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Class: Tues/Thurs: (9:30 am - 10:45 am)

English 101

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Rhetorical analysis essay

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How linguistics can make or break you when speaking to people of authority

Chi Luu's, "[How being polite with police can backfire.](#)" Takes the linguistic standpoint toward controversial topics like police brutality and abuse of power toward African americans. Chi Luu brings forth new perspectives on how using certain diction with police or people of authority can backfire and place you between a rock and a hard place even when you've done no harm. She uses different current police brutality events to state that it is still a recurring problem, even after the George Floyd incident. She argues that we as citizens are taught to respect law enforcement and be polite, although she argues that being polite can hinder Americans from using their rights. Using polite diction can be misinterpreted due to its indirect approach. Asking indirect questions causes the people listening to be able to draw negative conclusions on what is being said. Chi Luu's unbiased standpoint brings a new perspective to the table by allowing you to absorb and learn the information without getting angry and triggered. Chi luu's, " How being polite with police can backfire." argues that the societal norms of politeness in altercations with law enforcement can risk your civil rights, specifically with minorities or people of lower economic success . By analyzing the rocky outcomes of being indirect and the social dynamics in place , Luu explains that such respect can lead to miscommunication and racial vulnerability due to biases, and urges the reassessment of how to communicate with people of authority.

In her article, "How Being Polite with Police Can Backfire," Chi Luu explores the liabilities of politeness in interactions between citizens and law enforcement, specifically in black and brown communities. Luu delivered her argument through a range of personal narratives and research from social linguistics, pressing that the social norms being polite can lead to misunderstanding that can risk citizens' civil rights. By using incidents as examples of police brutality, for example, the tragic deaths of George Floyd and Daunte Wright, Luu presses for the reassessment of communication norms with people of authority to prevent acts of police brutality to decline. Her argument counters that being polite will keep you safe and help with understanding. She states that specific diction can leave victims vulnerable and leave an opening to corrupt activity and misinterpretation. One of Luu's rhetorical strategies is using casual conversations with others as examples, in a setting with friends or family where communication can be misinterpreted. For example, she uses indirect and direct questions to support her argument, "What time is it getting to be?" said at a party might be a hint that someone wants to leave, without explicitly saying "I want us to leave now." This analogy as an example highlights how one can take a polite question into an insult or resistance. In these instances clear communication is key to help others draw proper inferences and alleviate the person for being wrongly accused or judged. She implies in interactions with the police or in police interrogations clear communication is key to maintaining your civil rights and liberties. Specifically with women and people of minority groups that tend to use indirect speech more often than others. Luu's rhetorical guidance to use academic based research elevated her argument by providing a stronger educational background that ensures her perspective and highlights the systematic racism that is being normalized. Furthermore, she addresses the power of diction and the dynamics it plays in everyday conversation and in sticky situations. She also analyzed different

speech patterns , one specific speech pattern that falls under “women's language,” which is also a stereotypical norm between genders deeming one inferior. This analysis places more emphasis on how social hierarchies more or less than gender. That we need to place more focus on social norms of communication and less on personal opinions because lives are at stake. Chi Luu observed that in courts and places with higher power they favor more direct and confident responses. This creates a high risk for people who use indirect speech as self expression, lack of education or cultural preferences. This article is Luu’s call to action to identify the small things that we overlook with interactions with people of higher power. That anything we say can infect be used in the court of law and can be twisted and turned as they see fit. The article dives into the psychological impact within communication during times of intimidation, placing prominence on anxiety and fear that tend to be present in encounters with police. For people of color the possibilities are high for intentional misinterpretation or biased evaluations. Luu validates this point by using real-life examples where being polite has not protected individuals' welfare and civil liberties, but either cost a life or unfair conviction. By mentioning the incidents, she flawlessly places the message that being respectful and obedient do not equal safety and can always be twisted, especially for black communities. The legal system continues to dismiss people of counsel for indirect language, showing the unbenounced bias within the system. This brings light to the citizens of the importance of clear communication and to exercise their right without placing themselves into more trouble.

Chi Luu embedded the power of ambiguity, politeness and failure in describing interactions with Law enforcement. She draws a combination of relatable examples and sociolinguistic research to make a powerful case that social expectations for politeness can impede on one's civil liberties. By using power dynamics and language choice as a way to

- *How Being Polite with Police Can Backfire* - JSTOR DAILY, Chi Luu, [daily.jstor.org/how-being-polite-with-police-can-backfire/](https://www.jstor.org/how-being-polite-with-police-can-backfire/). Accessed 3 Mar. 2025.
- *Grammarly: Free AI Writing Assistance*, <https://www.grammarly.com/>. Accessed 3 March 2025.