ACTS OF RESISTANCE, SYMBOLIC POWER, AND THE POLITICS OF THE ACADEMY AFTER 9/11

Through Pierre Bourdieu’s work on language and symbolic power, the papers on this panel will explore the hidden and not-so-hidden structural challenges facing contemporary academics.

The first paper will tie hegemonic structures vis-à-vis global capital and cheap labor to a similarly perceived feudalistic-type of structure in the academic work world. Specific attention will be paid to Central America, especially El Salvador, using the work of Bourdieu, especially his Acts of Resistance and Language and Symbolic Power. Other theorists who will be considered include Althusser and Gramsci.

**Presenter:** Doug Sweet, Santa Clara University  
**Title:** The Politics of Consensus, Hegemonic Silence, and the Mystification of Agency: Bourdieu and the Post 9/11 Academy

The second paper will consider Pierre Bourdieu’s work on “authorized language,” especially as he considers it in Language and Symbolic Power. How are those who teach in academia “authorized” to come to speech about the critical issues of the day? How do they use their “platform” in the classroom to shape students’ perceptions of these events? What are the implications in the present climate, as civil liberties and the Bill of Rights are constrained by the “war” on terrorism?

To answer these questions, the paper will explore a model of “myth-making” grounded in Bourdieu’s notion of “habitus” as a mechanism through which, consciously or unconsciously, persons who exercise symbolic power contribute either to sustaining or subverting the myths which support the habitus. How can this model be used consciously to promote alternative visions for society? How can academics spend their symbolic capital wisely in pursuit of goals such as informed discourse and truly participatory democracy?

**Presenter:** Natalie K. Houghtby-Haddon, The George Washington University  
**Title:** Teaching as myth-making: On exercising symbolic power in the classroom

To round out the panel, a respondent will seek to draw out common themes from the papers that help to illuminate how Bourdieu’s work can encourage intellectuals—and academics—to challenge/resist/reclaim the politics of the academy in the post-9/11 world.

**Respondent:** Carolyn Betensky, The George Washington University