

COMM 620 Special Topics: Civic Media and Participatory Politics
Spring 2013
3 units

Schedule/Syllabus

Section: 20912D
Day/Time: Tuesday, 12:30-3:20 p.m.
Classroom: ASCJ G38

Professor: Henry Jenkins
Email: hjenkins@usc.edu
Office: ASC 101C
Office hours: By appointment.
Please contact Amanda Ford at: amanda.ford@usc.edu

Course Description and Outcomes:

Civic Media: “any use of any technology for the purposes of increasing civic engagement and public participation, enabling the exchange of meaningful information, fostering social connectivity, constructing critical perspectives, insuring transparency and accountability, or strengthening citizen agency.” (Jenkins)

Participatory Politics: “interactive, peer-based acts through which individuals and groups seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern. Importantly, these acts are not guided by deference to elites or formal institutions. Examples of participatory political acts include starting a new political group online, writing and disseminating a blog post about a political issue, forwarding a funny political video to one’s social network, or participating in a poetry slam.” (Joe Kahne and Cathy Cohen)

What can approaches rooted in cultural and media studies contribute to our understanding of political practices and organizations? How might a closer consideration of democratic citizenship contribute to our understanding of core concepts, such as the relationship between publics and audiences, the nature of participation, the power of storytelling, or the implications of remix practices? Over the past few years, political movements, such as Occupy Wall Street, The Tea Party, the DREAM activists, Kony 2012, and the Arab Spring movements, to cite a few examples, have explored new kinds of strategies that rely heavily on networked communication to mobilize their base and increase public awareness. At the same time, new work in political science and communication studies seeks to understand the ways these movements have tapped into the expanded communication capacities of everyday people and the ways that cultural participation might spill over into engagement with civic and political issues. In this class, we will be looking at how scholars have responded to these new movements and the ways that their work is reframing our understanding of the nature of democracy.

Often, we think about democracy as grounded in a rationalist discourse and shaped by structures of information, but democracy also has strong cultural roots and is shaped by what Raymond Williams would call “a structure of feeling.” We may ask in the first instance what citizens need to know in order to make wise decisions and, in the second, what it feels like to be an empowered citizen capable of making a difference and sharing common interests with others. Across the trajectory of the course, we will explore a range of other institutions and practices that have similarly contributed to the public awareness, civic engagement, and social connectivity required for a functioning democracy.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- define key concepts, such as "public sphere," "counter-public," "imagined communities," "participatory politics," and "citizen journalism," which have run through debates about the civic functions of media
- develop their own analysis of the intersection between culture and politics as they have informed contemporary political movements
- describe a range of different mechanisms through which civic functions have been performed across history
- recognize alternative conceptions of the role of citizens and their relationship to civic information
- discuss the impact of new media and participatory culture on the ways we conduct politics in the 21st century
- explain competing theories concerning youth and political participation
- discuss competing explanations for key political movements, such as Occupy, the Dreamer movement, the Arab Spring uprisings, the Tea Party, etc.

Grading and Assignments:

1. Students will contribute questions and comments to the class forum on Blackboard. (20 percent)
2. Students will develop a five-page report on a civic or activist organization they feel is making innovative use of civic media. (20 percent)
3. Using the PLAYground, students will develop a challenge which translates a core insight from the class into a set of activities and concepts that might be applied to the teaching of a high school civics class. (20 percent)
4. Students will develop a final project that applies the broad ideas of the course. This project might be a conventional academic essay, an experiment in new journalistic practice, or the prototype for a new civic media tool. Students should discuss their project with the instructor early in the semester so we can set an appropriate scale for this project. Students will be ready to give a 10-15 minute presentation on their project in the final weeks of the class. (40 percent)

Required Books:

Roopali Mukherjee and Sarah Banet-Weiser (Eds.) *Commodity Activism: Cultural Resistance in Neo-Liberal Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (New York: Polity, 2012).

Aaron Delwiche and Jennifer Jacobs Henderson (eds.) *The Participatory Culture Handbook* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

All other readings will be available through the class Blackboard site.

Academic Integrity:

It is particularly important that you are aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, fabricating data for a project, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself. If you have doubts about any of these practices, confer with a faculty member.

Resources on academic dishonesty can be found on the Student Judicial Affairs Web site (<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS>.) “Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism” addresses issues of paraphrasing, quotations, and citation in written assignments, drawing heavily upon materials used in the university’s writing program; “Understanding and avoiding academic dishonesty” addresses more general issues of academic integrity, including guidelines for adhering to standards concerning examinations and unauthorized collaboration. The “2009-2010 SCampus” (<http://www.usc.edu/scampus>) contains the university’s student conduct code and other student-related policies.

