Discourse Analysis in Cultural and Social Science Research Practice

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David Payne
**Discourse Analysis in Cultural and Social Science Research Practice**

7,5 HP (ECTS)

**Course content**

This course aims to provide an introduction to discourse analysis, while giving graduates an opportunity to consider, discuss and implement a variety of discourse analytic approaches to their own doctoral theses. Special attention will be devoted to application of the two dominant schools of thought in the field; *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA) and *Political Discourse Theory* (PDT). The aim is also to give participants insights into the different methodological approaches and an understanding of the different knowledge outcomes produced by diverse discourse analytical perspectives. Finally, the course will give graduate students an insight into current discussions about democracy, politics and social change within the field, with particular attention to post-Marxism. The final exam consists of an essay. *Discourse analysis in cultural and social science research* gives 7,5 HP (ETCTS credits), G (pass).

**Learning outcomes**

On completion of the course, students will have:

**Knowledge and understanding**

- good knowledge of post-structuralism and its connection to the discourse theoretical perspective
- good knowledge about central concepts within Political Discourse Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis
- good knowledge about similarities and differences between various schools in the field of discourse analysis, specifically Critical Discourse Analysis and Political Discourse Theory
- good knowledge of the connection between Political Discourse Theory and post-Marxism

**Skills and abilities**

- the ability to identifying different schools of thought and their characteristics in the discourse analytical research field.
- the ability to read, interpret and discuss how different researchers apply discourse analysis in empirical research
- the ability to apply different discourse analytical perspectives in their own research projects

**Course dates**

The course will be held in spring term of 2014, between 22 January and 9 April.
Assessment, examination and attendance

Participants are expected to attend all lectures, seminars and workshops, and attendance at seminars and workshops are compulsory. In addition, participants shall complete a number of smaller written papers during the course (reflexive statement, PMs). The final examination consists of a more extensive essay and participation on the final examination seminar. (More detailed information will be provided to all registered participants nearer the starting date.)

Schedule Overview

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Course readings


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1 For more detailed information (including page numbers), see below.


Recommended background readings


Further readings


Detailed schedule and course overview

Course Introduction

Wednesday 22 January (9.00-10.00)
DP & JGP

This introductory session will be spent going through the overall course aims, teaching and learning methods and examination, as well as giving the participants an opportunity to introduce themselves and their academic interests to each other.

Introductory Overview: Discourse Studies

Wednesday 22 January (10.00-12.00)
DP & JGP

Lecture

The aim of this lecture is to provide participants with an introductory overview of the larger field of discourse studies, as well as providing a first comparative overview of the main ideas in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Political Discourse Theory (PDT). Particular attention will be paid to mapping their different intellectual developments.

Readings


From the Sign to Research Design. Critical Discourse Analysis in Theory and Practice

Wednesday 29 January (10.00-12.00)

DP

Lecture

The aim of the session will be to explore in greater depth the diachronic development, as well as to evaluate the internal analytic (in)coherence, of Critical Discourse Analysis. The lecture will, firstly, seek to describe the ontological claims and theoretical commitments that CDA cribs together in its contribution to Social Theory. Secondly, it will identify a set of concepts that CDA puts to work in its analysis of social phenomena, as well as assessing their explanatory potential.

Readings


Wherefore art thou? Interrogating the ‘Critique’ of Critical Discourse Analysis

Wednesday 5 February (10.00-12.00)

DP

Seminar

The adjectival marker in the name ‘Critical Discourse Analysis’ would supposedly separate this particular variant of discourse studies from others on account of its critical focus. But what, in fact, does the critical gesture consist in? To what ends does the critical discourse theorist have in her sights when she is sharpening her analytical weapons for theoretical combat? What is the precise articulation between explanatory research and critically engaged investigations, and, indeed, is such an articulation tenable? This seminar will therefore seek to discuss both the existence and meaning of critique in both the social sciences and the humanities by examining Critical Discourse Analysis as a test case.
Readings (overlapping with the previous lecture)


From Linguistic Tool Boxes to Multi-Methodological Projects: Methods in Critical Discourse Analysis

Wednesday 12 February (10.00-12.00)

JGP

Lecture

The aim of the lecture is to introduce some contemporary methods in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis. The lecture will discuss the significance of interdisciplinarity in the larger methodological tradition of CDA, as well as paying special attention to the meaning and significance of ‘problem based’ (or ‘problem oriented’) research in the study of discourse. The lecture will discuss the inherent tension between ‘text’ and ‘context’ in the tradition of CDA, as well as investigating in more depth how different scholars have dealt with the move from ‘micro-’ to ‘macro analysis’. In addition, the lecture will cover various possibilities of deploying methodological triangulation in the study of discourse, as well as proving concrete examples of the ways in which scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Lilie Chouliaraki, Ruth Wodak and Michal Krzyzanowski have applied CDA in their own empirical case studies.

