Course Syllabus: ECLD 593-900 – Language, School & Society (3 units)

Course Description
The purpose of this course is to provide educators with opportunities to develop their understanding of the sociocultural and sociolinguistic contexts of learning for minority language students in the United States. Keep in mind that this will not be a “methods” course, meaning that we will not cover how or what to teach. Rather, we will be examining the theory and methods of sociolinguistics and ethnographies of communication as they apply to culturally and linguistically diverse students. Students will practice applying some basic sociolinguistic research methods, in order to develop an awareness and an “ear” for the complexities of language use and language learning in diverse social contexts. The goal is to enhance teachers’ ability to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students with a respectful, holistic approach.

School plays a major role in social and cultural reproduction. An important goal of the sociology and anthropology of education is to understand how this happens. In this course, the focus is on the role of language in the educational process of social and cultural reproduction in a number of ways. We will begin by looking at how interactional processes in school—especially classroom—settings lie at the heart of the construction of school knowledge (i.e., the identification and definition of what counts as knowledge in that setting).

We will then focus on what counts as legitimate language in schools. In both cases, we will be concerned with understanding how and why, through language, schools define legitimate knowledge in particular ways which privilege the knowledge of certain groups over others while masking how this privilege happens. This exercise of what Bourdieu (1977) calls symbolic domination will be taken as fundamental to social and cultural reproduction.

Required Texts (Please note that all required texts are available at the UNC Bookstore, in Greeley.)
Course Objectives

The following course objectives reflect the educational concepts, knowledge, skills, and abilities that the learner will master in this course. Based on course readings, class lectures and discussions, small group activities, student presentations, and individual assignments, the learner will be able to demonstrate and articulate her/his practical understanding of course content. Students will:

-- discover, identify, and become familiar with relationships between society, social expectations, language, and language production;
-- explore how these relationships and expectations flowing from them are manifested in institutions of schooling, and how they are promulgated both at levels of policy and of personal interaction;
-- develop awareness of how these relationships and expectations work to contribute to reinforcement and/or change in societal relations;
-- discover, identify, and become familiar with ways in which societal expectations, language, and language production are internalized and contribute to the formation of an individual’s identity and psychological development;
-- develop their capacities to recognize the manifestations of social and cultural values and beliefs in students, parents, and other stakeholders in education and to respect and include these values and beliefs into their schools and classrooms; and
-- discover, identify, and become familiar with the languages and cultures of language minority students attending public schools, especially those in their local communities.