PAPER 5: THE ART OF LANGUAGE

Amy Tan writes in her essay “Mother Tongue” about the different “Engishes” she uses—one designated for family talk, another designated for academia. In Jhumpa Lahiri’s book The Namesake (2006 film adaptation by Mira Nair), Gogol, a Bengali-American, struggles with his family’s strict Bengali traditions and language, along with his unique Russian name. In Gloria Anzaldúa’s piece, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue,” she writes: “Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself.” (RW 533).

Language, Anzaldúa believes, shapes identity. Anzaldúa, Tan, and Gogol all deal with the struggle to belong to multiple speech communities. Think about the speech communities you belong to or struggle with.


For ways to brainstorm speech communities, consider:
- Social ties (friends/romantic relationships)
- Family
- Religious affiliations
- Ethnic backgrounds
- Occupations
- Hobbies

Length: 3-4 pages

Audience: Instructor and students of 1310; broader academic community (especially those studying language and identity)

Format: Use MLA Style to format paper (see BH)

Drafts for Peer Review due: see Course Calendar

Final Copy (with PR materials): see Course Calendar