“Language as an instrument of power: Verbal antisemitism”

Spring 2019
Moses-Mendelssohn-Zentrum, University of Potsdam

Instructor: Matthias J. Becker
Course level: Undergraduate
Type of course: Seminar
Evaluation: Preparation and presentation of a teaching unit and a term paper.

Syllabus

1.) Introduction Linguistics & Discourse Analysis: Language and Power, verbal Discrimination and the Impact of Speech Patterns


2.) Introduction Cognitive Science: Concepts, Stereotypes, and Prejudices

Overview of conceptual units that represent the basis for hate speech.

Literature: Schoeps/Schlör 1996, Schwarz-Friesel 2010

3.) Antisemitism from Antiquity to Modern times

Definition of (verbal) antisemitism: Antisemitism as a “cultural code” (Volkov), as “a mental system of belief and of interpretation of the world has been passed down through the centuries, always adapted to current conditions and correspondingly modified, yet without changes in the underlying conceptual constants, according to which Jews categorically function as THE OTHER.” (Manichaeism)

Literature: Wistrich 2010, Nirenberg 2013, Schwarz-Friesel & Reinharz 2013

4.) Communicative Strategies for construing “the Enemy”: historical Antisemitism in Medieval times

Characteristics of anti-Judaism/religious antisemitism
Common words, esp. metaphors representing antisemitic stereotypes, strategies of demonization and dehumanization.


5.) Communicative Strategies in racial and especially Nazi Antisemitism

Overview and contrastive analysis with regard to anti-Judaism.
Sources: Speech and image examples of the Stürmer and Hitler’s Speech „Warum wir Antisemiten sind“ [“Why We Are Antisemites”] (Munich, 1920)

6.) Extremist forms of Antisemitism and public Radicalization: Verbal Manifestations of right-extremist Hatred and Violence (e.g. song texts of Neonazis and expressions in football stadiums)

Overview and contrastive analysis with regard to the racist-eliminatory antisemitism of the Nazis.


7.) Anti-Zionism on the Left: Demonisation, Dichotomic Worldviews, and Conspiracy Theories

History of antisemitism on the Left and Characteristics.
Relation between antisemitism and anti-Zionism.
Nationalist concepts in left rhetorics.

Sources: Texts of “Rote Fahne”, “junge Welt”, “Der Spiegel”, “Die Zeit”

8.) Antisemitism in Muslim communities & in Islamist movements: History and Characteristics

History of antisemitism in Arab states, Muslim communities, and in extremist movements.
Perspectives on the Holocaust.
Strategies for developing empathy.
Relation between Muslim and Islamist antisemitism and left anti-Zionism.


9.) Israel-related antisemitism

Characteristics of the “new” antisemitism, “communicative detour”, transfer of stereotypes onto the Jewish state.
Projection of historical injustices onto the Jewish state, deflection of guilt (Nazi and colonialism analogies).
Differentiation between Israel-related antisemitism and criticism of Israel.

Sources: Readers’ comments of “Die Zeit” and “The Guardian”
Literature: Sharansky 2004, Schwarz-Friesel & Reinharz 2013, IHRA 2016, Becker 2018b

10.) Latent communication in Post-war Germany, secondary antisemitism
Implicit Radicalism: Implicatures and the Power of Subtlety on the example of implicit Holocaust Denial and Relativization.
New/adapted forms of antisemitic hate speech for avoiding sanctions in German mainstream discourse.


11.) Research on antisemitism: How to measure antisemitism?
Overview and comparisons of German and international surveys on antisemitism in last 15 years. Comparison of results in qualitative and quantitative studies.
Problematization of factors such as social desirability, reactivity effects, etc.


12.) Pedagogical challenges while addressing antisemitism
Problematizing antisemitic expressions in classrooms without fostering their presence in the audience (handling of images, “ Exiting” the argumentation and focusing the reasons for the expression of antisemitic thinking).

Literature: Radvan 2010, Schäuble 2012