

## Communication 206: Communication and Culture

Fall 2018

Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00 pm – 3:20 pm

ASC G26

### Instructor

Professor Cristina Mejia Visperas

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### Course Description

This course is designed as an introduction to **Cultural Studies**, an interdisciplinary area of critical analysis, ideas, concepts, and research that is essential to the academic discipline of **Communication**. Communication(s) refers to the various practices and technologies we use to convey and share information and feelings, and to connect people, places, ideas, things and products. Culture, however, is a more complex and elastic concept, its definition more difficult to establish firmly. To some degree, it denotes both the history and legacies of such systems of communication, and even more systems of meaning making. But it also indicates how such systems of information, communication, and meaning are negotiated, articulated, constrained, and transformed within a society. Culture consequently describes the totality of all communication practices, terms, and systems of information and meaning. It signifies what people actually do, i.e. their **agency** (their thinking, ideas, and practices of social life and meaning-making), as well as the social context, i.e. the **structure** (the rules and conventions that regulate, influence, and demarcate their activity) where these practices and processes are shaped and enacted.

In this course, we will explore the above ideas, giving close attention to the relationship between **culture** and **power** (the organization, management, regulation, domination, and contestation of social life) – a relationship that scholars describe and categorize through the idiom “**the politics of culture**,” and which necessarily implicates race, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability, class differences, and the ways these matters intersect.

In this course we will commit ourselves to learning, discussing, and situating within history and contemporary times various concepts, theories, models and paradigms relating to communication

and culture. We will also explore distinct units/subfields of study—photography, television, film, brand culture, and others—as individual case studies of cultural analysis.

But most importantly, we will interrogate and identify how the theories and concepts learned throughout the course tie into our lives and the lives of others, examining the sociocultural similarities and differences between people that shape how we communicate and relate (or not relate!) to each other. Thus, our personal and collective experiences, and, even more, the **historical and cultural forces that shape these experiences**, will be a priority. You will be called upon to situate the theories and concepts learned in class and readings in relation to your experiences, your perspectives, and your relations with others to identify and construct new categories, concepts, and modes of analysis that best resonate with the challenges, realities and phenomena that we and others encounter on a daily basis.

In the end, this class's purpose is to strengthen and nuance your understanding of the historical and cultural moment in which we live, and increase your confidence and ability to critically think, talk, write, and communicate this understanding in a manner that conveys rigor, openness, honesty, respect, and compassion.

### **Required Texts for the Course**

- Stephen Duncombe, ed. *Cultural Resistance Reader*. New York: Verso, 2002 (available at the bookstore)
- Other Readings on Blackboard (BB)

### **Course Requirements**

Students are required to attend class and section regularly, to contribute to class discussions and section 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 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. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Students who miss more than **three lectures and two section discussions** will have their grades reduced and risk failing the course. Attendance will be taken during lectures and sections, and you will lose an entire letter grade from the final grade for every unexcused absence. This means that if your final grade is an A-plus and you miss four lectures or three sections, your final grade will drop to a B-plus. An excused absence is one where you inform the professor or the TA *beforehand* that you will not be able to make it to class for a valid and documented medical or legal reason. If you have an unforeseen emergency that prevents you from attending class, inform the professor or TA as soon as possible and provide written evidence of the reason of the emergency (e.g. doctor's note). Office hours are for clarifying questions concerning

assignments, grades, and lecture/section materials, and not for repeating any lectures/sections that a student may have missed.

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

Three papers, each 20%

In-Class Midterm, 25%

Class/Section participation and assignments, 15%

Papers: There are three 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 submitted through Turnitin on Blackboard, 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.

Midterm: While this in-class exam will cover material from readings and lectures covered during weeks 1-7, it will emphasize greater focus on materials from weeks 5-7. The midterm is worth 25% of your final grade.

Section Assignments: The section grade will be determined by participation, periodic pop quizzes, and section assignments. The purpose of these assignments is to make sure you are keeping up with the readings. Your TA will be giving you due dates for written assignments in section, and you will turn these assignments in during section.

