SYLLABUS: IR516, ADVANCED RESEARCH METHODS: TEXT, TALK AND CONTEXT
Discourse and Text Analysis for International Relations Researchers

Basically, Text, Talk and Context is a research methods course reviewing a variety of text and discourse analyses methods and literatures, as well as exemplary applications of such research strategies to International Relations subject matter. The course will be focused on helping students develop appropriate research designs and research proposals for either their substantive papers and/or their doctoral dissertation research. Previous course work at the level of IR513, or IR513 itself, will be considered as a prerequisite. Even with this background in qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, most International Relations Ph.D students will need a theoretical review of some of the major literatures in linguistic philosophy, computational linguistics, pragmatics, political science, sociology and communications research on the way texts and discourses are related to their more or less institutionalized sociopolitical contexts. Secondly, they need a detailed focus on the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies in this domain.

Emphasis will be on approaches to international research now generally described as “social constructivist” or “interpretive” in orientation. Typically these ask about the ways collective identities, orientational perspectives concerning “others,” policy ideas and interests are formed, and how they influence international relations and domestic societal activities. We shall explore how reproducible and valid inferences can be drawn in this area on the basis of text and discourse analysis methods developed since computational content analysis was introduced in the 1960s. Substantive foci will include the constitutive relationships among ideas, discourses, identities, interests, governance practices and the development of international institutions. Cross-cultural encounters, securitizing practices, gendered power relations, and delegitimization dynamics will also be addressed. Students may propose other examples than those listed below as preferred ways of illustrating particular approaches being reviewed.

Classes will require active participation of students, both through class discussion, class presentations, and the handing in of several reading-related homeworks. Generally the last hour of class will be given over to student presentations involving either their selective literature reviews or research proposals.

Class requirements:
The course will require two student presentations (based on written texts to be provided to all class members before class), one summarizing one of the linguistic and text analysis approaches covered in the required readings, one about their own proposed line of research in this area. There will also be several short homework assignments on the assigned readings. Grading will follow the following percentages:
3-4 Homeworks: 30%
Week-specific Selective literature review (5-8pp single spaced): 25%
Research Proposal (c. 10pp., single spaced): 35%
Attendance and Participation: 10%.

Week 1-2: Because it and Nicholas Onuf’s Worlds of Our Making (required reading in IR 513) are the basic citations in much of the contemporary literature on social constructivism, we shall begin with Alexander Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999. entire. (Sections of the material will repeat and update articles already assigned in IR500 and IR513. For the second week, read pages 1-54 and 215-272 from Titscher et al., Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis. We shall put Wendt and Onuf into the larger, more inter-disciplinary context suggested by the amazing chart on p. 51 of the Titscher text. What have we been doing in political science and international relations on these subjects compared to Titscher et al.’s sociometric network chart of p. 223? Why so little overlap?

Week 3: Before taking a second pass through the Titscher text and Onuf’s speech act-based constructivism, we need some background readings concerning speech acts discourse acts and text acts; Titscher et al. largely take such distinctions for granted, which is appropriate for those who have had a good introduction to the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic dimensions of linguistics. I suggest reading Chapters 1 and 12 of J. L. Austin, How to do Things With Words, Harvard U Press, 2nd Ed. Searle, Speech Acts, pp. 1-127, 175-198; Searle, The Construction of Social Reality, 1-78, 117-126; Robert de Beaugrande and Wolfgang Dressler, Introduction to Text Linguistics, Longman, London and New York, 1981, Table of Contents, pp. 1-13 (generalizing speech acts to text acts).


Week 8. Narrative and Constitutive Analysis
Alker, “Fairy Tales, Tragedies and World Histories,” and his version of computational hermeneutics in “Toynbee’s Jesus” in Alker’s Rediscoveries and Reformulations.
Titscher, Ch. 9 on Narrative Semiotics and chapter 14 on “Objective Hermeneutics”.

Read pp. 1-221 of Schank and Abelson, Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding. Be advised that the Frump program for narrative skimming/understanding is the parent of some of the software used in the Echelon surveillance software used by the US intelligence community.
Review Beaugrande and Dressler, Ch. 5 on Coherence. Especially look at pictures and pp. 90ff to see more in detail what this one aspect of a text act means, and where Schank and Abelson’s book on knowledge structures and computational models of text understanding and generation fit into Beaugrande and Dressler.

Weeks 11-12: Argumentation Analysis
Alker, “Politics as Political Argumentation,” mimeo. (Review his “The Dialectical Logic of Thucydides’ Melian Dialogue” from his Rediscoveries and Reformulations, which may have been assigned in IR513.).
Examples: Renee Marlin-Bennett, Food fights : international regimes and the politics of agricultural trade disputes, Langhorne, Pa., USA : Gordon and Breach, 1993 ;

The logic of our course design should become more explicit at this point: Fairclough and Wodak respectively define their versions of CDA as critical revisions of Levinson-Searle style pragmatics and, in the latter case, as an implementation of Schank-Abelson style text-planning logics. To fairly judge the course of these critical perspectives, one must have read a decent version of the positions they criticize.
Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 1992, pp. ix-xiii, and 39-78. Could this serve as a foundation for a systematic critical approach?

Week 14. Foucaultean Geneology
How should we read Foucault in this context? Does Wendt’s systematizing problematique, or Alker’s for that matter, fall to these brilliant criticisms? Could or should Foucaultean approaches be systematized? What concrete studies does a Foucaultean perspective positively suggest?

Some suggested alternative examples and exemplars

David Apter and Saich, Revolutionary Discourse in Mao’s Republic, Harvard U Press.
James Paul Gee, An Introduction to Discourse Analysis, Routledge.
Erwin Goffman, Forms of Talk, Univ. of Pennsylvania Press.
Georgia Green Pragmatics of Natural Language Understanding, L. Erlbaum Associates.
Paul Ten Have, Doing Conversational Analysis, Sage.
Wood and Kroger, Doing Discourse Analysis, Sage.
Jonson and S. Toulmin, The Abuse of Casuistry, California.
Francoise Dosse, The Empire of Meaning
Pierre Bourdieu, Masculine Domination.
Chouliaraki and Fairclough, Discourse in Late Modernity, Edinburgh.
A.Juarrero, Dynamics in Action, MIT Press.
J. Gunnell, The Orders of Discourse, Rowman and Littlefield.
Polkinghorne, Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences, SUNY Press.
R. J. Lifton, Destroying the World to Save It, Metropolitan Books.
C. Mattingly, Healing Dramas and Clinical Plots, Cambridge.
J. Carbonell, Subjective Understanding
R. Wodak, ed., Gender and Discourse, Sage.
M. Foucault, The Order of Things, his lectures on governmentality, etc
Peter Katzenstein, Culture and National Security (the dissertations corresponding to many chapters are especially appropriate).