School of Journalism Policy on Plagiarism/Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism is defined as taking ideas or writings from another and passing them off as one's own; in journalism, this includes appropriating the reporting of another without clear attribution. The following is the Annenberg School of Journalism's policy on academic integrity as published in the university catalogue: “Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will receive a failing grade in the course and will be dismissed as a major from the School of Journalism. There are no exceptions to the school’s policy.”

Statement for Students with Disabilities:

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.

About the Instructor:

Henry Jenkins is Provost's Professor of Communication, Journalism, and Cinematic Arts at USC. Previously, he was Peter de Florez Professor in the Humanities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he directed the Comparative Media Studies program for a decade.

As one of the first media scholars to chart the changing role of the audience in an environment of increasingly pervasive digital content, Jenkins has been at the forefront of understanding the effects of participatory media on society, politics and culture. His research gives key insights to the success of social-networking Web sites, networked computer games, online fan communities and other advocacy organizations, and emerging news media outlets. Jenkins is recognized as a leading thinker in the effort to redefine the role of journalism in the digital age.

Through parallels drawn between the consumption of pop culture and the processing of news information, he and his fellow researchers have identified new methods to encourage citizen engagement. As part of this work, Jenkins launched the Center for Civic Media at MIT to further explore these parallels. He is now Principal Investigator on the Civic Paths project at USC's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.

Week 1, Tuesday, January 15th: Foundations

James W. Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication," in *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

Benedict Anderson, "Introduction" and "Cultural Roots," in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

Robert Putnam, "Introduction: Thinking about Social Change in America," in *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Civic Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

Joshua Meyrowitz, "The Rise of Glocality: New Senses of Place and Identity in the Global Village," in Kristof Nyiri (ed.), *A Sense of Place: The Global and the Local in Mobile Communication* (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2005, 21-30).

Week 2, Tuesday, January 22nd: Youth and Political Participation

Peter Levine, "Why Do We Need Civic Engagement for Young People?," in *The Future of Democracy: Developing the Next Generation of American Citizens* (Boston: Tufts, 2007).

Joseph Kahne and Kathy J. Cohen, *Youth and Participatory Politics: a National Survey* (MacArthur Foundation, 2012),
http://ypp.dmlcentral.net/sites/all/files/publications/YPP_Survey_Report_EXECSUM_0.pdf.

Joseph Kahne, Ellen Middaugh and Danielle Allen, "Youth, New Media, and Participatory Politics," in Danielle Allen (ed.) *Youth, New Media, and Citizenship* (Work in Progress).

Jennifer Light "Putting our Conversation in Context: Youth, Old Media, and Political Participation, 1800-1971" in Danielle Allen (ed.) *Youth, New Media, and Citizenship* (Work in Progress).

Linda Herrera, "Youth and Citizenship in the Digital Age: A View from Egypt," *Harvard Educational Review* 82(3), 2012, 333-352.

Recommended:

Peter Levine and Cynthia Gibson, *The Civic Mission of Schools*, (Carnegie Foundation and CIRCLE: The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2003),
<http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/CivicMissionofSchools.pdf>.

W. Lance Bennett, Chris Wells, and Deen Freelon, "Communicating Civic Engagement: Contrasting Models of Citizenship in the Youth Web Sphere," *Journal of Communication* 61(5), 2011, 835-856.

Week 3, Tuesday, January 29th: Where Publics Gather

Ethan Zuckerman, "Cute Cats" in Danielle Allen (ed.) *Youth, New Media, and Citizenship* (Work in Progress)

Noelle McAfee, "Using New Media Politically," in Danielle Allen (ed.) *Youth, New Media, and Citizenship* (Work in Progress).

Mary L. Gray, "From Walmart to Websites: Out in Public," in *Out in the Country: Youth, Media and Queer Visibility in Rural America* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

Jessica Clark, "Public Media 2.0: Dynamic, Engaged Publics" (Center for Social Media), 2009, <http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/sites/default/files/whitepaper.pdf>.

Lana Swartz and Kevin Driscoll, "'I Hate Your Politics, But I Love Your Diamonds': The Web-Based Interest-Driven Messageboard as DIY Infrastructure," in Matt Ratto and Megan Boler (eds.), *DIY Citizenship: Critical Making and Social Media* (MIT Press, forthcoming 2013).

