

COMM 206: Communication and Culture

Summer 2020

Professor: Tyler Quick
Office hours: by appointment
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T/Th 9:30 am-1:30 pm

Course Overview:

This course is an introduction to Cultural Studies, an interdisciplinary area of critical analysis, ideas, concepts and research that is essential to Communication studies. It asks students to think critically about communication and media through the lens of culture.

In this course, we will interrogate the concept of culture from a multitude of standpoints, seeking to understand how common beliefs and practices are imagined by their communities to constitute cultures. We will also pay attention to how conventional understandings of culture have changed over time, and how those legacies influence contemporary debates around cultural production, cultural identity, and global cultural change. 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. 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 lives and your experiences, and to identify and construct new categories, concepts, and modes of analysis that best resonate with the challenges, realities and phenomena of that we and others encounter on a daily basis.

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, and compassion. **In light of recent events, this course will pay special attention to the concepts of imperialism, colonialism, and racism, and the manner by which these forces shape our present society and are contested through media activism.**

Course Requirements and Attendance:

You are expected to complete readings and assignments on time, attend all class sessions, and participate to the best of your ability in this class. **Attendance is crucial** during such a short summer session, as there is significant material covered in lecture that is not in the readings. As such, any unexcused absences after the your first will be recorded and result in a 5% reduction in your final grade. If you are more than fifteen minutes late to class or leave early without an approved excuse, this will be counted as an absence and reflected as such in your final grade. Participation is worth 10% of your grade in this class. Please make an effort to be on time, to join discussions, and to come to class prepared.

Classroom Conduct and Respect

In this class, we will be discussing sensitive topics, such as race, gender, sexuality, social class, etc. As such, **I expect students to treat each other with kindness, compassion, and curiosity.** Speak your mind, but also remain mindful of how your peers might be affected by your words. If you say something that another student finds offensive, **listen** to them, heed their words, and try to understand where they're coming from. If someone says something that offends you, criticize the

words, not the individual. If you don't feel comfortable speaking out, please email me right away, even during class if need be.

Course Readings/Required Texts:

All readings will be posted on Blackboard as PDFs or weblinks. However, two full books will be assigned: Stuart Hall's *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation* and Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* and if you are like me I'd encourage you to purchase copies. Should you choose to do that, I encourage you to purchase them from [an independent, Black-owned bookstore](#) and not that lizardperson Jeff Bezos. The one assigned film can be accessed through USC's free subscription to Kanopy. I have provided links to all the other media we will be discussing. Please let me know if you have trouble accessing any of these.

Assignments and Grading:

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

Participation	10%
Weekly Blackboard Posts	25%
Midterm Short Paper	25%
Final Essay	40%

You will receive details about each assignment/exam separately. **All assignments must be completed and handed in on time. Late papers will be penalized. If you are unable to turn in an assignment due to illness or a personal emergency, you must provide written documentation that will allow you to be excused or discuss your situation with me in a timely manner, before the paper is due. Do not wait until the end of the semester to sort things out. Remember: this is YOUR responsibility.**

Papers (65% total): There are two papers due in this class. The first will be 3-5 pages long and worth 25% of your final grade. The second will be 7-10 pages long and worth 40% of your final grade. Each should be checked for grammar, spelling, and proper citation practices. 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. Rather they are an opportunity for you to think about cultural practices and theories from the readings as they apply to some example or artifact outside of class. I try not to grade for style, but it must be said that clear, coherent, and engaging writing conveys ideas easier. We can work together via appointment on this and any other issues you might run into while writing your papers.

Grading scale for papers:

- A+ (98%+): This paper demonstrates the ability to think creatively and critically about key concepts from the course, as well introduces novel perspectives gained from independent research.
- A (94-97%): This paper demonstrates the ability to think creatively and critically about key concepts from the course.
- A- (91-93%): This paper demonstrates the ability to think critically about key concepts from the course.

- B+ (88-90%): This paper either demonstrates the ability to think critically about key concepts from the course but does not demonstrate an adequate understanding of those concepts' meanings and definitions OR does demonstrate an adequate understanding of those concepts' meanings and definitions, but does not demonstrate the ability to think critically about them.
- B (83-87%): This paper demonstrates that the student largely understands key course concepts, but not entirely.
- B- (81-82%): This paper demonstrates that the student has a rudimentary understanding of key course concepts.
- C (71-80%): This paper demonstrates that the student has a tenuous or confused understanding of key course concepts.
- D (60-70%): This paper does not make it clear that the student has any understanding of course concepts.
- F (<60%): The student clearly does not understand course concepts.

As such, it is exceedingly difficult to achieve a D or F grade on a paper in this class. Students who are worried about their grades are encouraged to reach out and schedule office hours appointments with me. Once a grade has been assigned, I ask that you do not ask me to change it. This is an uncomfortable position to be put in as a graduate student educator, and one that can be avoided through pre-emptive partnership with me.

