Course Description:

This course explores the role of language as one of many semiotic strategies employed by youth subculturalists to carve out a distinctive place for themselves stylistically in particular social scenes. The course consists in three parts. First, we will examine background material, central works in the formation of cultural studies as a discipline in its own right. These works share a common focus on subcultures, their styles and the political economies which emerge through competition for limited social resources. In Part 1 we will explore the formation of “subculture” as a theoretical construct, as well as themes which intersect with this construct, such as collective identification through style.

Second, we will consider the place of language in symbolically differentiating social actors who are positioned oppositionally in a particular context, in our case, a High School in the U.S. In Part 2, we walk through a linguistic ethnography that describes in detail two opposing social formations – Jocks and Burnouts – that utilize a range of semiotic tactics for collectively identifying and producing distinction. We will unpack the polarization between Jocks and Burnouts, examining the relationship between institutional (dis)orientation and the asymmetrical use of semiotic strategies for managing persona, including phonetic variation and distinctive clothing. This part closes with a discussion about communities of practice, a type of social formation that is central to Penelope Eckert’s theoretical treatment of style and youth cultures.

Third, we close the course by looking in detail at four examples of research which focus on the relationships between style (including linguistic style), social formations, and hierarchy.

Texts:

required: Gelder & Thornton, eds. (1997): The Subcultures Reader (SCR)
required: Eckert (2000): Linguistic Variation as Social Practice (LVSP)

I have also put some books on reserve that you will find useful to thumb through during the semester. These books include:

Resistance through Rituals. Stuart Hall & Tony Jefferson, eds.
Subculture: The meaning of style. Dick Hebdige
Homework:

Your first assignment will be a critique or response to the readings for 8/31, SCR Chs.5-6. This critique should not exceed two pages. During the semester, you will be assigned two reaction papers, similar to the critique, in which you address particular issues from class. There will be a total of three substantive papers (4-6 pgs in length), comprising sixty percent of your total grade. For these papers, you will carry out a small study, or respond to a hypothetical prompt, using material from class and readings to support your position. Finally, there will be an end of term paper. Similar in aims to the three main papers (though somewhat longer at around 10 pages), this essay will be a response to one of several prompts based on our in-class discussions.

Papers should be typed, stapled (when more than one page), and handed in the day they are due in class. I will not accept emailed submissions. If you know you will not be in class the day an assignment is due, please contact me ahead of time. Late papers will be accepted only in cases of emergency (if such a situation arises, please contact me).

Grading:

Critique----------------------5  
2 Reaction Papers @ 5---- 10  
3 Papers   @ 20--------  60  
Final Paper--------------------25  

