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Talking Politics: Anthropologists and Linguists Analyze the 2020 Election

Graduate students at the University of Chicago and University of Colorado Boulder announce *Talking Politics: Anthropologists and Linguists Analyze the 2020 Election*, through December 11, 2020

(Chicago, IL)—*Talking Politics: Anthropologists and Linguists Analyze the 2020 Election* brings together anthropology and linguistics experts to share their distinctive analytic perspectives on political communication in the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election. Organized by graduate students in the University of Chicago's Center for the Study of Communication and Society (CSCS) and Linguistic Anthropology Lab in the Department of Anthropology and the University of Colorado Boulder's Program in Culture, Language, and Social Practice (CLASP), this interdisciplinary forum invites the public to experience and learn how language and culture shape real-world politics.

Talking Politics will engage the public through a series of four workshops featuring scholars from Stanford University, Brandeis University, the University of California Los Angeles, the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, and the University of Colorado. Workshops will be held throughout October and November 2020, culminating in a final colloquium on December 11th.

Each workshop will feature a demonstration of the types of data and methods of analysis that anthropologists and linguists use in studying political communication. Each featured scholar will also engage in a participatory conversation with invited guest discussants and members of the public. All events are free and open to the public, and will be held via Zoom.

The final colloquium will gather all the forum speakers for a discussion moderated by Kira Hall, Professor of Anthropology and Linguistics at the University of Colorado Boulder and President of the Society for Linguistic Anthropology. Audience members will also have the opportunity to ask their questions about the role of language in the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election.

Talking Politics is presented by the Center for the Study of Communication and Society (CSCS) at the University of Chicago [in memory of Michael Silverstein \(1945–2020\)](#), who was the Center's Founding Director and the Charles F. Grey Distinguished Service Professor of Anthropology, Linguistics, and Psychology. The workshop series title is inspired by his 2003 book, *Talking Politics: The Substance of Style from Abe to "W"* (Prickly Paradigm Press), as well as his large body of pathbreaking scholarship on culture and communication in U.S. politics.

"This forum is an opportunity to recognize Michael Silverstein's many contributions to the study of political messaging and politicians' performance as a social process. The CSCS is one of

Michael's important legacies, and it will continue to serve as a site for investigations of topics in culture, communication, and pressing social issues," said Susan Gal, CSCS Director and Mae & Sidney G. Metzl Distinguished Service Professor in the Departments of Anthropology and Linguistics.

"We are excited that CSCS, CLASP, and the Society for Linguistic Anthropology can partner with us to bring this forum to the public," said Wee Yang Soh, a graduate student in the University of Chicago Department of Anthropology, who spearheaded the event in their capacity as UChicago Linguistic Anthropology Lab Coordinator and Society for Linguistic Anthropology Social Media Manager. "We are eager to showcase the unique perspectives that anthropologists and linguists bring to the table in making sense of our political realities, and to do so in a way that is engaging and accessible."

Speaker events:

October 9th, 6:00 pm (CST), Adam Hodges: "How Plausible is Deniability?"

October 20th, 3:00 pm (CST), Michael Lempert: "Political Gesture in Presidential Debate"

October 30th, 5:00 pm (CST), Jonathan Rosa: "Communicating Crisis: Getting Back to Whose Normal?"

November 16th, 5:00 pm (CST), Janet McIntosh and Norma Mendoza-Denton: "Race and Gender Panics in the 2020 Trump Campaign"

December 11th, 5:00 pm (CST), Final Colloquium moderated by **Kira Hall**, featuring all series speakers

Registration for all webinars and the final colloquium will take place through [Eventbrite](#). Attendees can register at bit.ly/TalkPol2020.

About the speakers and moderators:

Kira Hall is Professor of Linguistics and Anthropology at the University of Colorado Boulder and President of the Society for Linguistic Anthropology. Her research focuses on language and social identity in India and the United States, particularly with respect to hierarchies of gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic class. Her recent work has turned to diverse topics, including the role of gesture in Donald Trump's entertainment appeal. Her publications include the edited volumes *Gender Articulated* (Routledge 1995), *Queerly Phrased* (Oxford University Press, 1997), *Essays in Indian Folk Traditions* (Archana, 2007), *Studies in Inequality and Social Justice* (Archana, 2009), and *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Sexuality* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

