

The Politics of Language Use

Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz
Spring 2017

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house
Audre Lorde

Course No.	501.583
Time	Tuesday 1:30 – 3:00pm
Room	Heinrichstr. 26/V, UR 09.51
Website	http://moodle.uni-graz.at
Instructor	Dr. Dirk Kindermann
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Office Hours	Tuesdays 3-4pm & by appointment

Course Description

This is a course in *Social and Political Philosophy of Language*: We will explore social, moral and political dimensions of language (use). We will look at how speech and exclusion from speech are related to moral wrongness, harm, power, liberty, (in)equality, social (in)justice, and resistance. Our focus will be on three areas that are the subject of vibrant contemporary debate:

1. Freedom of Speech:

Should *all* speech be free, even speech that is harmful? What would reasonable limits to our freedom of speech be? Are we all equally free to speak, or are opportunities to speak and be heard distributed unequally—along sexist, racist, classist, and ableist lines? What are the explicit and implicit ways in which we use speech to harm others—to silence, demean, derogate, and subordinate them?

2. Epistemic Injustice:

Do societal conditions to speak influence our ability to acquire knowledge and share it with others? Are there distinctively *epistemic* forms of injustice? What are the conditions under which access to knowledge and the status as a knower is distributed unfairly in society?

3. Ideology and Propaganda:

What is propaganda? Where do we find propagandistic uses of language in the political discourse of Western, liberal societies? What is ideology, and what is the relationship between propaganda and ideology? Can we escape the influence of propaganda? What is linguistic resistance? How can we speak and act in non-racist and non-sexist ways? That is, how can we speak without harming others and without perpetuating discrimination?

We will address these philosophical issues with a close view on current social and political developments: racism and xenophobia in European migration politics, structural sexism in Western democracies, homophobia and transphobia, and discrimination against people with disabilities. Our philosophical readings will be accompanied by short readings from (social) media.¹

¹The design of this course is inspired by courses taught by Saray Ayala-López (San Francisco State), Cassie Herbert (Georgetown), and Aidan McGlynn (Edinburgh), who generously shared their syllabi with me.

Course Goals

The course is designed to put students in a position to ...

1. recognize and critically assess moral and political issues regarding our use of language
2. reconstruct and assess some foundational assumptions about the nature of language that inform political and moral questions about language use
3. understand and evaluate some of key issues in current analytic philosophy of language.

Prerequisites

You should have completed one course in philosophy of language or epistemology. This course won't be easy. You should be prepared to work hard for it.

Climate Issues

We will discuss controversial topics in class, which may challenge some of your most deeply held beliefs and values. The class room is meant to provide as safe a climate as possible, in which we treat each other and third parties respectfully; in which we avoid personal attacks or comments and intervene respectfully when we notice such attacks; and in which we will make an attempt at using inclusive language. For your orientation, take a look at the guidelines of the American Philosophical Association² and New York University's 'guidelines for respectful philosophical discussion'.³ Inclusive language also means avoiding aggressive and offensive speech as well as 'silencing techniques'.⁴

These rules for a respectful and constructive seminar climate apply to me as well. Whenever I may not live up to them, you're welcome to respectfully call me out on it. I will do the same.⁵

Online Participation

Please visit the Moodle course website regularly at <http://moodle.uni-graz.at>. Here you will find the readings, handouts, the glossary you will build up together over the course of semester, links to relevant current affairs, and *updates of this course syllabus*.

Readings

All course readings will be available on the [Moodle course website](#) or freely online. Further readings can also be found in the course's section in the philosophy library.

There are three categories of readings (see schedule):

1. Core readings: These are **obligatory** readings, which will be the focus of the session.
2. Optional readings: These are optional and (i) help you either get some background that facilitates understanding of the core readings, or (ii) allow you to explore beyond the core readings.
3. Voices: These are shorter pieces from (social) media, the blogosphere, and podcasts. Usually, they represent the author's view (which needn't coincide with mine, the instructor's) and connect the topic of the session to everyday life and current concerns.

