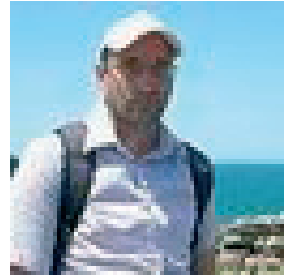


Conferência sobre argumentação e emoções

Fabrizio Macagno



**Dia 19 de Outubro, 11:00 horas, Sexta-feira,
sala Victor de Matos (6º piso da FLUC)**

ENTRADA LIVRE

Persuasive Definitions and Emotive Language

Words are instruments to refer and describe reality. However, at the same time they can be used to hide and distort it. Since ancient times, the persuasive force of names has been analysed in two crucial dimensions: their function of depicting reality, and their power of arousing emotions. They refer to reality by providing a representation of it, but they can also trigger an emotive response and influence the attitude of the hearer towards the referent. The use of a word in this sense can affect decisions and judgments. The speaker can use a name to represent facts unknown to the hearer by altering reality. He can omit, conceal and distort events and qualities, so that the representation does not correspond to the actual states of affairs. The speaker can also change the meaning of a term in order to modify the way he classifies reality. He can choose or use a new definition of a name, so that the interpretation of its referent is altered and the interlocutor's attitude towards it is modified. Names are therefore instruments for influencing our emotions and our perception of the world.

Building on Ch. L. Stevenson's theory of persuasive definitions (*Ethics and Language*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), the emotive and persuasive dimension of words will be inquired into, showing how their persuasiveness can be linked to the system, or rather hierarchy, of values. The speaker can redefine the descriptive meaning of a term positively evaluated by a community of speakers in order to classify a fragment of reality that otherwise would have been excluded from its reference. On the other hand, he can alter the hierarchy of values or modify the definition of the values that the use of the word triggers, or emphasize the negative or positive values associated with a concept in order to hide the potentially controversial classification. This theoretical approach will be applied to redefinitions of emotive keywords such as "peace" and "war" or "terrorism" in crucial political discourses such as Obama's Nobel Prize Address.