelin, Bambi. "Marking Time: The Dichotomizing Discourse of Multiple Temporalities" *Current Anthropology* 43: S5-S17. 2002.

11/18/09 Hearing Religion

Schmidt, Leigh Eric. *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment*. (Selections) Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2000. Ch. 2 (Sound Christians, pp 38-77) Ch5 (Voices from Spirit Land +Epilogue, pp 199-251)

11/23/09 Second paper due.

Film: The Tailenders.

Also browse <http://globalrecordings.net>

<http://www.inspirationalfilms.com/av/watch.html>

11/25/09 No Class

Week 13

11/30/09

Hirschkind, Charles. "The Ethics of Listening: Cassette Sermon Audition in Contemporary Egypt" *American Ethnologist* 28(3): 623-649. 2001.

Maltz, Daniel. "Joyful Noise and Reverent Silence: The Significance of Noise in Pentecostal Worship" *Perspectives on Silence*, D. Tannen & M. Saviile-Troike, eds. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing. Pp 113-137. 1985.

12/02/09 Second field report due.

An Immaterial Bible

Engelke, Matthew. *A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in and African Church Introduction*, Ch1-3 (Pp 1-137)

Week 14

12/07/09

Engelke, Matthew. A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in and African Church Ch 4-6, Conclusion (Pp 138-223, 244-252)

12/09/09

Words and Things

Engelke, Matthew. A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in and African Church Ch 7 (Pp. 224-244)

Gossen, Gary. "Language as Ritual Substance" Language in Religious Practice. W. Samarin, ed. Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers. Pp 42-60. 1976.

Recommended: Coleman, Simon. "Words as Things: Language, Aesthetics and the Objectification of Protestant Evangelicalism" Journal of Material Culture 1(1): 107-128. 1996.

Week 15

12/14/09 Wrap-up/Conclusions

Round-table discussion of field projects.

Final field project paper due by Thursday 12/17/09 at noon