²www.apaonlinecsw.org/apa-guidelines-for-non-sexist-use-of-language

³<http://philosophy.fas.nyu.edu/object/climate.guidelines>

⁴"Silencing techniques are things people say to get someone to drop out of a discussion, either by leaving or becoming and remaining silent." (Rachel McKinnon) You can find examples here: <http://krwordgazer.blogspot.ca/2013/04/silencing-techniques.html> Examples of silencing in philosophy class rooms can be found here: www.newappsblog.com/2013/09/calling-out-silencing-techniques-in-class.html

⁵This part of the syllabus is adapted from Rachel McKinnon's syllabus for her course *Phil 335: Philosophy of Language*, taught at College of Charleson in fall 2014.

Course Schedule

Please check the Moodle course website weekly if there are updates to the course schedule.

Freedom of Speech: Language & Harm			
2 02/05/2017	Speech Act Theory: J.L. Austin		<p>Core Reading: (1) Austin (1961): ‘Performative Utterances’</p> <p>(2) Morris (2007): Chapter 12 ‘Austin on Speech Acts’ in <i>An Introduction to Philosophy of Language</i></p> <p>Glossary: (a) <i>Locution, perlocution, illocution</i> (Austin), (b) <i>Performatives–primary & explicit</i> (Austin), (c) <i>Semantics vs pragmatics</i></p>
3 05/05/2017 9:30–11:30 am	Mill on Freedom of Speech		<p>Core: (1) Mill (1859): <i>On Liberty</i> ☞ skim Ch. 1, read Ch. 2, skim Ch. 4</p> <p>☞ Bring 5 written questions on Mill (1859) to class!</p> <p>Voice: Annaleigh Curtis (2016): ‘Inequality in the Market for Speech’, <i>The Harvard Law Record</i>, http://hlrecord.org/2016/04/inequality-in-the-market-for-speech/</p> <p>Glossary: (a) <i>Freedom of speech</i>, (b) <i>Liberalism</i>, (c) <i>Equality</i></p>
4 05/05/2017 12–1:30pm	Silencing, Subordination, and Pornography		<p>Core: Langton (1993): ‘Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts’</p> <p>Voices: (1) Jarune Uwujaren: ‘3 reasons why internet harrasment is not “freedom of speech”’, http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/08/internet-harassment-freedom-of-speech</p> <p>(2) Anne Wizorek on hate speech online: ‘Let’s talk about Meinungsfreiheit, Baby!!!’ <i>re:publica 15</i>, https://republica.de/session/lets-talk-about-meinungsfreiheit-baby1</p> <p>Glossary: (a) <i>Silencing</i>, (b) <i>Subordination</i>, (c) <i>Hate speech</i></p>
5 05/05/2017 3-5pm	Philosophical Writing Workshop		<p>Core: Jim Pryor’s ‘Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper,’ http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html</p>

6 09/05/2017 Butler on Hate Speech & Freedom of Speech	<p>Butler (1996): ‘Burning Acts: Injurious Speech’</p> <p>Optional: Salih (2002, 99–119): introductory chapter ‘Language’ on Butler on language</p> <p>Voice: Julia Krüger: ‘Meetup: Hate Speech and Digital Violence in Authoritarian Regimes’, <i>re:publica 17</i>, https://re-publica.com/en/17/session/meetup-hate-speech-digital-violence-authoritarian-regimes</p> <p>Glossary: (a) <i>Signifier & signified (semiotics)</i>, (b) <i>Discourse (Foucault)</i>, (c) Butler on <i>gender</i> (Butler, 1990)</p>
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Epistemic Injustice	
7 16/05/2017 Testimonial Injustice	<p>Core: (1) Fricker (2007): Introduction (☞ skim)</p> <p>(2) Fricker (2007) : Ch. 1 Testimonial Injustice</p> <p>(3) Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: ‘Feminist Social Epistemology’, §4.1, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-social-epistemology</p> <p>Optional: Fricker (2007): Ch. 2 Prejudice in the Credibility Economy</p> <p>Voice: Kate Manne & Jason Stanley: ‘When Free Speech Becomes a Political Weapon’, <i>The Chronicle of Higher Education</i>, http://www.chronicle.com/article/When-Free-Speech-Becomes-a/234207</p> <p>Glossary: (a) <i>Testimony</i>, (b) <i>(Feminist) standpoint theory</i> (SEP link), (c) <i>Prejudice & stereotype</i></p>
8 23/05/2017 Hermeneutical Injustice	<p>(1) Fricker (2007): Ch. 7 Hermeneutical Injustice</p> <p>(2) Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: ‘Feminist Social Epistemology’, §2 & 2.1, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-social-epistemology</p> <p>Voice: <i>The Unmute Podcast</i>, episode 9, interview with Kristie Dotson. http://unmutetalk.podbean.com/e/episode-009-kristie-dotson-on-ignorance/</p> <p>Glossary: (a) <i>Social Epistemology</i>, (b) <i>Testimonial quieting & smothering</i> (Dotson, 2011), (c) <i>Implicit bias</i></p>

