Anthropology 605, Discursive practice
Preliminary syllabus
Spring, 2016. Wednesdays 2:30-5:00, Saunders 329
Jack Bilmes

The first half of this seminar will cover the major strains of the discursive turn in social science—philosophical, sociological, anthropological, and sociolinguistic foundations, ethnomethodology, sequential analysis, discursive psychology, and post-modern approaches. The second half of the course will focus on one aspect of discourse—scaling—that is, relations of more and less. The focus in class will be on conversational materials, but students may choose to do projects dealing with scaling in any area (ritual, kinship, ecology, etc.). The last three class sessions will be devoted to student presentations. Grades will be based on papers associated with those presentations, as well as contributions to class discussions.

Part 1—General introduction to discursive perspective and analysis
Jan. 13: Introduction. The world as discourse. The observer and the observed.
Jan. 20: Philosophical foundations
Jan. 27: Sociological foundations
Feb. 3: Anthropological foundations
Feb. 10: Sociolinguistic foundations
Feb. 17: Ethnomethodology
Feb. 24: Sequential analysis and discursive psychology
Mar. 2: Category analysis
Mar. 9: Post-modern and critical discourse analysis

Part 2—Scaling
Scaling deals with the more/less dimension, in terms of quantity, intensity, etc. Here are some questions that may be asked regarding scaling in talk: What are the factors and consequences that lead to a particular scaling choice (more or less intense, etc.)? When, and with what consequences, do speakers make it explicit that they are operating with a scale? When, and with what consequences, do speakers up- or downgrade? How are scales interacting within a given context? How is scaling related to sequential order? These questions can be adapted to other cultural scaling phenomena.
Mar. 16: Scaling: introduction and data session
Mar. 30: Scaling data session
Apr. 6: Scaling data session
Apr. 13: Scaling data session
Apr. 20: Student presentations
Apr. 27: Student presentations
May 4: Student presentations