

Emila Palonen:

Minicourse on discourse theory and the thought of Laclau and Mouffe

Centre for Political Discourse Studies, Budapest
November – December 2005

Session One: ‘One discourse among many’, 8 November 2005

The point of the readings is that we should get an idea of the existing conceptions of ‘discourse’, and see how the Essex approach differs.

I will also bring in some comparison with the Ruth Wodak School.

Here we think of the usability of discourse theory, as well as its basic premises in contrast to other similar approaches.

Ernesto Laclau: Foreword. In David Howart – Aletta J. Norval – Yannis Stavrakakis eds. (2000): *Discourse theory and political analysis. Identities, hegemonies and social change*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, x–xi. p. (It is in Hungarian, too: manuscript)

Jacob Torfing: Discourse Analysis and the Post-structuralism of Laclau and Mouffe. In *European Political Science* Vol. 2. 2002. 1: 54–56. p. (It is in Hungarian, too: Politikatudományi Szemle 2004: 4.)

Kari Palonen: Introduction: from policy and polity to politicking and politicization. In Kari Palonen and Tuja Parvikko: *Reading the Political. Exploring the Margins of Politics*. Helsinki: The Finish Political Science Association, 1993. 6–16. p. (It is in Hungarian, too: manuscript)

Terrel Carver: Discourse Analysis and the „Linguistic Turn”. In *European Political Science* Vol. 2. 2002. 1: 50–53. p. (It is in Hungarian, too: Politikatudományi Szemle 2004: 4.)

Terrel Carver and Matti Hyvärinen: Introduction. In Terrel Carver és Matti Hyvärinen: (eds.) (1997): In *Interpreting the Political. New Methodologies*. 1–6. p. London and New York, Routledge. (It is in Hungarian, too: manuscript)

Maarten Hajer: Discourse Analysis and the Study of Policy Making In *European Political Science* Vol. 2. 2002. 1: 61–65 p. (It is in Hungarian, too: Politikatudományi Szemle 2004: 4.)

Véronique Mottier: Discourse Analysis and the Politics of Identity/Difference. In *European Political Science* Vol. 2. 2002. 1: 57–60 p. (It is in Hungarian, too: Politikatudományi Szemle 2004: 4.)

Discourse Analysis: Criticism and Defence. In *European Political Science* Vol. 2. 2002. 1: 66–67. p. (It is in Hungarian, too: Politikatudományi Szemle 2004: 4.)

David Howart and Yannis Stavrakakis: Introducing discourse theory and political analysis. In David Howart, Aletta J. Norval and Yannis Stavrakakis (eds.): *Discourse theory and political analysis: Identities, hegemonies and social changes*. 1–23. p. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000. (book or photocopies)

Session 2: 'Roots and logic', 15 November

After the introduction, we must discuss the background of discourse theory. We look at Laclau on 'universality' and 'particularity', and ask ourselves questions such as: What do poststructuralism and postmarxism mean, and what do they imply for our understanding of the world as well as concrete empirical analysis?

This literature is important, but if you get stuck, don't worry, keep on going. Most of us get stuck at some point. The move from Marxism, is described in more detail in the first and second chapters of the *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (HSS)*, and there's an approachable book on the philosophical background: David Howarth, *Discourse*, Open University Press, 2001.

Ernesto Laclau: Philosophical roots of discourse theory.

In: www.essex.ac.uk/centre/TheoStud/frameset.asp?p=onlinepapers.asp (It is in Hungarian, too: manuscript)

Ernesto Laclau: The Impossibility of Society. in: Ernesto Laclau: *New Reflection on the Revolution of Our Time*. 89–92. p. London and New York: Verso, 1990. (It is in Hungarian, too: manuscript)

'Postmarxism without apologies' Ernesto Laclau: *New Reflection on the Revolution of Our Time*. 89–92. p. London and New York: Verso, 1990. (book or photocopies)

Laclau and Mouffe, Chapter 3, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, London: Verso, 1985. (book or photocopies)

Session 3: 'Concepts to analysis', 22 November

In this session we will discuss key concepts in discourse theory, such as *empty and floating signifiers*, *logic of equivalence* and *logic of difference*, *political frontiers*, *myth* and *imaginary*, *rupture*.

We'll take this up with empirical examples.

Ernesto Laclau: Why do Empty Signifiers Matter in Politics? In Ernesto Laclau: *Emancipation(s)* London: Verso, 1996. pp. 36–47. (It is in Hungarian, too: manuscript)

Aletta J. Norval: Trajectories of future research in discourse theory. In David Howarth – Aletta J. Norval – Yannis Stavrakakis eds. (2000): *Discourse theory and political analysis. Identities, hegemonies and social change*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 219–236. p. (It is in Hungarian, too: manuscript)

Selections from the Ernesto Laclau: *New Reflection on the Revolution of Our Time*. London and New York: Verso, 1990. (book or photocopies)

And do go back to:

David Howarth and Yannis Stavrakakis: Introducing discourse theory and political analysis. In David Howarth, Aletta J. Norval and Yannis Stavrakakis (eds.): *Discourse theory and political analysis: Identities, hegemonies and social changes*. 1–23. p. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000. (book or photocopies)

Laclau and Mouffe, Chapter 3, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, London: Verso, 1985. (book or photocopies)

Session 4: ‘Analysis and critique’, 29 November

In this session, I will start by outlining my own research to break the ice. I hope you would participate by reviewing selected empirical cases from a pick-and-choose list, which will be distributed in sessions two and three. The point is to show how discourse theory has been used, which categories operationalised, what’s been gotten out of the discourse theoretical approach: how successful have each of the different attempts been.

We can discuss problems of discourse theory from both the empirical, and the theoretical point of view (that’s why I listed the ‘Glimpsing the Future’, Laclau’s replies to his, friendly, critics). In correspondence with the theme of the session, we also should discuss the role of critique in political analysis.

Ernesto Laclau ‘Glimpsing the Future’, in Simon Critchley and Oliver Marchart, eds., *Laclau – A critical reader*, pp. 279-328 (book or photocopies)

An article or piece from, for example one of the following (book or photocopies):

- Jacob Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Žižek*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1999.
- David Howarth, Aletta Norval & Yannis Stavrakakis, *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: identities, hegemonies and social change*, Manchester: Manchester University, 2000;
- David Howarth and Jakob Torfing, *Discourse Theory in European Politics*, Palgrave London: Macmillan, 2005
- Laclau, ed., *The Making of Political Identities*, London: Verso, 1994.
- Aletta Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*, London: Verso, 1996.
- Anna-Marie Smith, *New Right Discourse on Race & Sexuality: Britain 1968-1990*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Session 5: ‘Laclau and Mouffe?’ Date tba (to be announced), hopefully 6 December

The claim presented to the Cepods (Centre for Political Discourse Studies), has been that Laclau’s discourse theory focuses and provides answers for new social movements, while Mouffe’s approach focuses on the parliamentary politics. In this session we will discuss political frontiers, consensus, third way, political rhetoric..., and see how big a gap there actually is between Mouffe and Laclau, what do their different ‘takes’ add to political analysis.

Sections from:

Chantal Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox*, London: Verso, 2000. (book or photocopies)

Chantal Mouffe, *On The Political*, Thinking in Action Series, London and New York: Routledge, 2005. (book or photocopies)

Or relevant articles online, to be distributed later.

NOTE

The sessions will be in Hungarian, and whenever necessary, in English.

Finally, if you have any difficulties with the material, such as getting it (in any sense of the term), or if you want some more (!) or different stuff, do get in touch:

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Or let's fix a meeting over a coffee, for example at the Collegium Budapest.

September 2005