9 30/05/2017 (Racialized) Ignorance	<p>Core: (1) Mills (2007): ‘White Ignorance’</p> <p>(2) Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: ‘Feminist Social Epistemology’, §4.2, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-social-epistemology</p> <p>Optional: Lorde (1983): ‘The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House’</p> <p>Glossary: (a) <i>Racism</i>, (b) <i>Strategic Ignorance</i> (Bailey, 2007), (c) <i>Oppression</i>, (d) <i>Postcolonialism & Decoloniality</i></p>
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Language, Ideology & Propaganda	
10 13/06/2017 Ideology & Critique	<p>Core: (1) Haslanger (2011): ‘Ideology, Generics, and Common Ground’</p> <p>(2) Haslanger (2012, 16–22)</p> <p>Voice: (1) George Yancy: ‘Dear White America’, <i>New York Times</i>, https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/12/24/dear-white-america</p> <p>(2) Brad Evans & George Yancy: ‘The Perils of Being a Black Philosopher’, <i>New York Times</i>, https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/04/18/the-perils-of-being-a-black-philosopher</p> <p>Glossary: (a) <i>Ideology</i>, (b) <i>Common ground</i> (Stalnaker, 1978, 2002), (c) <i>Generics</i> (Anderson et al., 2012, 760–65)</p>
11 20/06/2017 Propaganda & Democracy	<p>Core: (1) Stanley (2015): Ch. 2 Propaganda Defined (☞ Read all of ch. 2, but focus on pp. 48-49, 52-66, 68-70)</p> <p>(2) Stanley (2015, Ch. 3): Propaganda in Liberal Democracy</p> <p>Optional: Stanley (2016b): ‘Précis of <i>How Propaganda Works</i>’</p> <p>Voices: (1) N. Loan Tràn: ‘Calling IN: A Less Disposable Way of Holding Each Other Accountable’, http://www.humanityinaction.org/files/567-N.Trn-CallingIN.pdf</p> <p>(2) Sian Ferguson: ‘Calling In: A Quick Guide to When and How’, http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/01/guide-to-calling-in</p> <p>Glossary: (a) <i>Propaganda</i>, (b) <i>(Liberal) Democracy</i>, (c) <i>Political Correctness</i></p>

12 27/06/2017 Language & Ideology	<p>Core: (1) Stanley (2015): Ch. 4 Language as a Mechanism of Control</p> <p>(2) Stanley (2015): Ch. 5 Ideology</p> <p>Optional: J. Stanley: ‘Propaganda braucht problematische Ideologien’, <i>Der Standard</i>, http://derstandard.at/2000025697887/JasonStanley-Propaganda-braucht-problematische-Ideologien</p> <p>Optional—anti-discriminatory speech: AG Feministisch Sprachhandeln der HU Berlin: ‘Was tun? Sprachhandeln—aber wie? W_ortungen statt Tatenlosigkeit’</p> <p>Voice: Brigitte Theissl: ‘Auf der Suche nach einer Sprache, die nicht diskriminiert’, <i>Der Standard</i>, http://derstandard.at/2000051773350/Auf-der-Suche-nach-einer-Sprache-die-nicht-diskriminiert</p> <p>Glossary: (a) <i>Possible-Worlds Content</i>, (b) <i>At-issue vs not-at-issue content</i>, (c) <i>Question Under Discussion</i> (Roberts, 2012)</p>
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Important Deadlines

