

Communication 7930-002
The Role of the Critic
Fall 2003

Prof. Gil Rodman

office hours: Tu 5-6p, Th 1-2p and by appointment
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This course will examine the various roles that intellectual work plays in contemporary culture and society. In particular, we will wrestle with the following questions:

- What value (if any) does our research have beyond the walls of our campuses? What can (or should) we do to bridge that gap more effectively?
- What is the proper role for the university in contemporary US society? What does this role imply for those of us who work within higher education?
- What does it mean to be a “public intellectual”? Does US society need such creatures? Does the academy want to spawn them?
- Who is the audience for our intellectual work? Who *should* it be? Is “audience” even the right word to use to describe this relationship?
- How can we more effectively disseminate our intellectual work to a broader public? What changes in our writing practices and/or our research agendas are mandated by such a project?
- In whose interest should we be working? The State’s? The public’s? The highest bidder’s? Our own?
- What distinguishes intellectual work done within the university from that done outside of it? What are the benefits and drawbacks to working under either set of conditions?

In keeping with the spirit of this as a doctoral seminar, I will assume that anyone enrolled in this course already has (1) at least a roughly defined research area and (2) enough existing expertise in that area to write and speak about it with passable fluency. The writing assignments for this course will require you to take traditional forms of academic knowledge and attempt to disseminate that knowledge to lay audiences. In and of itself, this can be a daunting task, but it will be an extra frustrating experience for you if you’re trying to write about subject matter that’s largely new to you.

required course materials

(1) Books.

- Cary Nelson and Stephen Watt, *Academic Keywords*
- Constance Penley, *NASA/TREK: Popular Science and Sex in America*
- Rius, *Marx for Beginners*
- Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*
- Ziauddin Sardar and Borin Van Loon, *Introducing Cultural Studies*
- Virginia Wolff, *A Room of One's Own*

All titles will be available at Inkwood Books, 216 S. Armenia, Tampa (253-2638, inkwoodbks@aol.com).

(2) Photocopied essays.

The non-book readings for the class will be copied and distributed through a cooperative photocopying "tree": a method that's proven in the past to be a cheaper, quicker, and more efficient way for the whole class to get the non-book readings than a coursepack. We will set up the rotation for this system during our first meeting.

(3) Reliable, regular access to the World Wide Web.

All of the written work for this class -- and a significant amount of our discussion -- will be submitted and conducted online, so you will *not* be able to complete the course successfully without being able to access the Web on a consistent basis. If you don't already have an Internet account and/or access to the Net from your home or workplace, you will need to make use of the e-mail account and open-use computer labs that Academic Computing (LIB 608) provides free of charge to registered students.

writing assignments

(1) "Starter" exercises. These are 3 *very* short essays (due dates: September 18, October 2, October 23) that are intended to help guide you into the practice of writing academically-informed prose for non-academic readers. Further details will be available on a separate handout.

(2) Major essay(s). By the end of the semester, you will produce a total of 5000-6250 words (~20-25 pages) of (hopefully) publishable "public intellectual" prose. This writing can consist of one long "feature" essay, a dozen short columns, or any other combination of pieces that collectively add up to a total word count in the range listed above. Each essay you write should have a specific non-academic venue (e.g., a magazine, newspaper, webzine, etc.) in mind as a potential target, and you should approach these essays with the full intention of submitting your finished work to the venue(s) in question at the end of the semester (if not before). We will spend the last week of the semester workshopping the various essays written by the group. You should meet with me individually to discuss your (preliminary) ideas for this/these essay(s) *no later than October 2.*

Blackboard Discussion Board participation

Blackboard is accessible through the USF “portal” site -- <https://my.usf.edu> -- which includes information on how to sign up for the USF NetID you’ll need to enter the site. Once you have your ID and have entered the portal site successfully, you should click on the “Courses” tab at the top of the screen, which will lead you to a list of Blackboard sites for the courses you’re enrolled in.

The main purpose of the Discussion Board is to serve as an informal space that’s always available for discussion of the issues raised by the assigned readings and our class sessions. I expect *everyone* to participate in these discussions on a regular basis (a respectable goal to aim for is about 250 words/week). If most of your contributions consist of one-line replies to other people’s messages (e.g., “Well said, Pat. Thanks.”) or if more than 7-10 days go by between your posts, you’re probably not pulling your weight here.

There are many ways to contribute meaningfully to our online discussions. A *partial* list of the possibilities includes:

- questions you may have about the readings
- thoughts on / responses to / critiques of the assigned readings
- follow-up comments on / additions to our in-class conversations
- replies to other people’s Discussion Board posts
- constructive feedback to other people’s written work

Additionally, the Blackboard site may occasionally be used to make important course-related announcements (e.g., “please add everything on the third floor of the USF library to next Thursday’s reading”) or to pass word on about other topics that may be of interest to the class (e.g., calls for papers, upcoming conferences, etc.). So check the site often.

