IDSY 295: Language: the Colonial and Imperial Difference
http://idsy295winter2015.blogspot.com/
Kalamazoo College
Winter 2015
Monday, Wednesday 10:00AM - 11:35AM
Friday 10:00AM - 10:40AM

Dr. Reid Gómez
107 Humphrey House
269.337.7353
Office Hours: TBA

IDSY 295 is an interdisciplinary survey course designed to introduce students to the study of language and power. Our primary objective will be to assert linguistic rights and to interrogate the politics of language use, and language thought, in light of colonization, imperialism and the transit of empire. We will consider the geo-political ideas and practices of literacy, language revitalization, translation and identity. These explorations will serve as a means to counter the monologism, monoculture, and monolingualism often invoked in nationalist projects. These ideas are grounded in the narratives and vocabularies particular to racial and colonial projects, consequently, each student will be asked to develop to their own creative understanding (linguistically speaking) of the field (language and the meta-linguistics of power). This will require fluency and immersion in a practice of meta-linguistics that explores the inter-relationship between the language of the academy and the language of social cultural community relevance. Critical Ethnic Studies requires scholarship able to counter the false binary between activism and intellectualism—that process is grounded in language.

“The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people’s definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relationship to the entire universe.”
Ngugi wa Thiong’o

Required Texts:
Language Planning and Policy in Native America: History, Theory, Praxis (Bilingual Education and Bilingualism) (2012) by Teresa L. McCarty
Translation and Identity in the Americas (2007) by Edwin Gentzler
Selected readings available on course reserve at the Kalamazoo College library
Handouts given in class, or via email

Requirements:
Assessing the status of your language: 10 points
Oral Performance: 10 points
Listening Mid-Term Examination: 10 points
Policy Brief: 20 points
On Translation and Multilingualism: 20 points
Part One: Points of Entry
“Language is political. That’s why you and me, my Brother and my Sister, that’s why we sposed to choke our natural self into the weird, lying, barbarous, unreal, white speech and writing habits that the schools lay down like holy law.”
June Jordan

Week One: Stalking With Stories: Language is Political
Leslie Silko, “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective,” Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit (1997)

Part Two: Language Planning and Policy
“Applied to the project of language reclamation, continuance, as we understand it, is not so much about bringing a language ‘back’ as bringing it ‘forward’ into the vital, ever changing, everyday of people’s lives.”

Week Two: First Peoples, First Principles: Context and Concepts
Reading: LPP: History, Theory, Praxis pp. 1-50
Assessing the status of your language: due Friday at 4 pm to the office in Humphrey House. No exceptions.
Sign-up for oral performance.

Week Three: Repatriating the Spoken Word
Reading: LPP: History, Theory, Praxis pp. 51-102

Week Four: Language Regenesis in Practice
Reading: LPP: History, Theory, Praxis pp. 103-154
Final Project Proposal: due, in class, on Friday. No exceptions.

Week Five: The Youth and the Seventh Generation
Reading: LPP: History, Theory, Praxis pp. 155-202
Listening Mid-Term Examination: Wednesday in class.
Policy Brief: due Friday at 4 pm to the office in Humphrey House. No exceptions.

Part Three: Translation and Identity
“The identity-forming power of translation always threatens to embarrass cultural and political institutions because it reveals the shaky foundation of their social authority.”

Week Six: New Definitions and Multiculturalism
Reading: *Translation and Identity*, pp. 1-47

**Oral performances begin.** Consult sign up for your date and time.

**Week Seven: Feminism and Cannibalism**
Reading: *Translation and Identity*, pp. 48-100

**Week Eight: Latin America, Border Writing and the Caribbean**
Reading: *Translation and Identity*, pp. 101-150

**Week Nine: New Directions**
Reading: *Translation and Identity*, pp. 151-187

**On Translation and Multilingualism:** due Friday at 4 pm to the office in Humphrey House. No exceptions.

**Week Ten: Creative Understanding**
Reading: M. M. Bahktin (authoritative discourse, and creative understanding)

**Final Project:** due Monday morning (after the final day of class) at 8 am to the office in Humphrey House. No exceptions.

