

University of Pittsburgh
Department of Anthropology and
Department of Linguistics
present

Michael Silverstein
Department of Anthropology
The University of Chicago

“Travels with Ego: Deictic Stance and Denotational
Style across Interactional Contexts”

Friday, November 9, 2007

3:00 p.m.

3106 WWPH

Anthropology Lounge

How do we fashion a ‘self’, the persona of an ego that remains in many respects a social constant across the various discursive contexts in which we encounter interactional others and co-construct events with them? Close study of comparably premised interactions of particular individuals with different interactional partners reveals part of our ability to transport means of self-presentation from one interactional site to another. We look here at several of the most fundamental aspects of verbally mediated interaction, among them [1] *deictic stance*, the way that a speaker constructs a place-from-which (s)he communicates as an implication of how particular fixed points are denoted; and [2] *denotational style*, how a speaker relationally implicates a self-identity by the particular choice of lexical and grammatical forms used to denote people, places, events, things, etc. being communicated about, and hence semiotically “in play,” at any given moment of interaction. We seem to observe individuals who in effect “practice” “being themselves” in one interactional context so as better to “perfect” the presentation of their selves in another.

A wine and cheese reception will follow the talk