grading policy

Those of you who’ve had classes with me before know that I’m not a big fan of grades at the graduate level. Presumably, your main reason for being here is that you have a genuine desire to learn something, not whether you can maintain a 4.0 GPA. Assuming you show up for class consistently, participate in our discussions (both in class and online) on a regular and meaningful basis, and complete the required writing/workshopping in satisfactory fashion, you should get an A. That being said, in cases where people are clearly slacking off, I reserve the right to go deeper into the alphabet when I fill out my final grade sheet (and I’ve actually done so in the past). Under such unfortunate circumstances, your grade will be calculated as follows:

Attendance/participation	10%
Blackboard Discussion Board participation	10%
“Starter” exercises	20% (5/5/10)
Major essay(s)	50%
Workshopping	10%

introduction

- Aug 28** [to be distributed and read in class]
John Leo, "Intellectuals Get the Blame"
Bill Maxwell, "Ph.D.s Don't Have What It Takes"
Jeffrey Williams, "Spin Doctorates: From Public Intellectuals to Publicist Intellectuals"
Bruce Bawer, "Public Intellectuals: An Endangered Species?"

why we write

- Sep 4** Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*
Michael Bérubé, "Bite-Size Theory: Popularizing Academic Criticism"
Michael Bérubé, "Cultural Criticism and the Politics of Selling Out"
Barbara Ehrenreich, "The Professional Managerial Class Revisited"
- Sep 11** Virginia Wolff, *A Room of One's Own*
George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language"
George Orwell, "Why I Write"
Antonio Gramsci, "The Intellectuals"
Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power"
Raymond Williams, *Keywords* [selections]

why we have universities

- Sep 18** **"Why I write" exercise due (250-500 words)**
Cary Nelson and Stephen Watt, *Academic Keywords* (pp. vii-152)
Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (fifth edition), chs. 7-9
Michael Bérubé and Janet Lyon, "Free Speech and Discipline: The Boundaries of the Multiversity"
- Sep 25** Cary Nelson and Stephen Watt, *Academic Keywords* (pp. 153-308)
Annette Kolodny, "A Personal Preface: Reflections on Five Years in a Dean's Office"
Bill Readings, "The Posthistorical University"
Stuart Hall, "The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the Crisis in the Humanities"
Joe Moran, "Cultural Studies and Academic Stardom"

speaking in (lay) tongues

- Oct 2** **“What universities are for” exercise due (250-500 words)**
Gilbert B. Rodman, “Suspicious Minds: The Politics of Elvis Studies”
Pierre Bourdieu, “In Front of the Camera and Behind the Scenes”
Gerald Graff, “Academic Writing and the Uses of Bad Publicity”
Phyllis Franklin, “The Academy and the Public”
Ellen Willis, “Intellectual Work and the Culture of Austerity”
Greg Seigworth, assorted “Fear of a Blank Planet” columns
Katha Pollitt, *Subject to Debate* [selections]
Lisa Jones, *Bulletproof Diva* [selections]
- Oct 9** **NO CLASS**
- Oct 16** Rius, *Marx for Beginners*
Ziauddin Sardar and Borin Van Loon, *Introducing Cultural Studies*
Michael Bérubé, “Pop Goes the Academy: Cult Studs Fight the Power”
Michael Bérubé, “Just the Fax, Ma’am: Or, Postmodernism’s Journey to Decenter”

intellectual work and/as/or politics

- Oct 23** **“Tell Mom” exercise due (500-1000 words)**
Raymond Williams, “The Future of Cultural Studies”
Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies”
Lawrence Grossberg, “Cultural Studies: What’s in a Name (One More Time)”
Meaghan Morris, “A Question of Cultural Studies”
Gilbert B. Rodman, “Subject to Debate: (Mis)Reading Cultural Studies”
Herman Gray, “Is Cultural Studies Inflated?: The Cultural Economy of Cultural Studies in the United States”
Bill Readings, “Culture Wars and Cultural Studies”
- Oct 30** Meaghan Morris, “Politics Now (Anxieties of a Petty-Bourgeois Intellectual)”
George Lipsitz, “Taking Positions and the War of Position: The Politics of Academia”
Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy”
Cornel West, “The Dilemma of the Black Intellectual”
Cornel West, “The Postmodern Crisis of the Black Intellectuals”
bell hooks, “Dialectally Down With the Critical Program”
Michael Eric Dyson, “It’s Not What You Know, It’s How You Show It: Black Public Intellectuals”

everybody's a critic

- Nov 6** Constance Penley, *NASA/TREK: Popular Science and Sex in America*
Constance Penley, "From NASA to *The 700 Club* (With a Detour Through Hollywood): Cultural Studies in the Public Sphere"
- Nov 13** Michael Bérubé, "Entertaining Cultural Criticism"
Henry A. Giroux, "Talking Heads and Radio Pedagogy: Microphone Politics and the New Public Intellectuals"
Jane Shattuc, "The Empress' New Clothing: Public Intellectualism and Popular Culture"
Susan McClary, "Living to Tell: Madonna's Resurrection of the Fleshly"
Christopher Anderson, "Reflections on *Magnum, P.I.*"
Marlon T. Riggs, "Unleash the Queen"
Carol Becker, "The Artist As Public Intellectual"
- Nov 20** **NO CLASS (NCA)**
- Nov 27** **final essays due**
NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

talking the talk and walking the walk

- Dec 4** essays by workshop group #1
- Dec 11** essays by workshop group #2 [only if necessary]

full citations

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