

Communication 206: Communication and Culture

Spring 2008

Professor Sarah Banet-Weiser

Office hours: Tuesday 11-1

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Course Description:

This course is designed as an introduction to communications 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 over-arching 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, Los Angeles, television, radio 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.

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 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 participation (not based solely on attendance), 10%

Blog Posts on Two Cultural Events, 5% each.

All assignments will be discussed in detail further in the semester.

Required Texts:

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

Gray, Ann, and Jim McGuigan, eds. 1997. *Studying Culture: An Introductory Reader*
New York: Oxford University Press Inc.

Comm 206 Course Reader

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.

Possible Cultural Events to Attend:

A Special Evening at Redcat: Listen Again, 1/22/08

© Murakami exhibit at MOCA (or other museum exhibits)

USC's Vision and Voices Events

Norman Lear Center's PopMusic Events

Any number of others

Schedule of Classes, Topics & Readings:

Week One

Tuesday 1/15: Introduction to the Course

Thursday 1/17: Defining Culture

- ❖ Raymond Williams, "Culture" from *The Cultural Resistance Reader* [p. 35-41]
- ❖ Raymond Williams, "Culture is Ordinary" from *Studying Culture* [Ch. 1]

Week Two

Tuesday 1/22: Culture and Communication

- ❖ James Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication" from *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* [Course Reader]
- ❖ Douglas Kellner, "Communication vs. Cultural Studies: Overcoming the Divide" from *Communication Theory* 5 (2). p.162-177 [Course Reader]

Thursday 1/24 : The Politics of Culture

- ❖ 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]

Week Three

Tuesday 1/29: Culture and Power

- ❖ Readings: Antonio Gramsci, from The Prison Notebooks, from *The Cultural Resistance Reader* [p. 58-67]
- ❖ Edward Said, "Orientalism" from *Studying Culture* [Ch. 5]
- ❖ Judith Williamson, "Meaning and Ideology" from *Studying Culture* [Ch. 17]

Thursday 1/31: Culture and the Individual

- ❖ Stuart Hall, "Minimal Selves" from *Studying Culture* [Ch. 12]
- ❖ Althusser, "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses" [Course Reader]

Week Four

Tuesday 2/5: Culture and Media

- ❖ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry" [Course Reader]

Thursday 2/7: 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" [Course Reader]
- ❖ Dwight MacDonal, "A Theory of Mass Culture" from *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*, eds. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White, (Free Press, 1957) [Course Reader]

Week Five

Tuesday 2/12: 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). [Course Reader]
- ❖ Paul Dimaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America" from *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, eds. Michael Schudson and Chandra Mukerji, (California, 1991). [Course Reader]

Thursday 2/14: Nobrow Culture

- ❖ John Seabrook, "Nobrow Culture," *The New Yorker* 9/99, <http://www.booknoise.net/johnseabrook/stories/culture/nobrow/index.html> [Available online]

Paper One Due in Class

Week Six

Tuesday 2/19: Culture and the Postmodern

- ❖ Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and consumer society" from *Studying Culture* [Ch. 18]

Thursday 2/21: Culture and Resistance

- ❖ Richard Hoggart, from Uses of Literacy, from *The Cultural Resistance Reader* [p. 303-312]
- ❖ Robin D.G. Kelley, from Race Rebels, from *The Cultural Resistance Reader* [p. 96-99]
- ❖ Phil Cohen, "Subcultural conflict and working-class community" from *Studying Culture* [Ch. 9]

Week Seven

Tuesday, 2/26: Subculture and Politics

- ❖ Albert Cohen, "A General Theory of Subcultures" from *The Subcultures Reader* [Course Reader]
- ❖ Stallybrass, Peter, and Allon White, "From Carnival to Transgression," from *The Subcultures Reader*. [Course Reader]

Thursday, 2/28: Specific Subcultures and Communication

- ❖ Dick Hebdige, "From Culture to Hegemony" from *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* [Course Reader]
- ❖ Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, "Girls and Subcultures," from *The Subcultures Reader* [Course Reader]
- ❖ Marcos Sanchez-Tranquilino and John Tagg, "The Pachuco's Flayed Hide: Mobility, Identity, and Buenas Garras," from *Cultural Studies*, eds. Nelson, Grossberg, et al. [Course Reader]

Week Eight

Tuesday 3/4: Culture and the Image

- ❖ Roland Barthes, “The Rhetoric of the Image” from *Studying Culture* [Ch. 2]
- ❖ Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, “Practices of Looking: Images, Power and Politics” from *Practices of Looking* [Course Reader]

