Language, Globalization and the Self

This course is intended as an exploration of language as vehicle for processes of globalization. What role did language play in the changes wrought by early capitalist transformations and the colonial expansion? Conversely, how have these global changes affected localized communities and the languages that identifies them? And why should we care?

To answer these questions we will examine how the colonial experience has given rise to value-laden linguistic practices that mirror and sustain the racializing of privilege; and how the experience of language-loss encountered by voluntary and involuntary migrants can attack the integrity of the self. While ultimately concerned with language, our discussions will have a wide scope ranging from issues of political economy to collective consciousness and individual psychology.

Required Readings

Benedict Anderson *Imagined communities*
Eric Wolf *Europe and the People Without History*
Eva Hoffman *Lost in Translation*
Tsitsi Dangarembga *Nervous Conditions*
Richard Rodriguez *Hunger of Memory*

**As well as material distributed in class

Part I   LANGUAGE, GLOBALIZATION AND THE SELF:  BROAD CONNECTIONS

*Issues:*
--Universality of language and its implications
--Is language the creator or mirror of experience?
--Language classification: Fiction or reality?
--Language and change: How do the arrows of connection go?
--Is identity inherited or invented?
--Is Globalization a new phenomenon?
--What happens to group identity in a globalized world?
--Is globalization a positive or negative development? Why?

Jan 20   Introduction
Part II ECONOMIC TRANFORMATIONS AND THEIR REPERCUSSIONS

Issues:
--What have been the “push” and “pull” factors in the world-wide contacts between different peoples?
--Who has encountered whom? When? Why?
--What have been the economic, political and social consequences of these encounters?
--What was new and different about “capitalism”?
--What is the connection between the industrial revolution and capitalism?
--What have been the social / human consequences of these economic/political changes?

Feb 10 Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*
[Chapter 3, everyone; chas. 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, assigned to different groups]

Feb 17 Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*
[Chas. 9, 10, 11, 12, everyone]

Feb 24 Documentary film
**DUE: 1st Paper**

Part III LANGUAGE TRANSFORMATIONS AND THEIR REPERCUSSIONS

Issues:
--What are “truth languages” and why are they relevant to our discussion of identity?
--How is linguistic change tied to new conceptions of self?
--How do the perception of time and the use of language foster novel views of self?
--What are the factors that produce change in either?
--What is the evidence for any of this?
--What is the relationship between/among nationalism, patriotism, and racism?

Mar 3 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*
[Chas. 1, 2, and 3, everyone]

Mar 10 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*
[Chas. 8, and 9, everyone; chas. 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, assigned to different groups]

Mar 17 Spring Break

Mar 24 Documentary film
**DUE: 2nd Paper**
Part IV   INDIVIDUALS IN A GLOBALIZED ENVIRONMENT

Issues:
--What is the author’s central theme/thought?
--The who/what/when/where for each piece
--How do any or all of the “issues” discussed so far this semester illuminate our understanding of this literary work?

Apr  7  Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

Apr 14  Hoffman, *Lost in Translation*

Apr 21  Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*

Apr 28  Conclusion

DUE: Final Paper

Requirements and Grades

Participation [25%]
This will include attendance, in-class discussion, group work and weekly write-up of issues.
We will divide our class into several groups of 4 students or so. Each group will keep in close touch via e-mail, telephone or even in person! The object will be to discuss the issues raised by our readings and to help one another find the issues’ relevance to the whole topic under discussion. A volunteer from each group will type the outcome of his/her group’s discussions, make one copy for each group and one for me, hand out the copies at the start of each class, and lead his/her group’s discussion.

1st Paper or 2nd Paper [35%]
You can chose to write on the 1st OR on the 2nd assignment. Only one is required.

Final Paper [40%]
To be discussed.

Let’s have a great semester!