Week 4, Tuesday, February 5th: Why Media Matters

John Fiske, "Los Angeles: A Tale of Three Videos" and "Technostruggles" in *Media Matters: Everyday Culture and Political Change* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Constituents of a Theory of the Media," *New Left Review* 64, 1970, 13-36.

Aaron Delwiche, "The New Left and the Computer Underground: Recovering Political Antecedents of Participatory Culture," in Aaron Delwiche and Jennifer Jacobs Henderson (eds.), *The Participatory Cultures Handbook* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 10-21.

Patricia A. Turner, "Introduction" and "Conspiracy I," *I Heard It Through the Grapevine: Rumor in the African American Community* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994).

Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, "Mobilized Grassroots and Roving Billionaires:

The Panoply of Tea Party Organizations” and “Getting the Word Out: The Media as Cheerleader and Megaphone,” in *The Tea Party and the Remaking of American Conservatism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Week 5, Tuesday, February 12th: Democracy and Diversity

Cathy J. Cohen, “‘My Petition’: Black Youth and the Promise of Democratic Citizenship” and “‘Minority Report’: Kanye West, Barack Obama and Political Alienation,” in *Democracy Remixed: Black Youth and the Future of American Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Melissa Victoria Harris-Lacewell, “Everyday Talk and Ideology” and “Truth and Soul: Black Talk in the Barber Shop,” in *Barbershop, Bibles and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Tommie Shelby, “Impure Dissent: Hip-Hop and the Political Ethics of Black Youth in the Digital Age” in Danielle Allen (ed.) *Youth, New Media, and Citizenship* (Work in Progress).

Week 6, Tuesday, February 19th: Networked Politics

Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (New York: Polity, 2012).

George Lipsitz, "Learning from New Orleans: The Social Warrant of Hostile Privatism and Competitive Consumer Citizenship," *Cultural Anthropology* 21(3), 2006, 451-468.

Evgeny Morozov, “Why the KGB Wants You to Join Facebook,” in *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom* (New York: Public Affairs, 2012).

Week 7, Tuesday, February, 26th: Rethinking the Informed Citizen

Roger Hurwitz, "Who Needs Politics? Who Needs People?: The Ironies of Democracy in Cyberspace," in Henry Jenkins and David Thorburn (eds.), *Democracy and New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 101-112.

Beth Simone Noveck, “Designing for Collaborative Democracy,” in *Wiki Government: How Technology Can Make Government Better, Democracy Stronger and Citizens More Powerful* (Brookings Institution Press, 2009).

Pierre Lévy, “The Creative Conversation of Collective Intelligence” (Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott, trans.), in Aaron Delwiche and Jennifer Jacobs Henderson (eds.), *The Participatory Cultures Handbook* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 99-108.

Kurt Squire and Matthew Gaydos, "From Egypt to Wisconsin: Tactical Innovation with Digital Media," *Critical Studies in Education* 54(1), 2013, 57-71.

Liana Gamber Thompson, "The Cost of Engagement: Politics and Participatory Practices in the U.S. Liberty Movement," *Media Activism and Participatory Politics White Paper*.

Week 8, Tuesday, March 5th: The Problem of Participation

Christopher Kelty, "From Participation to Power," in Aaron Delwiche and Jennifer Jacobs Henderson (eds.), *The Participatory Cultures Handbook* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 22-31.

Todd Gitlin, "Rituals of Participation," in *Occupy Nation: The Roots, The Spirit, and the Promise of Occupy Wall Street* (New York: IT Books, 2012).

Nico Carpentier, "Defining Participation: An Interdisciplinary Overview," in *Media and Participation: A Site of Ideological-Democratic Struggle* (Bristol: Intellect, 2011).

Jennifer Earl and Katrina Kimport, "Where We Have Been and Where We Are Headed," in *Digitally Enabled Social Change: Activism in the Internet Age*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).

Recommended:

Sherry R Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institution of Planners* 35(4), 1969, 216-224.

Peter Dahlgren, "Parameters of Online Participation: Conceptualising Civic Contingencies," *Communications Management Quarterly* 6(21), 2011, 87-110.

Week 9, Tuesday, March 12th: Making Media, Sharing Stories

Francesca Polletta, "Why Stories Matter," in *It Was Like a Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Arely Zimmerman, "Documenting DREAMS: New Media, Undocumented Youth, and the Immigrant Rights Movement," (*Media Activism and Participatory Politics White Paper*, 2012),
http://dmlcentral.net/sites/dmlcentral/files/resource_files/documenting_dreams_-_working_paper-mapp_-_june_6_20121.pdf.

