

Fall 2017

Tu, Th 3:55-5:15

Davison 122

# Language, Thought, and Identity

01-920-421-02

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 2:45-3:45  
131 Davison Hall

Welcome to “Language, Thought, and Identity,” a course designed to offer you a better understanding of the way we construct and maintain social identities (“male,” “Muslim,” “adult,” “American,” “conservative,” “Asian,” “gay,” “vegetarian,” “good student,” “Southerner,” “feminist”). Drawing on major sociological and linguistic theoretical traditions, we will examine how we come to (a) define what is “normal,” (b) set our cognitive “defaults,” and (c) establish what we can take for granted.

There is one required book for this course: *Peacocks, Chameleons, Centaurs* by Wayne Brekhus (ISBN 0-226-07292-4). It has been ordered through the University’s bookstores. All the other required course readings are posted on the course website on [sakai.rutgers.edu](http://sakai.rutgers.edu). Students are expected to read all the required material **prior** to the class for which it is assigned.

The course’s learning goals are to help you gain (a) an understanding of the way our social environment impacts the way we identify ourselves as well as others; (b) an improved understanding of major intellectual debates over “essentialism” and “constructionism”; and (c) an ability to communicate complex ideas effectively to a general audience. By the end of the course, students are expected to be able to articulate sociological theories, review disciplinary literature, synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights, produce a well-written paper, and present their work orally. In addition, they will also be able to demonstrate multicultural sensitivity as well as global awareness.

The course assignments include (a) a **midterm exam** on October 12, (b) a **10-page term paper** (due on November 21), and (c) a **final exam** (on December 15 at 8:00 am). Each of

these assignments will count for one third of your final course grade, and no extra credit will be permitted. Late assignments will be penalized, so make sure that your work is submitted on time. No late papers or make-up exams will be permitted without a valid written excuse such as documentation from your doctor or dean.

Class attendance (including arriving on time and staying until the end of the class period) is required. **Students are expected to attend all classes.** If you expect to miss a class, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. **Poor class attendance will affect the grade.**

It is acceptable to use other people's ideas in your written work as long as you give credit to the original author. You act professionally and ethically when you do this, and it is considered dishonest to pass others' ideas or words as your own. Such behavior constitutes plagiarism and can result in failure in the class and potentially dismissal from Rutgers. Students are required to follow current Rutgers' Academic Integrity Policy as indicated in the website [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI\\_Policy\\_9\\_01\\_2011.pdf](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf). For further information on how to avoid plagiarism in your work, see [http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib\\_instruct/instruct\\_document.shtml](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib_instruct/instruct_document.shtml). To give credit to the original author of ideas you present and protect yourself from charges of dishonesty, always cite in your text the sources you used and list all of them in a bibliography at the end of your written assignment.

The Department of Sociology encourages the free exchange of ideas in a safe, supportive, and productive classroom environment. To facilitate such an environment, students and faculty must act with mutual respect and common courtesy. Behavior that distracts students and faculty during class is therefore not acceptable. Such behavior includes cell phone use, surfing the internet, checking email, text messaging, listening to music, reading newspapers, and leaving early without informing your instructor beforehand. If a student engages in disruptive behavior, the instructor, following the University Code of Student Conduct, may direct the student to leave class for the remainder of the class period.

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles.

The best way to reach me is by email. **Please write "Language, Thought, and Identity" in the subject line** so I can recognize your email quickly. Please remember to also sign your name in the email.

## 1. Introduction

**September 5**

## 2. Cognition and Identity

**September 7**

Charles H. Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Schocken, 1964 [1922]), pp. 120-22, 183-85.

George H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), pp. 135-44, 173-75.

**September 12**

Eviatar Zerubavel, *Hidden Rhythms: Schedules and Calendars in Social Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985 [1981]), pp. 157-66.

Christena Nippert-Eng, *Home and Work: Negotiating Boundaries through Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 48-60, 67-91.

**September 14**

Eviatar Zerubavel, *Social Mindscales: An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 1-17.

**September 19**

Wayne H. Brekhuis, *Peacocks, Chameleons, Centaurs: Gay Suburbia and the Grammar of Social Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 12-16, 24-31, 35-58, 74-89, 93-94, 137-56.

**September 21**

Brekhuis, *Peacocks, Chameleons, Centaurs*, pp. 95-98, 157-64, 179-214.

## 3. Markedness and Unmarkedness

**September 26**

Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Seven-Day Circle: The History and Meaning of the Week* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989 [1985]), pp. 113-20.

