

Communication 206: Communication and Culture

Fall 2012

Professor Sarah Banet-Weiser
Fall Tues/Thurs 12:30-1:50

Office Hours:
SBW: Thursday 10-12, or by appt
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Teaching Assistants:
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Course Description:

This course is designed as an introduction to communication as the study of culture. Any study of communication entails an understanding of culture, and vice-versa. As an examination of cultural institutions, ideologies, artifacts, and productions, work in cultural studies and communication is concerned with the integral relationship of cultural practices to relationships of power. Therefore we will focus on some of the key methodologies of cultural analysis and some of the primary themes of cultural study, with an emphasis on how they intersect with central issues in the field of communication. The first half of the course will be devoted to general approaches, key concepts, and overarching questions, with a particular emphasis on the study of media, popular culture, and communication. The second half will focus more specifically on distinct units of study—gender, pop music, television, radio, brand culture, and others—as individual case studies of cultural analysis. We will pay particular attention to how notions of both culture and cultural study have changed over time, and how those legacies influence contemporary debates around cultural production, cultural identity, and global cultural change.

Required Texts for the Course (available at the bookstore):

Duncombe, Stephen, ed. 2002. *Cultural Resistance Reader*. New York: Verso.

Additional Comm 206 readings posted on Blackboard.

Course Requirements:

Students are required to attend class regularly, to contribute to class discussions, and to do weekly reading. Attendance in lecture is important: there is significant material covered in lecture that is not in the reading and you cannot pass the course if you do not

attend most of the lectures. In addition, there will be frequent screenings in lecture for which you will be responsible. There are several writing assignments for this class, and because the lectures, discussions, reading assignments and course assignments are all vitally linked, it is critical that you keep up with the schedule.

Students who miss more than **four lectures and two section discussions** will have their grades reduced and risk failing the course.

The final course grade will be based on the following distribution:

Four papers, each 20%.

Class/Section participation (not based solely on attendance), 10%.

Post on a “cultural event,” submitted on Blackboard, 10%.

Papers: There are four papers due in this class. Each paper should be 5-7 pages long, checked for grammar and spelling, with proper citation practices. The details of each paper will be given in a prompt approximately one week before the papers are due (due dates are noted in the syllabus). These papers are designed to have you think theoretically about issues of culture; while they call on you to utilize readings, they are not intended to be summaries of arguments presented in the course, but rather are an opportunity for you to think about cultural practices that have some meaning to you within the context of the course readings. Papers are due in class (not as an email attachment), and there are **no** late papers accepted. If you have an emergency that impacts your ability to turn your paper in on time, you need to contact the professor **before** the paper is due. Each paper is worth 20% of your final grade.

Section Assignments: The 10% section grade will be determined by participation and section assignments. TAs will distribute the section assignments in class.

Cultural Event Posts: This assignment offers an opportunity for you to post a short analysis (this can be as short as one or two paragraphs) of a “cultural event” you attend throughout the semester. This can be an art event, such as a visit to a museum or an art exhibit; a musical event, such as a concert or a symphony; a theatre event; a fashion show; a photography exhibit, a non-USC sports event, etc. The post does not require you to connect these events to course readings, although it is fine to do so; rather, it is simply an opportunity for you to relate your own activities to the discussions about culture we will be having in class. And, while surely events such as fraternity/sorority rush parties, raves, and other sorts of parties are also “cultural events” and often worthy of our analysis, for this assignment we’d like you to narrow the definition a bit to the kinds of events that involve cultural production. If you have questions about events, please email me. The post is due by Week Ten—if we have no post from you by that time, you will receive a “0” for the assignment.

Disability: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure

the letter is delivered to us as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Annenberg School for Communication Academic Integrity Policy:

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will receive a failing grade in the course and may be dismissed as a major.

In addition to the formal academic integrity policy, our pedagogical policy is based on mutual respect; all students are encouraged to use the classroom as a space in which to speak and to voice their opinions. Our expectation is that you will respect not only the professors but also your fellow classmates when they are participating in discussion.

