

Political Science 333  
Interpretive Methods in the Social Sciences  
Ms. Lisa Wedeen

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course will provide students with an introduction to interpretive methods in the social sciences. Students will learn to "read" texts and images while also becoming familiar with contemporary thinking about interpretation, narrative, ethnography, and social construction. Among the methods we shall explore are: semiotics, hermeneutics, ordinary language philosophy, and discourse analysis. **Requirements:** Students will complete short assignments on each method and will write one seminar paper.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

(in alphabetical order)

Roland Barthes, MYTHOLOGIES

Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (eds.) THE FOUCAULT EFFECT

Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, MICHEL FOUCAULT: BEYOND STRUCTURALISM AND HERMENEUTICS

Michel Foucault, DISCIPLINE AND PUNISH

Michel Foucault, HISTORY OF SEXUALITY, VOL. 1

Clifford Geertz, NEGARA: THE THEATRE STATE

Gary King, Robert Keohane, Sidney Verba, DESIGNING SOCIAL INQUIRY

Lynn Hunt, THE FAMILY ROMANCE IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, WITTGENSTEIN AND JUSTICE

Frederic C. Schaffer, DEMOCRACY IN TRANSLATION

Ludwig Wittgenstein, PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Books are available for purchase at the Seminary Co-operative Bookstore. All books and articles are also on reserve at Regenstein Library,

**READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Week One:** Semiotics and Structuralism

Roland Barthes, MYTHOLOGIES (Entire)

**ASSIGNMENT:** Choose FIVE pictures from magazines. Identify the signifier, the signified, and the signification for each one.

**Week Two:** Semiotics, Hermeneutics, and Anthropology: Geertz

Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" in THE INTERPRETATION OF CULTURES [On Reserve]

Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" (1973) [On Reserve]

Clifford Geertz, NEGARA: THE THEATRE STATE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BALI, Chapter 4 and Conclusion

Clifford Geertz, LOCAL KNOWLEDGE: FURTHER ESSAYS IN INTERPRETIVE ANTHROPOLOGY, Chapters 1; 3; 6 [On Reserve]

Clifford Geertz, AFTER THE FACT: TWO COUNTRIES, FOUR DECADES, ONE ANTHROPOLOGIST, Chapter 6 [On Reserve]

ASSIGNMENT: Write a short "Geertzian" analysis of the 1996 Republican convention's biographical sketch of Bob Dole (to be shown in class).

**Week Three:** Hermeneutics and Psychoanalysis

Lynn Hunt, THE FAMILY ROMANCE IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Michael Rogin, "Kiss Me Deadly: Communism, Motherhood, and Cold War Movies" [On Reserve]

(Selections from Freud are also recommended and are on reserve).

ASSIGNMENT: Complete one of the following: 1) Produce a psychoanalytic reading of the film, THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE (to be shown in class); 2) Summarize Hunt's book and discuss the promises and pitfalls of psychoanalytic interpretations for social science research.

**Weeks Four, Five, and Six:** Ordinary Language Analysis

Ludwig Wittgenstein, PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, WITTGENSTEIN AND JUSTICE

Frederic C. Schaffer, DEMOCRACY IN TRANSLATION

ASSIGNMENT: Choose a concept and investigate its ordinary language uses. (In addition to the readings and our discussions of ordinary language philosophy, you will become familiar with full-text databases.) Concepts chosen in the past include: identity, culture, preferences, legitimacy, utility, structure, democracy, and power.

**Weeks Seven and Eight:** Discourse Analysis

Week Seven: Read EITHER Michel Foucault, HISTORY OF SEXUALITY, VOL. 1 OR Michel Foucault, DISCIPLINE AND PUNISH (Choose the one you have not read before).

ASSIGNMENT: Identify what a discourse analysis is and what it entails.

Week Eight: Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, MICHEL FOUCAULT: BEYOND STRUCTURALISM AND HERMENEUTICS

**Week Nine:** Applying Discourse Analysis

Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, DESIGNING SOCIAL INQUIRY

ASSIGNMENT: Conduct a discourse analysis of King, Keohane and Verba's book.