

DISCOURSE, WAR AND TERRORISM

Society for Linguistic Anthropology Mini-Conference
Friday, November 19, 2004
1:30-5:00 in Dwinelle 370
University of California, Berkeley

This was a panel organized for the 2004 American Anthropological Association (AAA) Annual Meeting, originally scheduled for November 17-21 in San Francisco. Due to last minute venue changes from San Francisco to Atlanta for the AAA meeting, the panel met as part of a Society for Linguistic Anthropology forum held on November 19 in Berkeley, California.

Session abstract. Language is a primary tool used in the construction of cultural understandings; and discourses in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 have provided the frameworks through which the world now views global terrorism. This panel explores the discursive production of identities, ideologies, and collective understandings of terrorism in light of the Bush administration's ongoing "war on terror." At issue are how enemies are defined and identified, how political leaders and citizens react, and how societies collectively understand their position in the world vis-à-vis terrorism. Intimately involved in the production of cultural understandings are the media, and importantly tied to the language used by political leaders are ideologies that drive policy.

This panel joins scholars from around the world and across disciplines to analyze these issues. In particular, the narrative of the "war on terror" is examined in light of the Bush administration's ideological stance vis-à-vis terrorism as a military war. The discourse and actions of the administration are looked at within the larger post-Cold War context to explain the conflation of Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein in the discourse of the New World Order. Reactions to the "war on terror" discourse are viewed in places such as Serbia, where intellectuals see the global war against terrorism as an opportunity to upgrade their country's position on the international stage and revive Serbia's myth as "defender of the West." Looking through a gendered lens, the masculinization of the Arab population in the United States and the simultaneous emasculation within the Arab world is viewed in light of the Bush administration's justification for a war of liberation.

The panel takes a close look at the media's role in shaping reactions to and creating cultural understandings of terrorism. Media reports of AP and Reuters are examined with regard to the portrayal of emotions such as fear, worry, and concern. The formation of Arab identities is examined in stories that appear in the New York Times and Christian Science Monitor, where "Arab" is used to describe alternately a religion, a phenotype, a region, a language, and a nationality, sometimes in the same article. The explicit, implicit, and presupposed discursive strategies used in titles and subtitles of the French language Swiss press to construct negative identities of the Other in the Iraq war are analyzed. Finally, the Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia and the dialogic construction of meaning are used to explore the processes by which Western discourses on terrorism are entextualized by program moderators, guests, and callers in Aljazeera talk shows.

PAPER

"The Battle of Iraq": The Adequation of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden in the Bush War on Terror Narrative

Adam Hodges, University of Colorado

PAPER

Enunciating the Enemy: A Critical Analysis of Discourse and Politics in the Post Cold War Era

Annita Lazar and Michelle Lazar, National University of Singapore

PAPER

Gendered Freedom: Rhetorics of Terror and Liberation

Katherine Lemons, University of California, Berkeley

DISCUSSANT

Monica Heller, University of Toronto

GENERAL DISCUSSION

BREAK

PAPER

The Discourse of "War on Terror": The Role of Emotions in the Reports of International News Agencies

Maija Stenvall, University of Helsinki

PAPER

Media and War: The role of titles and subtitles of media information in the construction of other negative identities

Marcel Burger, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

PAPER

"Martyrs and Terrorists, Crusades and Jihad": Contextualizing the Exchange of Terrorism Discourses in Aljazeera Programming

Becky Schulthies, University of Arizona

DISCUSSANT

Paul Chilton, University of East Anglia, UK

GENERAL DISCUSSION

PANEL ORGANIZERS: Adam Hodges, Chad Nilep