09/06/2017	Deadline for emailing me your essay question
16/06/2017	Deadline for emailing me and your writing buddy the first draft of your essay for their feedback
23/06/2017	Deadline for emailing me and your writing buddy your written feedback on their essay draft
07/07/2017	Deadline for submission of your essay (final version) on Moodle
Rolling	The deadline for emailing me the handout for your presentation is the evening before your presentation.
Rolling	The deadline for your glossary entry is the beginning of the class to which your entry’s concept/issue is assigned (see schedule).

Attendance

In compliance with university regulations, attendance in class is obligatory. You may miss as many as 3 sessions without sanction. Note that the seminar day of 5 May 2017 is equivalent to three sessions. Please always send me a short email before class if you cannot make it to that class.

Assignments & Assessment

1. Attendance and participation in class (10%)

Regular attendance as well as active participation in class discussion make up this part of your overall grade.

2. Short presentation (25%)

You are each required to give a **short presentation of 10–15 minutes** in class. We will have one presentation by a group of 2-3 students in every session. Please prepare, write, and deliver the presentation *together as a group* (see ‘Team work’ below). The presentations are meant to provide a **short and succinct** summary and evaluation of the most important **theses and arguments** in the core reading(s) of the session. A **short handout** (1-2 pages) is obligatory and will also be assessed. You need to send me your handout by email **the evening before class** at the latest. Please make sure to bring enough copies to class.

I also encourage you to come talk to me during office hours one week before your presentation.

3. Entry in glossary (15%)

All of you will join forces and compile an online glossary of key concepts together over the course of the semester. We will use our Moodle course website for work on, and access to, the glossary.

Each one of you will write one entry in the glossary. It should be between 200 and 500 words. It should (i) explain the concept or issue *as clearly as possible*, with an attempt to avoid unexplained jargon, (ii) provide example(s) and/or illustration, (iii) include a short bibliography (2-5 entries) with your sources and suggestions for further readings, and (iii) be signed with your name. Your entry should be written in the style of a concise lexicon entry. The **deadline** for your entry is the **day of class to which the concept is assigned** (see schedule above); i.e., by the beginning of class, your entry should be online on Moodle.

If you are unsure about which sources to use for your entry, come talk to me after class and/or during office hours. (By the way, Wikipedia is *not* a reliable source for academic work of this sort.) For illustration of the kind of glossary I have in mind, see the German glossary produced by students in my course ‘Language and Gender’ (2015):

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/u6chl85ba8s5ptv/PSSpracheGenderGlossar.pdf?dl=0>

4. Short essay (35%)

You will write a short essay. The **deadline for sending me your essay question** is **09 June 2017**. The **deadline for the 1st draft** of your essay is **Friday, 16 June 2017**. The **deadline for the final version** is **Friday, 7 July 2017**.

Your essay should be 1500 words (submitting more than 1800 words or less than 1200 words will affect assessment negatively) and should reflect your independent and critical engagement with your essay question. You have to come up with **your own essay question** yourself – it needs to be related to the course topics. You need to **email your essay question & topic to me by 09 June 2017**. Your essay title and introduction should clearly state the essay question, and your conclusion should summarize your answer.

By **Friday, 16 June 2017**, you need to send your first draft to me (*not for assessment*) and to your writing buddy—the person you have picked at the beginning of class, who will give you written feedback on your essay draft by Friday, 23 June 2017. Using their feedback, you must re-work your essay and submit your final version on Moodle by **Friday, 7 July 2017**.

