

Sp Cm 305

Unit 1: Language & Thought

Group presentation: Discovering a community's "god terms"

DUE: Thursday, 9 February

Your group should come to class prepared to make a formal informative presentation of your investigation into a community's god terms. You may choose any community you're familiar with: students, the University, a town or neighborhood, an organized group—your choice.

You'll have ten minutes max for your presentation. In addition to having an Introduction ("CARRP," in public speaking lingo) and conclusion, the body of your presentation should answer the three course questions:

**WHAT?** What community are you studying? What is an important *god term* in that community? What does that god term mean?

**HOW?** How do you know that? How do you know that *it is* a god term, and that it means what you say it means? Present *in detail* the evidence on which your conclusion is based.

NOTE: Evidence is something in the real world you can show to us—actual examples of speech and/or behavior in the community you're studying. Your own opinions or views are interesting, but they're *not* evidence.

You'll want therefore to *show* us your evidence. Use transparencies, handouts or whatever will best show us your evidence.

**SO WHAT?** Why is this god term significant? What does it help us understand about the community? Give at least one example of how this god term "*selects*" the reality people in this community experience, and also "*deflects*," distracting people from seeing everything.

An example:

Rebekah Nathan's work on undergraduate culture (online) found;

WHAT? "Fun" is a god term at AnyU. "Fun" means spontaneity, sociability, unconstrainedness.

HOW? She studied door displays in the dorm she was living in—that was an interesting thing to notice and examine in detail.

SO WHAT? "Fun" helps students *select* and emphasize parts of their experience that emphasize their new independence and adulthood. But also, it *deflects*: Because of the undergraduate culture of "fun," it proved difficult for the dorm manager to impose basic ground rules in the dorm—like keeping the shower area clean. It also stopped students from (for example) publicly expressing their love for their families.

Questions to prepare for Thursday:

1. Is "fun" a god term in the student culture at ISU?
2. What other evidence could you give for the importance of "fun" for ISU students?
3. Can you think of any ways in which "fun" "reflects, selects and deflects" the thinking of students here at ISU?