ALL of your work will be evaluated on the following:

- 1) the level of your engagement with the class materials (as evidenced in your written work and participation)
- 2) your capacity to explain your ideas and analysis in articulate and well-written forms structured around a clearly stated argument
- 3) your ability to creatively explore and apply theories and methodologies from class readings, lectures, media, and discussions

Course Grading Policy: Grades will be assigned as follows

A	outstanding, thoughtful and engaging work; a grade of A+ <i>may</i> be given to <i>individual</i> assignments in <i>rare</i> instances where expectations are exceeded
B+/B	above average work, demonstrating good insight into assignment
B-/C+	needs improvement on ideas, argument and follow through
C and below	fulfilling the bare minimum and showing little understanding of the material

If you have concerns regarding a grade on a given assignment, you must first wait 24 hours (cooling off period) before appealing it in writing (approximately 1 page), stating the reasons why you feel the grade is inaccurate, taking specific written comments into consideration. All concerns should be addressed within 10 days of receiving the graded assignment. After that, no appeals will be accepted for review and the grade will be considered final.

### **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.

Effective Fall 2014, all undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors will be required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the Annenberg [Virtual Commons](#) for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's [Information Technology Services](#) website. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that **use of computer in the classroom is a privilege**. You may use a computer in the classroom ONLY for taking notes or for class presentations. If you abuse this privilege by checking email or going on the Internet, updating Facebook profiles, IM-ing friends, or playing solitaire, you will be marked as absent for that class period. All other electronic devices (cell phones, MP3 players, etc.) must be turned off and put away during class time. If this kind of activity gets to be a problem, laptop computers will not be allowed in the classroom.

### **Statement on Academic Integrity**

**Plagiarism:** USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, ([www.usc.edu/scampus](http://www.usc.edu/scampus) or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as Communication school administrators. In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Title IX office describes reporting options and other resources. See <https://titleix.usc.edu/reporting-options/>

### **Writing Support**

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a 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 me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP: [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html), (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) [ability@usc.edu](mailto:ability@usc.edu).

### **Stress Management**

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

### **Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP)**

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) is located in Engemann, Suite 356 <http://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>. In case of an emergency or if you need immediate assistance, please call (213) 740-4900 (after hours, press zero “0” to speak to an on-call counselor). RSVP on-call counselors aid in discussing medical options, reporting options and provide crisis support and advocacy. Student Counseling Services is a separate place that also offers confidential counseling and support groups on a variety of other topics. To schedule an appointment with Student Counseling Services, call (213) 740-7711 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays or visit the Engemann Student Health Center on the University Park Campus.

### **ESL Students**

Please inform me as soon as possible if you require special accommodations based on your understanding of the English language.

## Schedule of Readings & Assignments

### Week 1: What is Culture?

- Monday, August 20
  - Raymond Williams, “Culture,” in *The Cultural Resistance Reader*
- Wednesday, August 22
  - Raymond Williams, “Culture is Ordinary,” from BB
  - Horace Miner, “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema,” from BB
  - James Carey, “A Cultural Approach to Communication,” from BB

### Week 2: Ideology and Hegemony

- Monday, August 27
  - Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, from “The German Ideology,” in *The Cultural Resistance Reader*
  - Antonio Gramsci, “from The Prison Notebooks,” from *The Cultural Resistance Reader*
  - Matthew Arnold, “Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism,” in *The Cultural Resistance Reader*
- Wednesday, August 29
  - Louis Althusser, “The State” and “On Ideology,” from BB
  - Michel Foucault, “Panopticism” from BB

### Week 3: Space, Place, and Location: Disability

- Monday, September 3 – LABOR DAY, NO CLASS
- Wednesday, September 5
  - Aimi Hamraie, “Designing Collective Access,” from BB

### Week 4: Space, Place, and Location: Empire

- Monday, September 10
  - Edward Said, “Orientalism” from BB
  - Gloria Anzaldúa, “The Homeland, Aztlán | El Otro Mexico” from BB
- Wednesday, September 12
  - Saidiya Hartman, “So Many Dungeons,” *Lose Your Mother* from BB

### Week 5: Intersectionality

- Monday, September 17
  - Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” from BB
- Wednesday, September 19
  - Cathy Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens,” from BB

