

these films normalize queer "happiness" for a straight audience. Rituals like graduation and marriage (and even quasi military bootcamps) normalize queers because these characters desire an American life; youthful, innocent, upbeat, with a love that is "normal" and subject to frustration. Enter *American Beauty*. Here several American rituals are underway all at once: boy and girl next door meet, fall in love, and run away; dad has a midlife crisis and quits his job; mom wants to have sex with the "King." Interestingly, the cheerleader as object of desire is too good for the pricey pot-dealing, surveillance obsessed boy-next-door but not too good to seduce her friend's dad. The dad wakes up in the middle of his male menopause, unlike the tardy Dr. T, and realizes that kids are kids, that love is love, and that he could be happy like Jim and Jim, the gay couple he jogs with down the street. But then there's the war going on in the military mind next door. The cheerleader cheers the dad on in this movie as he and the narrator retreat back into the hindsight of a good death.

The pastel backdrops and goofed out "straight camp" scenery of *But I'm a . . .* contrast sharply with the realism of *American Beauty*, which lands in the suburbs with a fast-food thud. But I think surreality is the tone that carries the day. What about those queer college relationships that the straights or lugs never categorized? Who are those cute bridesmaids and groomsmen anyway? Now that's what I call surreal, an American sexuality that doesn't ask, sometimes tells, and only now, in the year 2000, cheers.

Please send abstracts of research or column ideas to Stass at [estassinios@annamaria.edu](mailto:estassinios@annamaria.edu). Our co-chairs are Sandy Faiman-Silva at [SFAIMANSILVA@bridgew.edu](mailto:SFAIMANSILVA@bridgew.edu) and Lawrence Cohen (U California-Berkeley; [cohen@csd.uwm.edu](mailto:cohen@csd.uwm.edu)). SOLGA listserv: to sign up, send a message to [listserv@american.edu](mailto:listserv@american.edu); the text of which should read "subscribe solga-l."

## Society for Linguistic Anthropology

CYNDI DUNN AND RICHARD J SENGHAS,  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Starting this spring, James M Stanlaw will replace Cyndi Dunn as the new co-editor of the SLA column, serving together with current co-editor Richard J Senghas. Jim is an associate professor at Illinois State U who has written extensively on loan words and color terminology in Japan, language contact and Japanese popular culture. Please send him your announcements of conferences, new journals, websites, or email discussion lists and any other news of interest to linguistic anthropologists.

We welcome two new officers for 2001. Monica Heller is our new Secretary-Treasurer ([mheller@oise.utoronto.edu](mailto:mheller@oise.utoronto.edu)) and Bonnie McElhinny is a Board Member At-Large ([bonnie.mcelhinny@utoronto.edu](mailto:bonnie.mcelhinny@utoronto.edu)). The SLA nomination committee is composed of Mary Bucholtz ([bucholtz@tamu.edu](mailto:bucholtz@tamu.edu)), Jim Wilce ([\[nau.edu\]\(mailto:nau.edu\)\) and James Collins \(\[collins@cnsunix.albany.edu\]\(mailto:collins@cnsunix.albany.edu\)\). Please contact them if you would be willing to serve as an officer of either the SLA or AAA.](mailto:Jim.Wilce@</a></p>
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We had a wonderful meeting in San Francisco with 22 total panels and four invited sessions, two of which were co-sponsored with other sections. If you would like to propose a panel for invited status for next year's meeting, send the panel description and individual paper abstracts to Laura Miller (Dept of Soc and Anthro, Loyola U, 6525 N Sheridan Road, Chicago, IL 60626; 773/508-3469, fax 508-7099, [lmille2@luc.edu](mailto:lmille2@luc.edu)) no later than March 1.

### SALSA Call For Papers

The Ninth Annual Symposium About Language and Society—Austin will be held April 20-22 with keynote speakers Mary Bucholtz, Alessandro Duranti, George Lakoff and Gerry Philipsen. Abstract deadline is Jan 23. See [www.utexas.edu/students/salsa](http://www.utexas.edu/students/salsa).