**Format for All Written Assignments:** A note about form: all papers must be typed, proofread and printed. You should use a number 12 font. Times New Roman is my preferred font. All papers should include your name, my name (spelled correctly), the date, the assignment and an original title. There are no exceptions to these formatting requirements. Points will be deducted for failure to comply. Additional details for each assignment follow:

NB: *I recommend you keep a writer’s diary for the duration of this class. This is a private space and you should keep it close at all times. Do not let anyone look through this space. If you want to share items you’ve placed in your diary, read it aloud, or copy out the section. Write, draw, doodle, cut-n-paste and copy—this will provide the source material for each of your written assignments, as well as class dialogue and discussion.*

**Assessing the status of your language: 10 points**
Students will be given a list of questions and prompts based on week one’s readings and Waziyatawin’s chapter (“Defying Colonization Through Language Survival”) in the collection *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook* (Waziyatain and Michael Yellow Bird). This paper will be comprised of the answers to those questions and will be used by each student throughout the term in their own project of meta-linguistics, and for each of their written projects. Papers will be evaluated according to the clarity and depth of responses.

**Oral Performance: 10 points**
Each student will be required to deliver a ten minute dramatic reading of a text. Each text must be given written approval by Dr. Gómez. Sign-ups for individual performances will take place in the second week of the term. Performances will begin in the sixth week. Each performance will be evaluated according to the following criteria: verbatim recitation
of text by memory, and the embodiment of the language of the text (physical, emotional and spiritual).

**Listening Mid-Term Examination: 10 points**

Students will listen to a story in class. They will not be allowed to ask questions. Immediately following the story they will be given a written exam. They will be required to re-tell the story, in the greatest detail possible, with as much original language as possible. Exams will be evaluated according to the following criteria: accuracy of retelling, detail, and original language.

**Policy Brief/Statement: 20 points**

This paper must follow the format and length requirements (see specific guidelines and links on the course blog) of standard policy briefs and statements. Student’s arguments should reflect a detailed and nuanced understanding of the course material, particularly part two of the course design. Policy Brief/Statements will be evaluated according to the following criteria: evidence of engagement with course material, format, strength of argument, originality of argument and innovativeness of policy recommendations.

**On Translation and Multilingualism: 20 points**

This paper should be 1,000 words (you must include word count) that critically address the ideas of translation and multilingualism. You may focus your ideas on either, or both, of the primary texts (McCarty or Gentzler). You should formulate an argument you can then argue. Following Strunk and White’s “Elementary Principles of Composition” (rule no. 12) you should “Choose a suitable design and hold to it.” Your writing should reflect your passion and creativity, and should be profound. Consequently, you should select a point, or matter, you genuinely care intensely about. Each paper will be evaluated according to three principles: has the author (you) identified a key concept (or argument) of the text, can they articulate that concept in their own words, and finally have they clearly and effectively formed an original argument/response to that concept.

**Final Project: 20 points**

This paper will be broken down into two components: the proposal and the final project. The proposal will be valued at 5 points. The final project will be valued at 15 points, but will not be accepted without approval of your final proposal. The evaluation process will be determined by the proposal and outlined in the final project proposal approval. This paper provides the student the opportunity to study a subject we have not covered, or that they wish we had covered in greater depth.

**Participation and Decorum: 10 points**

Your participation will be evaluated on your attendance, participation in class discussion, use of office hours, responsibility toward intellectual partners (when, and as, assigned) and response to email correspondence.

**Required Attendance and Participation:**

*Class participation: We create the class together. Everyone's voice is essential and valuable. We will focus on listening, speaking and responding to each other. Dialogue*
(meaningful conversation) and translation (between languages and viewpoints) will be an everyday activity. Daily attendance is required. Any and all absences must be discussed with me, in writing, or during office hours; together we will decide on the best means of making up any missed work. Any unexcused absence will result in a reduction of grade (by 10 points).

**Class Responsibility and Decorum:** Each class session will consist of group discussion and individual writing exercises. My goal is to maintain an intellectually stimulating and supportive class environment. I expect everyone to be prepared for, and to participate in, discussion. Readings are to be completed before each class. Each member of the class is expected to follow a code of ethics: no tardiness, no sleep deprivation, no demeaning, hateful or violent remarks, no cell phones, no internet or email, no texting and no intimidation. Failure to follow this code of ethics will result in direct and immediate action.

**Resources:**

- Kalamazoo College Library: [https://reason.kzoo.edu/library/research_help/](https://reason.kzoo.edu/library/research_help/)
- The Writing Center: [http://reason.kzoo.edu/writingcenter/](http://reason.kzoo.edu/writingcenter/)
- Student Code of Conduct: [https://reason.kzoo.edu/studev/stuconduct/](https://reason.kzoo.edu/studev/stuconduct/)