- Audre Lorde, “There Is No Hierarchy of Oppressions” from BB

### Week 6: Mass Reproduction and Pop Culture

- Monday, September 24
  - Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” from BB
  - Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” from BB
- Wednesday, September 26 – PAPER 1 DUE
  - Jean Baudrillard, “The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media,” from *The Cultural Resistance Reader*
  - Stuart Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing the ‘Popular’” from *The Cultural Resistance Reader*

### Week 7: Taste and Subculture

- Monday, October 1
  - Pierre Bourdieu, “The Aesthetic Sense as the Sense of Distinction,” from BB
  - Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” from BB
  - Albert Cohen, “A General Theory of Subcultures” from BB
- Wednesday, October 3
  - Robin Kelley, “OGs in Postindustrial Los Angeles: Evolution of a Style,” in *The Cultural Resistance Reader*
  - Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, “Girls and Subcultures” from BB
  - John Clarke, “The Skinheads and the Magical Recovery of Community,” in *The Cultural Resistance Reader*

### Week 8: Branding and Co-optation

- Monday, October 8 – MIDTERM
- Wednesday, October 10
  - Vickie Rutledge Shields “The Less Space We Take the More Powerful We’ll Be,” from BB
  - Thomas Frank, “Why Johnny Can’t Dissent,” in *The Cultural Resistance Reader*

### Week 9: Spectatorship and (In)Visibility

- Monday, October 15
  - Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” from BB
  - bell hooks, “Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance,” from <https://genius.com/Bell-hooks-eating-the-other-desire-and-resistance-annotated>
- Wednesday, October 17
  - Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “The Politics of Staring: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography,” in BB

### Week 10: Whiteness and Masculinity

- Monday, October 22
  - Richard Dyer, “The Matter of Whiteness,” from BB
  - Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The First White President,” from <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/10/the-first-white-president-ta-nehisi-coates/537909/>
- Wednesday, October 24
  - Anne Fausto-Sterling, “How to Build a Man,” from BB
  - Kevin Powell, “Redefining Manhood,” from <https://thebaffler.com/latest/weinstein-masculinity-powell>

### Week 11: Bodies and Technologies

- Monday, October 29
  - Kim TallBear, “The Genographic Project: The Business of Research and Representation,” from BB
  - Ruha Benjamin, “Innovating Inequity: If race is a technology, postracialism is the genius bar,” from BB
- Wednesday, October 31
  - Simone Browne, “B@anding Blackness: Biometric Technology and the Surveillance of Blackness,” from BB

### Week 12: Emotion and Appropriation

- Monday, November 5
  - Susan Sontag, “Regarding the Pain of Others,” from BB
  - Saidiya Hartman, “Innocent Amusements,” from BB
- Wednesday, November 7 – PAPER 2 DUE
  - Kobena Mercer, “Black Hair/Style Politics,” from BB
  - Ijeoma Oluo, “The Heart of Whiteness,” from <https://www.thestranger.com/features/2017/04/19/25082450/the-heart-of-whiteness-ijeoma-oluo-interviews-rachel-dolezal-the-white-woman-who-identifies-as-black>

### Week 13: Free Speech

- Monday, November 12
  - Howard Zinn, “Civil Liberties during Wartime,” from BB
  - Howard Zinn, “Soldiers in Revolt,” from BB
  - Sky Croeser, “Thinking Beyond Free Speech,” from BB
- Wednesday, November 14
  - Angela Davis, “Political Prisoners, Prisons, and Black Liberation,” from BB
  - Joy James, “American Prison Notebooks,” from BB

### Week 14: Hate Speech



- Monday, November 19
  - Steve Martinot and Jared Sexton, “The Avant-Garde of White Supremacy,” from BB
  - Frantz Fanon, section from “The Fact of Blackness,” from BB
- Wednesday, November 21 – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Week 15: Resistance

- Monday, November 26
  - Stephen Duncombe, “Introduction,” in *The Cultural Resistance Reader*
  - Robin Kelley, “from Race Rebels,” in *The Cultural Resistance Reader*
  - James Scott, “Weapons of the Weak,” in *The Cultural Resistance Reader*
- Wednesday, November 28
  - Sara Ahmed, “Killing Joy: Feminism and the History of Happiness,” from BB

PAPER 3 DUE: TBD