### An Overview of Speech Communication as Discipline

By Kristine L Fitch (U of Iowa)

The discipline of "speech communication," like most of those that bridge the humanities and social sciences, is sufficiently broad and diverse to make quick overviews difficult. Some general description and orientation, however, is possible. There are two primary national/international organizations associated with the field, the International Communication Association and the National Communication Association (formerly the Speech Communication Association).

The roots of communication studies are in rhetoric, with Aristotle a central tale of origin of the tribe. Around 1914, "speech teachers" began to separate themselves from departments of English into a distinct discipline, beginning with elocution on the humanities side and scientific studies of persuasion on the social sciences side. Since then, the discipline has multiplied in a number of directions. One formulation (always disputable) of what all of our branches have in common is that we study adaptation of messages to people and people to messages. Communication studies encompasses a wide range of research into human interaction and messaging processes, including rhetorical, electronic, and other media; specific to particular kinds of contexts such as families, organizations, health care, mediation. Issues in these areas are studied with the full range of methodologies observable in the social sciences and humanities: statistical, textual, qualitative and phenomenological.

Perhaps most relevant to linguistic anthropologists is the area of the field generally referred to as language and social interaction. Two journals which provide exemplars of such work are the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* and *Research on Language and Social Interaction*. Within that area are included conversation analysis, a wide range of discourse analysis and ethnography. Emphasis in these areas is on language use, discursive prac-

tices as well as symbolic codes of meaning, situated within contexts of conversational structure, culture and institutions. The area that overlaps most obviously with linguistic anthropology is ethnography, focused on communicative activity and proceeding from extended periods of fieldwork involving participant observation, interviewing and sometimes tape recording and transcribing conversations.

This focus is not limited to verbal behavior but includes consideration of nonverbal and mediated communication, studies of built environments, and so forth. Recent and classic works have focused on gender role enactment and other language use in blue collar neighborhoods, personal address in various cultures, accounts and storytelling as conversational, relational and communal activity and distinctive communication practices that reveal symbolic codes of meaning.

To learn more, visit the websites of: the National Communication Association ([www.natcom.org](http://www.natcom.org)), the International Communication Association ([www.icaheadq.org/index.html](http://www.icaheadq.org/index.html)) and the Language and Social Interaction Division, NCA (with link to LSI/ICA), at [cscwww.cats.ohio.edu/%7Escalsi](http://cscwww.cats.ohio.edu/%7Escalsi).

Send comments and contributions to Richard J Senghas ([richard.senghas@sonoma.edu](mailto:richard.senghas@sonoma.edu)) or James M Stanlaw ([stanlaw@ilstu.edu](mailto:stanlaw@ilstu.edu)).

## Society for Medical Anthropology

ANN MILES AND FRED BLOOM, CO-CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

### A Note from the SMA Editors

We write to you this month in despair. Because of AAA financial constraints, starting this month all section columns have been reduced in size by one half. We are now limited to a mere 700 words. To maintain the high quality associated with this column over the years we have decided to inter-mingle our print and web columns. While in no way ideal, you will find that this month's printed column introduces some articles that can be found in their entirety on the SMA webpage. Please let the editors know how this system works for you.

At the AAA meeting the contributing editors for this column expressed their dismay at the column cuts. But there is little we can do alone. If you also are concerned about this, please contact me, Ann Miles, at [Miles@wmich.edu](mailto:Miles@wmich.edu). I can provide you with the names of AAA personnel who are responsible for our budget. If you told them how you feel about having your section news reduced in this way, you could have an impact.

### Call for SMA Invited Sessions

SMA members are encouraged to submit proposals for SMA Invited Sessions for the 2001 AAA Annual Meeting (Nov 28-Dec 2, Washington DC), the theme for which is "100 Years of An-