Sasha Constanza-Chock, "Se Ve, Se Siente: Transmedia Mobilization in the Los Angeles Immigrant Rights Movement," MIT Comparative Media Studies podcast, January 24, 2011, http://cms.mit.edu/news/2011/01/podcast_sasha_costanza-chock_s.php.

Spring Recess, March 18th-22nd

Week 10, Tuesday, March 26th: Mobilization and Circulation

Ritesh Mehta, "Flash Activism: How a Bollywood Film Catalyzed Civic Justice Toward a Murder Trial," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 10, 2012, <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/345/271>.

Archon Fung and Jennifer Shkabatur, "Viral Engagement: Fast, Cheap, and Broad but Good for Democracy?," in Danielle Allen (ed.) *Youth, New Media, and Citizenship* (Work in Progress).

Ben Stokes and Francois Barr, "'Rethinking Mobile and Civics: *Toward Situated Engagement*" (Work in Progress).

Elisabeth Soep, "The Digital Afterlife of Youth-Made Media: Implications for Media Literacy Education," *Comunicar* 19(38), 2012, 93-100.

Jodi Dean, "Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics," *Cultural Politics* 1 (1), 2005, 51-74.

Gilad Lotan, "KONY2012: See How Invisible Networks Helped a Campaign Capture the World's Attention." *Social Flow*, March 14, 2012, <http://blog.socialflow.com/post/7120244932/data-viz-KONY2012-see-how-invisible-networks-helped-a-campaign-capture-the-worlds-attention>.

Week 11, Tuesday, April 2nd: Entertaining the Citizen

Elizabeth Van Zoonen, Excerpt from *Entertaining the Citizen: When Politics and Popular Culture Merge* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

Sonia Livingstone, "On the Relationship between Audiences and Publics," in Sonia Livingstone (ed.) *Audiences and Publics: When Cultural Engagement Matters for the Public Sphere* (London: Intellect, 2005), 17-42.

Daniel Dayan, "Mothers, Midwives and Abortionists: Genealogy, Obstetrics, Audiences and Publics," in Sonia Livingstone (ed.) *Audiences and Publics: When Cultural Engagement Matters for the Public Sphere* (London: Intellect, 2005), 43-76.

Stephen Duncombe, "Imagining No-Place," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 10, 2012, <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/350/266>.

Catherine Burwell and Meghan Boler, "I Could Create It Myself!" How Fan Bloggers Make a Difference," in Matt Ratto and Megan Boler (eds.), *DIY Citizenship: Critical Making and Social Media* (MIT Press, forthcoming 2013).

Week 12, Tuesday, April 9th: Civic Rituals and Spectacular Realities

Victor Turner, "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbolology," *Rice University Studies* 60(3), 1974, 53-92.

John Hartley, "Reality and the Plebisite," in *Television Truths: Forms of Knowledge in Popular Culture* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).

Aswin Punathambekar, "Television, Participatory Culture, and Politics: the Case of Indian Idol," *Flow* 10(5), 2009, <http://flowtv.org/?p=4182>.

Jane McGonigal, "This Is Not A Game': Immersive Aesthetics and Collective Play," Digital Arts & Culture conference proceedings, 2003, <http://www.seanstewart.org/beast/mcgonigal/notagame/paper.pdf>

Week 13, Tuesday, April 16th: From Culture Jamming to Commodity Activism (Sarah Banet-Weiser)

Selections from Roopali Mukherjee and Sarah Banet-Weiser (eds.), *Commodity Activism: Cultural Resistance in Neo-Liberal Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

Mark Dery, *Culture Jamming: Hacking, Slashing and Sniping in the Empire of the Signs*, *Open Magazine* pamphlet series, 1993, http://markdery.com/?page_id=154.

Week 14, Tuesday, April 23rd: Fan Activism

Melissa M. Brough and Sangita Shresthova, "Fandom Meets Activism: Rethinking Civic and Political Participation," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 10, 2012, <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/303/265>

Henry Jenkins, "'Cultural Acupuncture': Fan Activism and the Harry Potter Alliance," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 10, 2012, <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/305/259>.

Neta Kligler-Vilenchik and Sangita Shresthova, "Learning Through Practice: Participatory Culture Civics," (Media Activism and Participatory Politics, 2012), http://ypp.dmlcentral.net/sites/all/files/publications/Learning%20Through%20Practice_Kligler-Shresthova_Oct-2-2012.pdf.

Lori Kido Lopez, "Fan Activists and the Politics of Race in *The Last Airbender*." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 15(5), 2011, 431-445.

Week 15, Tuesday, April 30th: Final Presentations