Readings

Applying Critical Discourse Analysis

Wednesday 19 February (10.00-12.00)

JGP

Workshop

The aim of this workshop is to provide the participants with an opportunity to critically explore the possibilities, limitations and advantages of applying CDA in their own ongoing thesis projects. Drawing on the CDA thinkers which has hitherto been covered in the course, each participant will discuss what it would mean for them to conduct a ‘problem based’ (or ‘problem oriented’) approach, possible fruitful theoretical concepts which might be useful in their own research as well as possible opportunities of deploying a strategy of methodological triangulation on their respective specific research topics. Depending on the participant’s respective individual stage in the research process, each participant is encouraged to bring empirical materials from their own case studies.

Readings


Wodak, Ruth & Krzyzanowski, Michal 2008. *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Wodak, Krzyzanowski eds.), Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillan. (2 optional chapters out of chapters 2-9, app. 50 pp.)
Political Discourse Theory: Ontology and Politics

Wednesday 26 February (10-12)

DP

Lecture

The aim of this lecture is to introduce in greater depth the theoretical tradition of Discourse Theory of the ‘Essex School’, especially as it has been formulated in the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, but also as it has been advanced by contemporary scholars such as Aletta Norval, Jason Glynos and David Howarth. The relation between ‘ontology’ and ‘politics’ will be the principal interest of the lecture, from out of which understandings of, inter alia, ‘discourse’, ‘hegemony’, ‘dislocation’, ‘antagonism’ and ‘articulation’ will be developed extensively. How might such a concatenation of concepts help one appreciate the relevance of Discourse Theory to our understanding of politics, democracy and social change? The significance of the post-Marxist descriptive will also be discussed in depth.

Readings


The Irrecusable Trace: Is Everything Political?

Wednesday 5 March (10.00-12.00)

DP

Seminar

If Critical Discourse Analysis understands the specificity of its own interpretation of discourse analysis as engaging in a practice of theoretical critique then the differentia specifica of Political Discourse Theory would be that it has as its principal focus the identification and analyses of a constellation of political logics, processes and phenomena.
This does not mean, however, that PDT’s interest is needlessly restrictive to formal political spaces and questions. Rather, from its own perspective, the very idea of ‘politics’ (‘what’ and ‘who’ counts as political) undergoes extension. This seminar will be an opportunity to take a closer look at the type of ‘political’ questions animating this theoretical perspective. Time will also be spent evaluating the possibilities that this extension of the category of the political affords, as well as identifying some of the risks involved therein.

Readings


Methodological Debates in Political Discourse Theory

Wednesday 12 March (10.00-12.00)

JGP

Lecture

The aim of this lecture is to introduce recent methodological discussion within the field of Political Discourse Theory. The lecture will particularly deal with the methodological developments of David Howarth and Jason Glynos so called ‘logics approach’, including its interrelated elements: problematisation, retroductive explanation, logics, articulation and critique. Furthermore, the lecture will discuss a few examples of how Political Discourse Theory has been applied in the Swedish academic context. Specifically, attention will be paid to the problems and possibilities of using the characteristically abstract macro-perspective of Political Discourse Theory on a particular empirical case.
Readings

http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/796/1/discourse_analysis_NCRM_014.pdf


Applying Political Discourse Theory

Wednesday 19 February (10.00-12.00)

JGP

Workshop

This workshop continues the methodological discussions, but this time with the emphasis on the methodological debates within discourse theory. The aim of this workshop is to provide the participants with an opportunity to critically investigate into the possibilities, limitations and merits of applying PDT in their ongoing research. Each participant will explore what it would mean to conduct a ‘problem driven’ approach, what a ‘method of articulation’ would mean for their specific research projects, as well as the possible advantages and difficulties of applying a ‘logics approach’ on an empirical material. Depending on the participant’s individual stages in the research process, participants are encouraged to bring empirical materials from their own research.

Readings


Examination seminar

Wednesday 26 Mars (9-13, preliminary)

In addition to being part of the examination of this course, this seminar will provide an opportunity for participants to present their planned examination papers, to give and receive feedback which might aims to help them to advance further in their PhD projects and to provide a last possibility for discussions about similarities, differences, overlaps and possible fruitful cross-fertilisations between CDA and PDT.

More detailed instructions for the examination seminar will be provided at the first introductory session of the course.

Deadline, final essay

Wednesday 9 April

Final essays should be submitted via email to: jenny.gunnarsson.payne@sh.se

Instructions:

Detailed instructions for the final essay will be provided at the first introductory session of the course.