

PHI 340: Language & Power

Prof. Cassie Herbert

Spring 2019

MW 5:00-6:15pm, STV 352

Language plays a central role in our interactions with others in the world: it helps us to convey our thoughts and to create important connections with others. It can also be a powerful mechanism through which to derogate, marginalize, or subordinate people. This course will examine how language draws on, exerts, and reinforces social power. Much of the course will focus on the real impact of hate speech, pornography, and use of derogatory terms. We'll examine the role of social authority and the ways in which discourse can be distorted by features of the participants' identities. We'll look at what sorts of inferences are licensed both by derogatory terms and by seemingly innocuous language used in daily life. Finally, we'll discuss whether, how, and when resistance to harmful speech is possible.