Thursday, 3/6: Culture and Looking

- ❖ Stuart Hall, “The Television Discourse –encoding and decoding” from *Studying Culture* [Ch. 3]

Week Nine

Tuesday 3/11: Social Construction of Gender

- ❖ Judith Lorber, “Believing is Seeing: Biology as Ideology?” From *The Politics of Women’s Bodies* [Course Reader]
- ❖ Susan Bordo, “Introduction: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body” from *Unbearable Weight* [Course Reader]

Thursday 3/13: Gender and the Media

- ❖ David Gauntlett, “Some Background Debates” from *Media, Gender, and Identity* [Course Reader]
- ❖ David Gauntlett, “Michel Foucault: Discourses and Lifestyles” from *Media, Gender and Identity* [Course Reader]

Paper Two Due in Class

Spring Break: March 17-21

Week Ten

Tuesday 3/24: Gender and the Media II

- ❖ Sandra Lee Bartky, “Femininity, Foucault, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power” from *Femininity and Domination* [Course Reader]
- ❖ Susan Bordo, “The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity” from *Unbearable Weight* [Course Reader]

Thursday 3/27: Sexuality and Culture

- ❖ Michel Foucault, "We 'Other Victorians" from *The History of Sexuality [Course Reader]*
- ❖ Cherrie Moraga, "A Long Line of Vendidas" [Course Reader]

Week Eleven

Tuesday 4/1: Screening: Paris is Burning

- ❖ Bell hooks, "Is Paris Burning?" [Course Reader]

~~Thursday 4/3: Culture and Media - Television~~

- ❖ Raymond Williams, "Television and Representation," from *The Raymond Williams Reader [Course Reader]*
- ❖ Ian Ang, from *Watching Dallas [Course Reader]*

Week Twelve

Tuesday 4/8: Culture and Media - Television contd.

- ❖ Jose Munoz, "Pedro Zamora's Real World of Counterpublicity: Performing an Ethics of the Self." *Living Color: Race and Television*. Ed. Sasha Torres. [Course Reader]
- ❖ Sarah Banet-Weiser, "Girls Rule! Gender and Nickelodeon," "Consuming Race on Nickelodeon" from *Kids Rule! Nickelodeon and Consumer Citizenship [Course Reader]*

Thursday 4/10: Culture and Media - Radio

- ❖ Rudolf Arnheim, "In Praise of Blindness," from *Radiotexte*, ed. Neil Strauss (Semiotext, 1993) [Course Reader]
- ❖ Arnold Schoenberg, "The Radio," from *Radiotexte [Course Reader]*
- ❖ Michelle Hilmes, "Radiating Culture," *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922-1952* (U of Minnesota Press, 1997) [Course Reader]

Week Thirteen

Tuesday 4/15: Culture and Media - Radio contd

- ❖ John Fiske, "Technostruggles: Black Liberation Radio" from *The Radio Reader* [Course Reader]
- ❖ Susan Douglas, "Letting the Boys Be Boys: Talk Radio, Male Hysteria, and Political Discourse in the 1980s," from *The Radio Reader* [Course Reader]
- ❖ Franz Fanon, "This Is The Voice of Algeria," available online: <http://www.warmcove.com/texts/fanon.html> [Internet]

Paper Three Due in Class

Thursday 4/17: No class

Week Fourteen

Tuesday 4/22: Popular Music

- ❖ Simon Frith, "Music and Identity" in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay [Course Reader]
- ❖ Theodor Adorno, "On Popular Music" in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, eds. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin [Course Reader]

Thursday 4/24: Popular Music contd.

- ❖ George Lipsitz, "Cruising Around The Historic Bloc: Postmodernism and Popular Music in East Los Angeles," from *Time Passages* [Course Reader]
- ❖ Tricia Rose, "All Aboard the Night Train," from *Black Noise* [Course Reader]

Week Fifteen

Tuesday 4/29: Global Culture

- ❖ Karl Marx, "Communist Manifesto" (pts 1-2); available on-line [Internet url will be provided in class]
- ❖ Benjamin Barber, "Jihad vs. McWorld" [Course Reader]

Thursday 5/1: Global Culture contd.

- ❖ Chris Anderson, "The Long Tail" [Course Reader]
- ❖ Medea Benjamin, "Interview with Subcomandante Marcos," in *First World Ha-Ha* [Course Reader]

