Discourse Analysis

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PhD Programme
Winter semester 2014-15 (2 credits)
Class meetings : Thu 17:20-19:00
Office hours: Friday 9am-1pm

Course description

This course aims to introduce the students to social science discourse analysis, i.e. to 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 looks at various issues of discourse theory and practice, including: conceptual and epistemological issues, different uses of discourse analysis (for the analysis of constructions of meaning, including frames, and emergent discourses) and various strands of DA. In this process, we also look briefly into a more conventional strand of analysing discourse, e.g. the analysis of "ideas". 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 a set of practical skills enabling them to use discourse analysis for their own purposes, and to find their way through the vast 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. Auditors may be accepted under the condition that they commit to regular participation and to handing in all assignments.

MA students who are interested in discourse analysis are advised to join the "Qualitative Data Analysis" course (4 credits).

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 an 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, one or two class meetings may have to be added to accommodate the presentations. We will agree on the final schedule for the presentations in due course.

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. 8000 words) (70%) (learning outcomes 1 and 2)
- Active and regular **participation** and **assignments** (20%) to be handed in the day before class (learning outcomes 1, 2, 3) (assignments are for weeks 2-10)
- 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: **10th April** (to be confirmed).

Team-work is possible for final papers (papers written by two or three students will be accordingly longer) and encouraged for assignments.
Course Outline

Week 1 (15 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 (22 Jan) – Discourse: linguistic perspectives

- Language and communication
- Linguistic perspectives: semantics, pragmatics, socio-linguistics

Required readings:

Week 3 (29 Jan) – Beyond language: discourse as structure

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

Required readings:


**Supplementary readings:**


**Week 4 (5 Feb) – Discourses as (negotiated) systems of meaning**

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

**Required readings:**


**Supplementary readings:**

**Week 5 (12 Feb) – Doing discourse analysis (1)**

- Problem definitions
- The discursive constructions of hierarchies, boundaries, (dis)continuities and temporalities

**Required readings:**


**Supplementary readings:**


**Week 6 (19 Feb) – no class meeting**

**Week 7 (26 Feb) – Doing discourse analysis (2)**

- Frames and frame analysis

**Required readings:**


Supplementary Readings:
Special issue of the Greek Review of Social Research, 117.

Week 8 (5 March) – Discourse and/in history

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

Required readings:

Week 9 (12 March) – Discourse and discursive institutionalism

- Discourse vs ideas
- Discourse and causality

Required readings:

**Supplementary readings**


**Week 10 (19 March) - An example: Analysing parliamentary discourse**

- Reconstructing vs measuring discourse
- Organisational discourse

**Required readings:**


**Supplementary readings**


**Week 11 (27 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 (2 April) – Student presentations (possibly double session 3:30-7pm)

- The slides have to be submitted by Wednesday noon before the presentation (!)

End of semester

10 April: Deadline for the final papers! (to be confirmed)

18.11.2014/ls