A final note about Academic Integrity: at the Annenberg School, we are fortunate to have classrooms with wireless Internet connection. This is not, however, an opportunity for students to surf the Internet for something more interesting than the class lecture, update their Facebook profiles, IM friends, or play solitaire. Our class is also not available for tweeting—please do not do this. If this kind of activity gets to be a problem, laptop computers will not be allowed in the auditorium.

Schedule of Classes, Topics & Readings:

Week One

Tuesday 8/28: Introduction to the Course

Thursday 8/30: Defining Culture and Communication

- ❖ Raymond Williams, “Culture” from *The Cultural Resistance Reader* [p. 35-41]
- ❖ Raymond Williams, “Culture is Ordinary” [Blackboard]
- ❖ Douglas Kellner, “Communication vs. Cultural Studies: Overcoming the Divide” from *Communication Theory* 5 (2). p.162-177 [Blackboard]

Week Two

Tuesday 9/4: Culture and Power

- ❖ Marx and Engels, from “The German Ideology”, from *The Cultural Resistance Reader* [p. 41-49]
- ❖ Matthew Arnold, “Culture & Anarchy: An Essay in Political & Social Criticism” from *The Cultural Resistance Reader* [p. 49-58]

Thursday 9/6 : The Politics of Culture

- ❖ Antonio Gramsci, “from The Prison Notebooks,” from *The Cultural Resistance Reader* [p. 58-67]
- ❖ Edward Said, “Orientalism” [Blackboard]

Week Three

Tuesday 9/11: Culture and the Popular

- ❖ James Carey, “A Cultural Approach to Communication” from *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* [Blackboard]
- ❖ Stuart Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing the ‘Popular’” from *The Cultural Resistance Reader*

Thursday 9/13: Culture and the Individual

- ❖ Louis Althusser, “Ideology and ideological state apparatuses” [Blackboard]

Week Four

Tuesday 9/18: Culture and Media

- ❖ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “*The Culture Industry*” [Blackboard]
- ❖ Richard Hoggart, from *The Cultural Resistance Reader* [p. 303- 311]

Thursday 9/20: Class and Culture - Divisions and Debates

- ❖ Walter Benjamin, from *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, (Schocken, 1969), “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” [Blackboard]
- ❖ Dwight MacDonald, “A Theory of Mass Culture” from *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*, eds. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White, (Free Press, 1957) [Blackboard]

Paper One Due in Class: No Late Papers Accepted

Week Five

Tuesday 9/25: Culture, High and Low

- ❖ Lawrence Levine, “William Shakespeare and the American People: A Study in Cultural Transformation” from *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, eds. Michael Schudson and Chandra Mukerji, (California, 1991). [Blackboard]
- ❖ George Lipsitz, “Popular Culture: This Ain’t No Sideshow” (Blackboard)

Thursday 9/27: Culture and Taste: Guest Lecture, Prof. Tom Kemper

- ❖ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Aesthetic Sense as the Sense of Distinction,” [Blackboard]
- ❖ Malcolm Gladwell, “The Coolhunt” [Blackboard]

Week Six

Tuesday 10/2: Subculture and Politics: Guest lecture, Prof. Taj Frazier

- ❖ Albert Cohen, “A General Theory of Subcultures” from *The Subcultures Reader* [Blackboard]
- ❖ Sarah Thornton, “The Distinction of Cultures Without Distinction” [Blackboard]

Thursday 10/4: Specific Subcultures: Screening of Style Wars

- ❖ Sarah Banet-Weiser, Convergence on the Street [Blackboard]

Week Seven

Tuesday, 10/9: Culture and Difference—Guest Lecture Inna Arzumanova

- ❖ Ralph Ginzburg, “Huge Mob Tortures Negro,” from *The Cultural Resistance Reader* [p. 131-134]
- ❖ Richard Dyer, “White.” [Blackboard]
- ❖ Hua Hsu, “The End of White America” [Blackboard]
- ❖ Stuart Hall, “The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media.” [Blackboard]

Thursday, 10/11: Culture and Resistance—Guest Lecture Melissa Brough

- ❖ Robin D.G. Kelley, from Race Rebels, from *The Cultural Resistance Reader* [p. 96-99] from *The Cultural Resistance Reader* [p. 96-99]
- ❖ James C. Scott, from *The Cultural Resistance Reader* [p. 89-96]
- ❖ Melissa Brough, Huffington Post piece