Adam Hodges is Adjunct Assistant Professor at the Department of Linguistics at the University of Colorado Boulder. He is a sociocultural linguist with research interests in how language impacts contemporary social and political issues, such as the collective enactment of racism and the role language plays in politics. His books include *When Words Trump Politics: Resisting*

a Hostile Regime of Language (Stanford University Press, 2019) and *The “War on Terror” Narrative: Discourse and Intertextuality in the Construction and Contestation of Sociopolitical Reality* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

Michael Lempert is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor. A linguistic anthropologist with cross-disciplinary interests, he has trained in several fields and written on a wide range of topics having to do with social interaction, featuring political gesture and embodied communication. He is author of *Discipline and Debate: The Language of Violence in a Tibetan Buddhist Monastery* (University of California Press, 2012; recipient of the 2013 Clifford Geertz Prize), co-author (with Michael Silverstein) of *Creatures of Politics: Media, Message, and the American Presidency* (Indiana University Press, 2012), and co-editor (with E. Summerson Carr) of *Scale: Discourse and Dimensions of Social Life* (University of California Press, 2016).

Janet McIntosh is Professor of Anthropology at Brandeis University. She is a cultural anthropologist with wide-ranging interests, including linguistic anthropology, narrative and discourse, whiteness studies, nationalism, and East Africa. She is author of *The Edge of Islam: Power, Personhood, and Ethnoreligious Boundaries on the Kenya Coast* (Duke University Press, 2009) and *Unsettled: Denial and Belonging among White Kenyans* (University of California Press, 2016). She recently published an anthology (with Norma Mendoza-Denton), *Language in the Trump Era: Scandals and Emergencies* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

Norma Mendoza-Denton is Professor of Anthropology at the University of California Los Angeles. Her research focuses on youth, language, migration, politics, and identity. She is author of *Homegirls: Language and Cultural Practice among Latina Youth Gangs* (London: Blackwell), and collaborated with Janet McIntosh on *Language in the Trump Era: Scandals and Emergencies* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

Jonathan Rosa is Associate Professor at the Stanford Graduate School of Education. As a sociocultural and linguistic anthropologist, Jonathan Rosa's research theorizes the co-naturalization of language and race as a key feature of modern governance. Specifically, he analyzes the interplay between youth socialization, raciolinguistic formations, and structural inequity in urban contexts. He is the author of *Looking Like a Language, Sounding Like a Race: Raciolinguistic Ideologies and the Learning of Latinidad* (Oxford University Press, 2019). In addition to his formal scholarly research, Dr. Rosa is an ongoing participant in public intellectual projects focused on race, education, language, (im)migration, and U.S. Latinxs, and his work has been featured in media outlets such as MSNBC, NPR, CNN, and Univision.

About the partnering organizations:

Stationed at the University of Chicago, **Center for the Study of Communication and Society (CSCS)**'s mission is to apply interpretive social scientific and especially semiotic and linguistic approaches to the study of communication. By drawing on the resources of a range of

disciplines and schools across the University of Chicago (Anthropology, Linguistics, Political Science, and Sociology), CSCS promotes inquiries into the social and political processes through which ideas, information, and beliefs are produced, disseminated, and received in diverse organizational and geographical contexts. (cscs.uchicago.edu)

University of Colorado Boulder is home to the **Graduate Certificate in Culture, Language and Social Practice (CLASP)**. This program provides an interdisciplinary forum on language and society for CU students and faculty. This is facilitated through regular colloquia on the subject of language and society, as well as a diverse curriculum of courses offered toward the CLASP graduate certificate. (colorado.edu/program/clasp)

A section of the American Anthropological Association, **Society for Linguistic Anthropology** is devoted to exploring and understanding the ways in which language shapes, and is shaped by, social life, from face-to-face interaction to global-level phenomena. Their publication, the *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, features original research that engages substantively with contemporary issues (theoretical, analytical, and methodological) in linguistic anthropology and allied fields of study. (linguisticanthropology.org)

Organizing Committee:

Wee Yang Soh (Lead Organizer, UChicago)
Velda Khoo (Lead Organizer, CU Boulder)
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Molly Hamm-Rodríguez (CU Boulder)
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 THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO Presented by
Center for the Study of Communication and Society (CSCS)
Linguistic Anthropology Lab

 University of Colorado Boulder



 Society for Linguistic Anthropology