Speech Play and Verbal Art
Anthony K. Webster
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Course time:
Tuesday/Friday 11:00 AM-12:50 PM
Location: The 90, Room 217

Course Description:
This class deals with speech play, poetics, and verbal art from a linguistic and anthropological point of view. The speech types involved typically include punning, joking, play languages, proverbs, riddles, verbal dueling, narrative, myth, song, poetry, and ritual and theatrical performance; they employ such formal features as parallelism, rhyme, alliteration, meter, prosodic distortion, and versification; and they draw on such literary tropes as iconicity, imagery, metaphor, metonymy, and quotation. The view is taken that these elements and structures of artful or special language production are characteristic of all speech, including even conversation and expository prose; and that their study in heightened, artistic or playful contexts provides a grounding framework for any linguistic or anthropological approach to both form and content in naturally-occurring speech activity.

Texts: Articles for the class are on Canvas. I have also included a set of other articles that people might find of use going forward in life. They are, like much, for personal edification and not required.

Requirements:

1. **Reading Responses.** For each reading, compose one question to be turned in at the beginning of each class session (this question can be informational, theoretical, practical, etc). Two readings per class session = two questions per class session. **20% of grade.**
2. **Final Project.** During the course of the class, record one narrative or joke. It doesn’t have to be long. Analyze it. Describe the structuring principles behind it and the cultural milieu in which it exists. What does the story/joke do? How does it do it? What do you need to know to get it? The written analysis need be no longer than five pages (excluding transcript). **35% of grade.**
3. **Final Presentation.** On the last day of class, each student will briefly present on their final project. **35% of grade.**
4. **Class Participation.** This should be a fun class and I want students to participate actively. We all live in a world of speech play and verbal art, let’s enjoy that together. **10% of grade.**
Course Schedule:

Each class is dedicated to a topic. The topics build to the end of the course.

1) Orientation (July 7)


2) Ideology (July 11)


3) Parallelism (July 14)


4) Ideophony (July 18)


5) Style (July 21)


6) Translation (July 25)


7) Song (July 28)


8) Presentations (Aug. 1)