

COM 691: Critical/Cultural Approaches to Communication Studies
 Thursdays, 6-845p, A431



Revolution is not a onetime event.
 — Audre Lorde

Yesterday's deconstructions are often tomorrow's orthodox clichés.
 — Stuart Hall

Required Materials

- ∇ Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2015. (e-copy available online via Hayden).
- ∇ Collins, Patricia Hill. *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*. Duke University Press, 2019.
- ∇ Journal for writing (medium is arbitrary—play to your writing strengths).
- ∇ A poem you will find on your own and that brings light to a weekly theme; you are asked to perform this poem.
- ∇ Additional readings are accessible either as PDFs (via Canvas) or accessed online through Hayden. Many readings are found as book chapters you must read online via Hayden or download via PDF—be mindful of your time in accessing these readings.

Suggested Materials (especially for those new to critical/cultural traditions)

- ∇ During, Simon, ed. *The Cultural Studies Reader*. 3rd ed., Routledge, 2007.
- ∇ Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New ed., Oxford University Press, 2015. (it's titled the “new edition,” rather than a number).

Description

This seminar explores the convergence of critical/cultural communication (CCC) studies, a convergence that has earned status as a distinct line of scholarly inquiry. “Critical” is a transdisciplinary paradigmatic orientation with various lineages (modernist, postmodernist, poststructural, postcolonial, etc.). In communication studies, “critical” is an orientation that intersects with and shapes the attitudes and conduct of traditional areas of communication inquiry. “Culture,” famously described by Raymond

Williams as “one of the two or three most complicated [key]words in the English language,”¹ has long been a topic of inquiry and innovation among communication scholars from a variety of methodological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives. In the convergence of critical/cultural communication studies, scholars address “broader theoretical issues of discourse: social power relations; social inequities; political resistance; modern thought, politics, and institutions; social and political organizations, logics, and frameworks; and cultural difference. Furthermore, the study of CCC not only has strong historical roots but also aims to historicize social life and, therefore, while interested in social change and technology, is not interested only in the ‘new.’”² With that said, this course puts particular emphasis on current topics in critical/cultural studies. We will start with a brief history of cultural studies and review its contribution to the communication discipline. Then we will dive in the current topics in the sub-field, including, but not limited to: dis/ability studies and crip theory, monstrosity studies, critical race theory, queer theory, transgender studies, border rhetoric(s), and affect theory. The aim of the course is to provide students with an overview of the current critical/cultural intellectual trends and conversations.

This course includes readings (and possibly performances) that may contain content considered sensitive for some. You should decide if you are comfortable with this. Your continued enrollment in the course indicates that you have done so. Practice self-care—reach out with questions, guidance, and support.



Assignments

Discussion Facilitation (15 pts.). Everyone is asked to facilitate a class discussion once in the semester; you will need to sign up for a facilitation. This means that at the top of class, you will talk about the readings assigned, identifying a) research questions; b) putting readings in a conversation with each other; and c) offering two questions meant to jump-start a conversation. This is a pedagogical exercise that gives you an opportunity to get comfortable presenting ideas and viewpoints to others.

Creative Expression (10 pts.). In addition to facilitating a class discussion, each student is asked to find and perform a poem that pertains to a given week’s theme and content (your task, in part, is to articulate these connections even if poetry is new to you). This performance will occur on a week

¹ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1976), 25.

² Kent A. Ono, “Critical/Cultural Approaches to Communication,” in *21st Century Communication: A Reference Handbook*, ed. William F. Eadie (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), 74, <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.4135/9781412964005> (accessed May 3, 2014).

different from your discussion facilitation. Your task is to perform the poem and make connections to the readings. This performance will be brief and intended to facilitate free-writing responses in your peers (free-writing response are not collected—these are for your own records and processing).

Reading Summaries (10 @ 10 pts. each). You will submit ten reading summaries during the course of the semester. Please note that, not counting the first week of class (for which the summary is not required), there are twelve weeks of readings. Therefore, you can skip any 2 summaries of your choosing. **Note:** You are *also* signing up for (1) a facilitation and (2) a creative expression on different days. As such, you might want to plan these to be days you “skip” the summaries—this choice is entirely up to you and your work flow capacity. The reading summaries should not exceed 2 single-spaced pages. The summaries should explore how the readings nuance, trouble, and engage the weekly topic. In the summary, and at minimum, you are asked to a) identify the reading’s research question(s); b) provide a comprehensive summary of the arguments; c) identify the strength of the argument(s), and d) apply the argument(s) to a cultural example. You may use first-person voice. You may focus on no less than 2 of the week’s assigned readings; engaging all readings, however, is ideal.

Proposal (25 pts.): The culminating experience for this course is a research project (can be a critical/cultural analysis [e.g., research paper] and/or performance). You are asked to complete this assignment in four steps. In the first step, you will submit a project proposal outlining your intended project and goals. It is expected that your choices at this stage will change throughout the semester. Still, start to think early about your interests and how you might envision a critical/cultural analysis. Read ahead as interest calls.

Advanced Draft (50 pts.): The culminating experience for this course is a research project (can be a critical/cultural analysis [e.g., research paper] and/or performance). You are asked to complete this assignment in four steps. In the second step, you are asked to construct an advanced draft of your research project. This “paper” should be between 12-15 pages (performance scripts including autoethnographies just the same), include 10-15 sources of support, and be formatted for submission to an academic journal of your choosing (research potential publication outlets early on). Think of your dream journal based on how you want to be understood as a scholar/artist. This assignment includes 3 elements: (1) a letter to the editor (pretend as if you are submitting to the editor of your desired journal), (2) a title page featuring the essay title, your contact information, an abstract of no more than 150 words, and 5 keywords, and (3) an anonymized version of your essay (there should be NO information identifying you as the author).