Johanna Foster, "Menstrual Time: The Sociocognitive Mapping of 'the Menstrual Cycle,'" *Sociological Forum* 11 (1996): 525-31, 542-44.

**September 28**

Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1995 [1912]), pp. 34-38.

Wayne H. Brekhus, "Social Marking and the Mental Coloring of Identity: Sexual Identity Construction and Maintenance in the United States," *Sociological Forum* 11 (1996): 497-520.

Jamie Mullaney, "Making It 'Count': Mental Weighing and Identity Attribution," *Symbolic Interaction* 22 (1999): 269-81.

**October 3**

Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: Free Press, 1982 [1895]), pp. 85-104.

**4. Norms, Traditions, and Conventions****October 5**

Ruth Simpson, "Neither Clear nor Present: The Social Construction of Safety and Danger," *Sociological Forum* 11 (1996): 549-61.

Dan Baum, "Happiness Is a Worn Gun: My Concealed Weapon and Me," *Harper's Magazine*, August 2010, pp. 29-38.

Eviatar Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives: Genealogy, Identity, and Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 62-64, 101-03.

**October 10**

Eviatar Zerubavel, *Hidden in Plain Sight: The Social Structure of Irrelevance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 49-57.

**October 12**

**MIDTERM EXAM**

**October 17**

Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (London: Verso, 1995), pp. 23-30.

Monica McDermott and Frank L. Samson. "White Racial and Ethnic Identity in the United States." *Annual Review of Sociology* 31 (2005): 245-50.

Zerubavel, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, pp. 57-59.

## **5. Normality and Deviance**

**October 19**

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 5-9.

**October 24**

Deborah Tannen, "Marked Women, Unmarked Men," *The New York Times Magazine*, June 20, 1993, pp. 18, 52, 54.

Ross Chambers, "The Unexamined," *Minnesota Review* 47 (1996): 141-56.

Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 52-61.

Allan V. Horwitz, "Normality," *Contexts* 7 (2008), #1: 70-71.

**October 26**

Celia Kitzinger, "'Speaking as a Heterosexual': (How) Does Sexuality Matter for Talk-

in-Interaction?" *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 38 (2005): 221-24, 255-59.

Carol Tavis, *The Mismeasure of Woman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), pp. 18-20, 96-100.

### **October 31**

Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 194-98.

Ashley W. Doane, "Dominant Group Ethnic Identity in the United States: The Role of 'Hidden' Ethnicity in Intergroup Relations," *Sociological Quarterly* 38 (1997): 375-91.

Pamela Perry, "White Means Never Having to Say You're Ethnic: White Youth and the Construction of 'Cultureless' Identities," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 30 (2001): 57-59, 65-87.

Eviatar Zerubavel, "The Five Pillars of Essentialism: Reification and the Social Construction of Objective Reality," *Cultural Sociology* 10 (2016): 69-74.

## **6. Semiotic Subversion**

### **November 2**

Wayne H. Brekhus, "A Sociology of the Unmarked: Redirecting Our Focus," *Sociological Theory* 16 (1998): 43-48.

Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 65-68.

Zerubavel, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, pp. 82-85.

### **November 7**

Jonathan N. Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007 [1995], pp. 145-66.

Sally Robinson, *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp. 23-32.

**November 9 GUEST LECTURE (to be announced)**

**November 14**

Harold Garfinkel, "Studies of the Routine Grounds of Everyday Activities," in *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967 [1964]), pp. 36-49, 53-55.

Zerubavel, *The Seven-Day Circle*, pp. 1-4.

Brekhus, "A Sociology of the Unmarked," pp. 38-43, 49.

Zerubavel, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, pp. 27-30.

**November 16**

Betty Edwards, *The New Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1999), pp. 116-19.

Zerubavel, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, pp. 85-89.

**November 21**

**TERM PAPERS DUE**

Horace Miner, "Body Ritual among the Nacirema," *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 503-07.

Charles Moser and Peggy Kleinplatz, "Does Heterosexuality Belong in the DSM?" *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review* 6 (2005): 261-67.

**November 28**

Viviana A. Zelizer, "Payments and Social Ties," *Sociological Forum* 11 (1996): 481-82.

Esther Rothblum, "Poly-Friendships," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 3 (1999): 71-74.

## **7. Methodological Reflections**

**November 30**

## **8. Student Presentations**

**December 5**

Student Presentations

**December 7**

Student Presentations

## **9. Conclusion**

**December 12**