Participation (10%): I understand that some students are shy. I also understand that this is awkward on Zoom. However, this class is very long and will be exceedingly difficult without participation. This grade is therefore entirely contingent on you speaking up, as possible, and as much as you can muster.

Weekly Blackboard Posts (25%): Every week, you will be expected to post one 300-600-word response to one of the readings in the assigned folder on Blackboard. While these posts will not be graded for their content, I will read them and mark off points for students who do not reference the readings or meet the required word count. You can write about anything you want: your thoughts on the readings, your agreement with it, your disagreement, its applicability as an analytical lens for a song, movie, video game, or cultural phenomenon you are interested in. All that I care about is that you take this task seriously and do it on time.

Course Grading Policy:

Grades will be assigned as follows:

A	outstanding, thoughtful and engaging work; a grade of A+ (97-100) may be given to individual assignments in rare 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

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores on the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale shown below:

A+	= 97-100 (only possible on individual assignments)	C	= 73-77
A	= 93-97		

A-	=	90-93	C-	=	70-73
B+	=	87-90	D+	=	67-70
B	=	83-87	D	=	63-67
B-	=	80-83	D-	=	60-63
C+	=	77-80	F	=	0-60

Again, I will almost certainly not change a grade. If I do, it will only be for extreme circumstances such as a health emergency, family emergency, etc. Please do not contact me just because you did not get the grade that you wanted.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

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/>

Support Systems

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](#), which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. [The Office of Disability Services and Programs](#) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, [USC Emergency Information](#) will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Stress Management/Mental Health

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](tel:213-740-7711). The service is confidential, and there is no charge. Moreover, they offer drop-in workshops throughout the semester on managing stress and maintaining mindfulness.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP)

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services ([RSVP](#)) is located in Engemann, Suite 356.. 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.

ASSIGNED READINGS, ARTWORKS, & COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: Defining Culture: Historical Debates and Divides

July 2 Course Introduction: What is Culture? What is Communication?

- Stuart Hall, "The Fateful Triangle"
- Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding"
- N.W.A., "[Fuck the Police](#)"
- M.I.A., "[Paper Planes](#)"
- Raymond Williams, "Culture is Ordinary" (optional)

Week 2: The Politics of Culture: Ideology and Power

July 7 What is ideology?

- Frantz Fanon, "The Black Man and Language"
- W.E.B. DuBois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings"
- Audre Lorde, "The Masters Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House"
- Louis Althusser, "Ideological State Apparatuses" (optional)

July 9 What is power?

- Edward Said, passages from Orientalism
- Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality"
- Raoul Peck, I Am Not Your Negro (available on Kanopy)
- Michel Foucault, passages from The History of Sexuality Vol. 1 (optional)

Week 3: Race, Class, Gender, and Identity

July 14 Gender, race, and intersectionality

- Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins"
- Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, sections from Racism Without Racists
- The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement"
- Claudia Rankine, passages from Citizen

July 16 Gender, race, and intersectionality

- Cathy Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, & Welfare Queens"
- Evelyn Hammonds, "Black W(h)oles"
- Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe"

Week 4: Communication & Globalization

July 21 The nature of globalization

- Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History"
- Aimé Césaire, Discourse on Colonialism
- Kwame Anthony Appiah, "[Cosmopolitanism](#)"

July 23 Imperialism, colonialism, and nationalism

- Jasbir Puar, "The Sexuality of Terrorism"
- JP Park, "Koreans Are White?"
- Swet Shop Boys, [Cashmere](#) (available on most streaming services, reach out if you can't get access)
- Check out Kent Monkman's artistic practice [on Instagram](#)

- Vladimir Lenin, “Imperialism” (optional)

Week 5:

Cultural Production & Media Industries

July 28

The culture industry, neoliberalis, & mass media

- Herman Gray, “Television and the Politics of Difference”
- Adolph Reed, “Antiracism: A Neoliberal Alternative to a Left”
- Derecka Purnell [on Jay-Z](#)
- Martin Connor, [How Jay-Z, Dr. Dre Focus Group Their Releases](#)

July 30

New media

- John Jackson, “Lights, Camera, Police Action!”
- Safiya Noble, “Searching for Black Girls”
- Ruha Benjamin, “Engineered Inequity”

Week 6

Pop Culture and Politics

August 4

Style & Resistance

- madison moore, “How to Work a Look”
- Philip Brian Harper, “The Subversive Edge”
- bell hooks, “Is Paris Burning?”
- Jennie Livingstone, [Paris is Burning](#) (optional)
- Judith Butler, “Gender is Burning” (optional)

August 6

Taste, Popularity, & Power

- Stuart Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing the Popular”
- bell hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze”
- Zaid Jilani [on Martin Luther King Jr.](#)
- Pierre Bourdieu, “Distinction” (optional)

Week 7:

FINAL EXAM

August 11

No assigned readings