Review (25 pts.): The culminating experience for this course is a research project (can be a critical/cultural analysis [e.g., research paper] and/or performance). You are asked to complete this assignment in four steps. In the third step, we perform the role of anonymous reviewer. I will assign a paper to each of you. You are asked to read and write a critical review that serves pedagogical and humanizing ends. Said differently, you are asked to help develop a peer’s ideas from your vantage offering suggestions and asking questions rather than demanding a particular final form (i.e., this is their project and not yours). You are asked to submit a written review (anonymized; do not include your identifying information) that will be submitted to the respective author along with instructor feedback. This way each author will receive at least two sets of reviews. Focus on quality over quantity when crafting your review as there is no limit for this assignment in terms of length.

Presentation (25 pts.): We will construct a series of mock panels during the final day of instruction. On that day, each of you will have 7-10 minutes to share your project. You are welcome to present in any

format that feels most conducive to your expression though consider thinking of the limits of conference decorum. I am not asking you to follow said decorum, but to make choices in tension with those expectations. That is, don't feel constrained to present in any one particular way.

Final Paper (100 pts.): The culminating experience for this course is a research project (can be a critical/cultural analysis [e.g., research paper] and/or performance). You are asked to complete this assignment in four steps. In the fourth and final step, you are asked to construct and submit a final draft of your research project. This project should meet the submission criteria particular to your selected journal. For instance,

- *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*: No more than 9000 words; this limit includes tables, references, figure captions, footnotes, and endnotes. This journal requires Chicago endnote style.
- *Women's Studies in Communication*: Should be between 8,000 and 11,000 words; this limit includes abstract, references, and endnotes. This journal allows you to use either MLA or APA style.

This final assignment includes 3 elements: (1) A letter to the editor. This letter should detail both the history of your essay *and* respond to the points highlighted in your review. That is, how did you respond to the review points? What changes were and were not made and what is your reasoning? This is your opportunity to articulate your intellectual choices and make a case for your reasoning. (2) A title page featuring the essay title, your contact information, an abstract of no more than 150 words, and 5 keywords. (3) An anonymized final version of your essay (there should be NO information identifying you as the author).

Grading

Discussion Facilitation	15 points
Creative Expression	10 points
Summaries (10 @ 10 pts.)	100 points
Proposal	25 points
Advanced Draft	50 points
Review	25 points
Final Essay	100 points
Presentation	25 points
Total	350 points

Student Comportment

Familiarize yourself with the *Student Code of Conduct* (<https://eoss.asu.edu/dos/srr/codeofconduct>) and comport yourself accordingly; this includes, specifically, refraining from threatening behavior per the *Student Services Manual* (<https://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/ssm/ssm104-02.html>). To be certain, ASU is committed to providing an environment free of discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation. In particular, ASU prohibits discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation based on any protected status: race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and genetic information as outlined in the *Academic Affairs Manual* (<https://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/acd/acd401.html>). This is a critically-oriented class, and discussion/speech concerning issues of race, class, size, gender, nation, citizenship, religion, age, and so forth are encouraged and will certainly be addressed as communication is a key component to the construction and maintenance of our culture(s). Come to class with an open mind and due expect to be

challenged on your/our communicative conventions; I expect to be held equally accountable for my communicative choices.

Title IX

Title IX is a federal law that provides that no person be excluded on the basis of sex from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. Both Title IX and university policy make clear that sexual violence and harassment based on sex is prohibited. An individual who believes they have been subjected to sexual violence or harassed on the basis of sex can seek support, including counseling and academic support, from the university. If you or someone you know has been harassed on the basis of sex or sexually assaulted, you can find information and resources at <https://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/faqs>.

As a mandated reporter, I am obligated to report any information I become aware of regarding alleged acts of sexual discrimination, including sexual violence and dating violence. ASU Counseling Services, <https://eoss.asu.edu/counseling>, is available if you wish to discuss any concerns confidentially and privately.

Academic Integrity

Honesty is expected of all students. The possible sanctions for academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE), loss of registration privileges, disqualification and dismissal. For more information, see <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>.

Accessibility

If you have any need for accommodations, please notify me as you are able so that we might make the appropriate arrangements. Formal accommodations can be made through the Disability Resource Center (DRC). For additional information, visit: www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc.

Intellectual Property

As outlined in the Academic Affairs Manual course content, including lectures, are copyrighted materials. Students may not share outside the class, upload, sell, or distribute course content or notes taken during the conduct of the course. For more information, see <https://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/acd/acd304-06.html>.

Canvas and Technology Support

Students can navigate directly to the course Canvas website via myASU or <http://canvas.asu.edu>. If you need technical assistance, it is available via the Canvas “Help” icon located on the left-hand navigation menu and phone and live chat support are available 24/7 at <http://contact.asu.edu>. ASU Tech Studios provide a variety of walk-in support services on all ASU campuses: <https://uto.asu.edu/services/campus-it-resources/techstudio>. To learn the basics, refer to the Student Guide: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701> and the Canvas Glossary: <http://links.asu.edu/student-canvas-glossary>.