Virtues in philosophical essay writing which I care a lot about in assessing your essay: clarity of expression, clarity in overall essay structure, concise arguments, precision. Take the time to carefully read the guidelines for philosophical writing listed below. We will also have a session on essay writing towards on 5 May 2017.

(a) *Essay Writing in Philosophy* (Kindermann, available on Moodle)

(b) Jim Pryor’s guidelines: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

5. Critical essay feedback (15%)

You will give your writing buddy—the person you have picked at the beginning of class—feedback on their essay draft. Your feedback may contain short comments on the margins of their text and *must*

include constructive feedback of 400–800 words, written in regular prose. Your job is to help your writing buddy *improve their draft*, so try to think of what is helpful and feasible for them. You can use the above writing guidelines as your guide for your feedback. On Friday, 16 June 2017, you will receive your buddy’s draft by email. You then have one week for your feedback, which you need to **send by email to your buddy and to me by Friday, 23 June 2017**. I will assess your feedback.

Late Submission

It is important to me that you learn to finish essays and other creative writings within a reasonable period of time and to hand them in on time. For the sake of fairness, I have the following *Late Assignment Policy*, which applies to your essay and media research exercise:

< 24 hrs.	1/3 grade
24–48 hrs.	2/3 grade
48–72 hrs.	1 grade
3–7 Tage	2 grades
> 1 week	<i>Please don't.</i>

If special circumstances prevent you from submitting by the deadline, please contact me *well before the deadline*.

How To Prepare For Class

- **Reading:** You will spend a lot of time reading in this course. Many of the texts are very challenging. Some are short, but don’t assume they won’t take you long to read. Expect to read a text **2-3 times**. Read “**read aggressively**” (see [Perry et al. \(2012, 2–4\)](#)): Read closely, analyse, question, reconstruct, take notes, continue ...If you have trouble understanding what an author says, or any other question concerning the course, you can always **consult me for advice**. And consider team work (see below).
- Always do the reading(s) *before* class. Don’t miss any readings – it will be hard to catch up.
- **Ask questions** in class: If a point is unclear to you, chances are your classmates will appreciate additional clarification, too. Don’t be shy to ask questions in class.
- **Team work:** You will find it helpful to **team up** with fellow students to **explain philosophical ideas and arguments to each other** and to **critically discuss** them. What you invest in helping others will come back doubly when you write your essays: You haven’t understood a view or argument unless you can express it clearly and precisely.

Fair Play & Plagiarism

Don’t plagiarise. It’s that simple. Plagiarism is an infringement of intellectual copyright and a serious offence, and is not taken lightly by the university. It is easy to avoid it: whenever you help yourself to the ideas of others, make their authorship explicit by **referencing** them. In addition, use **quotation marks** when you cite them word for word. When in doubt, always reference the source you’re using: better a reference too many than too few.

RESOURCES

Further Readings: Generally on course topics

- Entries in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu>) on: *Feminist Philosophy of Language, Feminist Philosophy of ... , Feminist Social Epistemology, Analytical Feminism, Topics in Feminism, Discrimination, Race, Implicit Bias, Identity Politics, ...*