Week Eight

Tuesday 10/16: Culture and the Image

- ❖ Roland Barthes, “The Rhetoric of the Image” [Blackboard]
- ❖ Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, “Viewers Make Meaning” from *Practices of Looking* [Blackboard]

Thursday, 10/18: Culture and Media: Television

- ❖ Aniko Bodroghkozy, “Plastic Hippies: The Counterculture on TV” in *The Groove Tube* [Blackboard]
- ❖ Horace Newcomb and Paul Hirsch, “Television as a Cultural Forum” in *Television: A Critical View* [Blackboard]

Paper Two Due in Class: No Late Papers Accepted

Week Nine

Tuesday 10/23: Culture and Media – Radio

- ❖ Michelle Hilmes, “Radiating Culture,” *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922-1952* (U of Minnesota Press, 1997) [Blackboard]
- ❖ Franz Fanon, “The Voice of Algeria.” [Blackboard]

Thursday 10/25: Popular Music: Guest Lecture Prof. Josh Kun

- ❖ Simon Frith, “Music and Identity” in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay [Blackboard]
- ❖ Theodor Adorno, “On Popular Music” in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, eds. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin [Blackboard]
- ❖ George Lipsitz, “Cruising Around The Historic Bloc: Postmodernism and Popular Music in East Los Angeles,” from *Time Passages* [Blackboard]
- ❖ Tricia Rose, “All Aboard the Night Train,” from *Black Noise* [Blackboard]

Week Ten

Tuesday 10/30: Culture and Femininity

- ❖ Sarah Banet-Weiser, “Branding the Post-Feminist Self” [Blackboard]
- ❖ Susan Bordo, “Introduction: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body” from *Unbearable Weight* [Blackboard]

Thursday 11/1:

Culture and Masculinity

- ❖ CLR James. “from *Beyond Boundary*.” from *The Cultural Resistance Reader* [p. 205-214]
- ❖ Michael A. Messner & Jeffrey Montez de Oca, “The Male Consumer as Loser: Beer and Liquor Ads in Mega Sports Media Events.” [Blackboard]

Week Eleven

Tuesday 11/6: Culture and Sexuality

- ❖ Michel Foucault, “We ‘Other Victorians’” from *The History of Sexuality* [Blackboard]

Susan J. Wolfe and Lee Ann Roripaugh, “The (In)visible Lesbian: Anxieties of Representation in The L Word,” in *Feminist Television Criticism* [Blackboard]

Thursday 11/8:

Screening: Paris is Burning

Week Twelve

Tuesday 11/13: Discussion: Paris is Burning

- ❖ bell hooks, “Is Paris Burning?” [Blackboard]

Paper Three Due in Class: No Late Papers Accepted

Thursday 11/15: NO CLASS

Week Thirteen

Tuesday 11/20: Culture and Hybridity

- ❖ Taj Frazier, “China’s Chocolate Girl Wonder: Lou Jing and Anti-Black Racism.” [Blackboard]
- ❖ George Lipsitz “Immigration and Assimilation.” from *The Cultural Resistance Reader* [p. 231-239]

Thursday 11/22: NO CLASS : Thanksgiving

Week Fourteen

Tuesday 11/27: Brand Culture

- ❖ Rob Walker, “The Pretty Good Problem,” “The Straw Man in the Grey Flannel Suit,” and “Ignoring the Jones’s” from *Buying In* [Blackboard]
- ❖ Alison Hearn, “Meat, Mask, Burden” [Blackboard]

Thursday 11/29: Consumer Citizenship and Commodity Activism

- ❖ Roopali Mukherjee, “Diamonds (are from Sierra Leone): Bling and the Promise of Consumer Citizenship” [Blackboard]
- ❖ Laurie Ouellette, “Citizen Brand: ABC and the Do Good Turn in US Television” [Blackboard]

Week Fifteen

Tuesday 12/4: Global Culture

- ❖ Karl Marx, “Communist Manifesto” (pts 1-2); available on-line [Internet url will be provided in class]

Thursday 12/6: Conclusion

Paper Four Due in Class: No Late Papers Accepted