

Instructor

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Materials

Thornton, Thomas. 2008. *Being and Place among the Tlingit*. Seattle: U. Washington Press.
Levinson, Stephen C. 2003. *Space in Language and Cognition*. Cambridge: CUP.
Kari, James & James Fall. 2004. *Shem Pete's Alaska*. Fairbanks: U. Alaska Press. [optional]
Cresswell, Tim. 2004. *Place: A Short Introduction*. Wiley. [optional]
Course Readings (available via Rasmuson Library Electronic Reserve, <http://eres.uaf.edu>)

Overview

This course provides a transdisciplinary perspective on the complex inter-relationships between landscape and language. In juxtaposing the terms landscape and language this course will contribute to the forging of a new ethnosciences which seeks to understand the ways in which human experience of landscape shapes cognition, and vice versa. Just as ethnobiology seeks to understand human conceptualization of the biological world, an ethnosciences of landscape—call it ethnogeography or ethnophysiology—seeks to understand human conceptualization of land, water, and other physical aspects the natural environment.

That an ethnosciences of landscape has current relevance is evidenced by the surge of research in the field over the past several years. Understanding this recent work will be among the primary goals of this course.

That such an ethnosciences is possible becomes obvious as soon as one begins to look at the categorization of landscape features across the world's 6000 plus languages. In Yéli Dnye there is no generic elevation term equivalent to English 'mountain.' Rather, this concept is subsumed within a term which refers to conical peaks of any size from molehills to mountains. In Lamma there is no generic term for 'river' but rather distinct terms depending on the dissolved mineral content of the watercourse.

That an ethnosciences of landscape is needed becomes apparent within the context of increasing globalization, as we attempt to make sense of our world as scientists, policy makers, educators, and citizens. Landscape categories are not universal semantic primitives but are in fact realized differently in different languages (and cultures). Hence, an understanding of these conceptual differences is a prerequisite to investigating global change and related global geographic issues.

Goals

We will begin by reviewing seminal literature on the nature of place from the various perspectives of linguistics, anthropology, geography, and philosophy. From this foundation we will assess emerging research on how landscape is conceptualized, that is, how the essentially continuous physical environment is subdivided into discrete cognitive categories. In particular we will examine the role that language and linguistic knowledge plays in the understanding of landscape, and the ways in which this understanding can inform the development of a cross-linguistic ontology of landscape categories. We will also examine the ways in which indigenous naming practices—toponymy—interact with these generic categories, looking in particular at Alaska Native placenames. We conclude by discussing the role of ontologies and GIScience and their implications for a general ethnosciences of ecology.

Prerequisites

LING 101 or equivalent introduction to the study of language is recommended, though not required.

Course format and responsibilities

Classroom sessions will combine occasional short (20-30 minute) presentations by the instructor or a guest speaker with a critical discussion of relevant literature. Reading discussions will be led by students (see below). However, while each reading will be assigned to a particular student presenter, all students are responsible for all readings and for participating in the ensuing discussion. The major requirement of the course is the completion of a final paper/project, described below.

Reading assignments

Each reading will be presented by a discussion leader, who will prepare a 1-2 page discussion guide for distribution prior to the discussion. A sample will be distributed by the instructor for the first discussion. The discussion leader should plan on an approximately ten minute oral presentation followed by a guided discussion of the material. The number of student-led reading discussions will be determined by the number of students in the class, but each student will be assigned at least two readings. We will examine in detail a number of case studies from a selection of the world's languages, with particular attention to the indigenous languages of Alaska.

Final paper/project

Each student will develop a final paper or project which describes the conceptualization of landscape from the point of view of a particular language (or language family) of their choosing. A 1-2 page research proposal for this paper/project will be due **Oct 1**. An annotated bibliography of sources will be due approximately **Oct 29**. Depending on the chosen topic, students may find that presentation as a multimedia project may be more appropriate than as a written paper. Examples of potential projects might include placename visualization using Google Earth; 3D visualization of elevation categories; or a website linking images and landscape narratives. A project should also include a short (5-10 page) written overview. Students are encouraged to discuss paper/project ideas with the instructor at the earliest opportunity.

Evaluation

Attendance and participation	10%
Reading assignment #1	10%
Reading assignment #2	10%
Paper/project proposal	15% [due Oct 1]
Annotated bibliography	15% [due Oct 29]
Final paper	40%

Graduate credit

Students enrolled for graduate credit will participate in an online discussion group which will discuss literature relevant to the particular projects in which the graduate students are involved. It is expected that the final paper/project produced by students enrolled for graduate credit will be of publishable quality.

Disabilities services

The Office of Disability Services implements the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and insures that UAF students have equal access to the campus and course materials. The instructor will work with the Office of Disabilities Services (203 WHIT, 474-7043) to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities.

Tentative schedule (subject to revision)

Week		Topic	Reading
1	9/8, 9/10	The nature of place: perspectives from geography and philosophy	Cresswell 2004 Yi-Fu Tuan
2	9/15, 9/17	Linguistic preliminaries The anthropology of space	Burenhult & Levinson 2008 Basso 1996
3	9/22, 9/24	Landscape categories and ontologies	Brabyn 2009 Mark & Smith 2009
4	9/29, 10/1	Sense of place	Thornton 2008 – chaps 2 & 3
5	10/6, 10/8	Directional systems	Fortescue 1988 Leer 1989 Moore & Tlen 2007
6	10/13, 10/15	Spatial coordinate systems	Levinson ch. 3 & 4
7	10/20, 10/22	Case studies	O'Connor 2008 O'Meara 2008 Duvall 2008
8	10/27, 10/29	Placenames	Cruikshank 1990 Hunn 1996 Kuipers 1984
9	11/3, 11/5	Nov 3: Nov 5: Guest Lecture: Siri Tuttle	Kari & Fall 2004
10	11/10, 11/12	Wayfinding	Kari 1989a Kari 1996a Kelley & Francis 2005
11	11/17, 11/19	Landscape and prehistory	Kari 1989b, 1996c
12	11/24	Alaskan perspectives	Holton 2009
13	12/1, 12/3	Toward an ethnosience of landscape	tba
14	12/8, 12/10	Final presentations	

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