Further Readings on Freedom of Speech & Hate Speech

- [Maitra & McGowan \(2012\)](#): A collection of essays on *Speech and Harm. Controversies Over Free Speech*
- [Meibauer \(2013\)](#): A collection of essays, in German, on *Hassrede/Hate Speech. Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zu einer aktuellen Diskussion*
- [Haslanger \(2012\)](#): *Resisting Reality. Social Construction and Social Critique*
- [Spivak \(1988\)](#): ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’
- [Hornsby & Langton \(1998\)](#); [Hornsby \(2000\)](#)
- [Saul \(2012\)](#): ‘Politically Significant Terms and Philosophy of Language: Methodological Issues’
- [Saul \(2016\)](#): ‘Dogwhistles, Political Manipulation and Philosophy of Language’
- [Dotson \(2011, 2014\)](#)
- Linguist [Hornscheidt](#) on hate speech, in German ([Hornscheidt, 2011b](#); [Sprachpraxis, 2011](#); [Hornscheidt, 2011a, 2012, 2013](#))
- [MacKinnon \(1993\)](#) [Waldron \(2012\)](#): *The Harm in Hate Speech* –A plea for curtailing freedom of speech to protect against hate speech
- Rae Langton’s ‘Beyond Pragmatics’ ([2012](#)), her [2009](#) book *Sexual Solipsism* ‘Accommodating Injustice’ (*John Locke Lectures*, Oxford University)
Handouts and Mp3s available at http://www.philosophy.ox.ac.uk/lectures/john_locke_lectures.
- [Butler \(1997\)](#): the book based on her article ‘Burning Acts, Injurious Speech’
- [Tirrell \(2012\)](#), analysing hate speech in pre-war Rwanda
- [Maitra \(2009, 2012\)](#) on silencing and subordinating speech
- [Leslie \(2012, 2015a, 2015b\)](#) on (harmful) generics [Kukla \(2014\)](#)

Further Readings on Epistemic Injustice

- [McKinnon \(2016\)](#): A high-level & up to date introduction to research on epistemic injustice
- [Kidd et al. \(2017\)](#): *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*
- [Maitra \(2010\)](#) on Fricker’s book
- Further writings by Fricker, e.g. [Fricker \(forthcoming\)](#)
- [Medina \(2013\)](#): *The Epistemology of Resistance. Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations*
- [Sullivan & Tuana \(2007\)](#): *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*

Further Readings on Language, Ideology & Propaganda

- [Stanley \(2016a\)](#)
- [Srinivasan \(2016\)](#), [McGlynn \(2016\)](#) and further articles in a special issue on Stanley’s *How Propaganda Works in Theoria: An International Journal for Theory, History and Foundations of Science*

Textbooks, Handbooks: Language, Gender, Feminism

- [Goddard & Meân \(2008\)](#)
- [Cameron \(1998\)](#)
- [Holmes & Meyerhoff \(2003\)](#)
- [Mills & Mullany \(2011\)](#)

Introductions to Philosophy of Language

- [Lycan \(2008\)](#)
- [Miller \(2003\)](#)
- [Morris \(2007\)](#)
- [Soames \(2010\)](#)
- Advanced: [Devitt & Hanley \(2006\)](#), [Kompa \(2015\)](#) (deutsch), [Russell & Fara \(2012\)](#)

Resources: Philosophy Dictionaries & Research Engines

- The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu>
The free app in the itunes store: <https://itunes.apple.com/en/app/sep/id342210166?mt=8>
- The Philosophy Compass: [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1747-9991](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1747-9991)
- [Craig \(1998\)](#) Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Online at www.rep.routledge.com or in the philosophy institute library: U-LPh5, Hauptbibliothek II 602811
- [Audi \(1999\)](#): Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy. Main library II 726908 & HB2-C19
- [Blackburn \(2008\)](#): Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy. Institute library U-LPh88, Hauptbibliothek I 596361
- [Mautner \(2005\)](#): The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy
- [Proudfoot & Lacey \(2010\)](#): The Routledge Dictionary of Philosophy. Main library I 582860
- The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: www.iep.utm.edu
- Researching articles online: <http://scholar.google.at>
- PhilPapers (online directory of English articles and books):
<http://philpapers.org>

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- Fricker, M. (forthcoming). Epistemic injustice and the preservation of ignorance. In R. Peels & M. Blaauw (Eds.), *The Epistemic Dimensions of Ignorance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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- Hornscheidt, L. (2011a). Pejorisation – ein konstruktivistisches konzept zur analyse von beschimpfungspraktiken. In A. L. Hornscheidt, I. Jana, & H. Acke (Eds.), *Schimpfwörter - Beschimpfungen - Pejorierungen: Wie in Sprache Macht und Identitäten verhandelt werden* (pp. 15–45). Frankfurt am Main: Brandes & Apsel.
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