

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

SPEAKER SERIES:

Radio Union nan kalfou: Navigating the language ideologies of home and host countries

Dr. Chantal White
Université Sainte-Anne

In recent years, particularly with the rise of anti-Haitian rhetoric in the United States, Montreal has increasingly established itself as the cultural capital of the Haitian diaspora, despite being only the third-largest Haitian community in North America, trailing behind New York and Miami. Due to Haiti's French colonial past, immigrants of Haitian origin have historically been perceived as being more compatible with the vision of a distinct French-speaking society in Quebec. This perception, however, fails to take into account the fact that in Haiti, only 5 to 7% of the population speaks French fluently, while everyone speaks Haitian Creole. Reflecting the linguistic situation in Haiti, six of the seven Haitian radio stations in Montreal broadcast their programs in Creole. In contrast, Radio Union, the only ethnic radio station that consistently targets a Haitian audience, broadcasts its programs exclusively in French. This means that the radio voice of Montreal's Haitian population speaks only French. In this paper, I examine how Radio Union's language policy is justified, discussed, and implemented both on and off the air. As a diasporic medium, Radio Union operates within the discursive and ideological spheres of both the host country and the homeland. After a brief overview of the main language ideologies at play within the crossroads that is Haitian radio in Montreal, I illustrate how these ideologies influence the language choices of Radio Union's various hosts.

Chantal White is a professor of linguistics in the Department of French Studies at Université Sainte-Anne. With a primary focus on linguistic ideologies in situations of language contact, Chantal studied linguistic anthropology at New York University. As a specialist in traditional and community media—specifically print media and broadcasting—Chantal has researched the linguistic ideologies and practices of hosts on a French-language radio station targeting Montreal's Haitian diaspora. Her recent work focuses on the way the local vernacular « acadjonne » is portrayed by characterological figures in Baie Sainte-Marie and on the linguistic ideologies they convey through their appearances in the media and on the stage.

Friday, October 16th, 2026
McCain #2118 @ 2:30 p.m.
Reception to follow
All Welcome!