TOTAL--------------------------100


Tentative Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1:</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/24</td>
<td>Intro and overview of syllabus</td>
<td>SCR Ch. 2: Introduction to part one (Thornton) SCR Ch. 3: The City (Park)</td>
<td>Critique handed out</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/26</td>
<td>Birmingham: Theorizing subcultures</td>
<td>SCR Ch. 5: The concept of the sub-culture and its application (Gordon) SCR Ch. 6: A general theory of subcultures (Cohen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2: 8/29</td>
<td>Birmingham tradition and style</td>
<td>SCR Ch. 15: Subculture: The meaning of style (Hebdige) Hebdige (1981): From</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading Material</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/31</td>
<td>Clarke on Style</td>
<td>Clarke (1976): Style. (Resistance through Ritual)</td>
<td>Critique due</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/2</td>
<td>Hebdige on Youth Styles: Cases Studies</td>
<td>Hebdige (1981) Ch. 4: Case studies</td>
<td>Style assignment handed out</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 3:</strong> 9/5</td>
<td>No class: Labor day</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/7</td>
<td>Reggae, Rastas, and Rudies</td>
<td>Hebdige (1976): Reggae, Rastas, and Rudies (Resistance through Ritual)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/9</td>
<td>Mods</td>
<td>Hebdige (1976): The meaning of Mod (Resistance through Ritual)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 4:</strong> 9/12</td>
<td>After Birmingham: Post-subcultural theory &amp; style</td>
<td>Weinzierl &amp; Muggleton (2003): What is ‘Post-Subcultural Studies’ anyway? (The Post-Subcultures Reader)</td>
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<td>9/14</td>
<td>Politics of Style</td>
<td>Piano (2003): Resisting Subjects: DIY Feminism and the Politics of Style in Subcultural Production (The Post-Subcultures Reader)</td>
<td>Style assignment due / Subculture assignment handed out</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 5:</strong> 9/19</td>
<td>Subcultures and Music</td>
<td>Laughey (2006). Subculture, club cultures and post-subcultures</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/21</td>
<td>The Old and the New</td>
<td>Muggleton (2002). A Neo-Weberian Approach to the Study of Subcultural Style (Inside Subculture)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9/23</td>
<td>Popular Music</td>
<td>Bennett (2000). Youth Culture and Popular Music (Popular music and youth culture)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 6:</strong> 9/26</td>
<td>Language and Youth Cultures</td>
<td>Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) Ch 2: Individuals and Society - The linguistic turn in the study of identity (The Language of Youth Subcultures)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading</td>
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<td>9/27</td>
<td>Youth and Cultural Practice</td>
<td>Bucholtz (2002): Youth and Cultural Practice</td>
<td>Subculture assignment due</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/29</td>
<td>Styling Youth Identities Vocalically</td>
<td>Eckert (1996): Vowels and nail polish</td>
<td>Media handed out</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 7:</strong>&lt;br&gt;10/3</td>
<td>(Sub)cultural Approaches to Style in Sociolinguistics</td>
<td>Eckert (2002): Constructing meaning in sociolinguistic variation</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/5</td>
<td>Style and Meaning</td>
<td>Eckert (2004): Meaning of Style</td>
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<td>10/7</td>
<td>Conventionalization</td>
<td>Eckert (2005): Variation, Convention, and Social Meaning</td>
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<td><strong>Week 8:</strong>&lt;br&gt;10/10</td>
<td>Fall Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/12</td>
<td>Symbols of Category Membership</td>
<td>Eckert (1989) Ch 4: Symbols of category membership</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 9:</strong>&lt;br&gt;10/17</td>
<td>Language Variation as Social Practice (LVSP): I</td>
<td>LVSP: Introduction and Chapter 1</td>
<td>Reaction Paper One handed out</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/19</td>
<td>Interpreting the Social Meaning of Variation</td>
<td>LVSP: Chs. 2-3</td>
<td>Media due</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/21</td>
<td>Vocalic Variables</td>
<td>LVSP: Ch. 4</td>
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<td><strong>Week 10:</strong>&lt;br&gt;10/24</td>
<td>LVSP: II Outline of Variation in Belten High</td>
<td>LVSP: Ch. 5</td>
<td>Reaction Paper One due</td>
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<td>10/26</td>
<td>We are What We Do</td>
<td>LVSP: Ch. 6</td>
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<td>10/28</td>
<td>Introducing Communities of Practice</td>
<td>LVSP: Ch. 7</td>
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<td><strong>Week 11:</strong>&lt;br&gt;10/31</td>
<td>Language Variation as Social Practice: Communities of Practice</td>
<td>LVSP: Ch. 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/2</td>
<td>One take on Communities of Practice</td>
<td>Meyerhoff (2004): Communities of practice</td>
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<td>11/4</td>
<td>Legitimacy and Agency</td>
<td>Davies (2005): Communities of practice: Legitimacy not choice</td>
<td>Final Paper instructions handed out</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 12:</strong>&lt;br&gt;11/7</td>
<td>Bucholtz on B-boys and Nerd Girls</td>
<td>Bucholtz (1997) Marking black: The construction of white identities through linguistic stylization (from her dissertation)</td>
<td>Reaction Paper Two handed out</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/9</td>
<td>Gendered Dimensions of Whiteness</td>
<td>Bucholtz (1997) B-boys and nerd girls: Gendered dimensions of white oppositional identities (from her dissertation)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 13:</strong> 11/14</td>
<td>Mendoza-Denton on Latina youth and gangs</td>
<td>Mendoza-Denton (1997) Ch. 2: Sor Juana High School (from her dissertation)</td>
<td>Reaction Paper Two due</td>
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<td>11/16</td>
<td>Variation in the Speech Community</td>
<td>Mendoza-Denton (1997) Ch. 3: Variation in the Speech Community (from her dissertation)</td>
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<td>11/18</td>
<td>Discourse in the Speech Community</td>
<td>Mendoza-Denton (1997) Ch. 4: Discourse in the Speech Community (from her dissertation)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 14:</strong> 11/21</td>
<td>Language, Stance, and Identity at Selwyn Girls' High (SGH)</td>
<td>Drager (2009) An ethnography of SGH (from her dissertation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/23</td>
<td>Thanksgiving</td>
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<td>11/25</td>
<td>Thanksgiving</td>
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<td><strong>Week 15:</strong> 11/28</td>
<td>Houston Hip Hop: A case study</td>
<td>Competing hip hop cultures: an overview (lecture)</td>
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<td>11/30</td>
<td>Enregistering local style (lecture)</td>
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<td>12/2</td>
<td>Parody as social action (lecture)</td>
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**Other Things to Note:**

If you have a documented disability please set up a time with me to discuss your needs; you must also register with Disability Services if you haven’t already.

**One Final Note:**

If you carry a cell phone, please turn it off or set it to silent before class begins.