

Communication 3712
Communication and Cultural Diversity
Fall 1995

Prof. Gil Rodman (3040 CIS, 974-3025)
Office Hours: W 11a-12n, Th 3-4p, and by appointment

We live in a society where questions of difference and diversity have come to play an increasingly central role in public debates over cultural values, public policy, and the shape of our daily lives. This is a course devoted to exploring many of these questions in depth. While "cultural diversity" encompasses a broad range of subjects -- including social divisions based on age, religion, geography, etc. -- our primary focus this semester will be on the categories of race, gender, and class, with special emphasis on issues relating to communication and culture (both broadly defined).

Barring a small miracle or three, we will not *solve* any of the social, cultural, and political problems that lie at the heart of this class. This course is not designed, however, to provide you with the "right" answers, as much as it is intended to make you think *critically* about the issues involved. Regardless of who you are or what you may believe at the start of the semester, this course will *challenge* (which is not necessarily to say "change") your current way of looking at U.S. culture and the different types of people who make up that culture.

WARNING: The subjects that we'll be discussing this semester are, without exception, controversial ones. The readings reflect a diverse spectrum of strongly held opinions and viewpoints on these issues, and it's likely that your classmates will hold -- and express -- a similarly broad range of beliefs and values. As a result, our class sessions will often generate heated arguments, and it is likely that we will *all* walk away from one or more meetings angry, frustrated, and/or offended by our discussions. If this possibility makes you uncomfortable, then you should *not* take this course. I should emphasize, however, that while I expect our meetings to be confrontational, I also expect those confrontations to be *respectful*. Impassioned arguments and strongly expressed opinions are perfectly acceptable in this class; verbal bullying and personal attacks, on the other hand, will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Required course materials:

- (1) Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez (eds.), *Gender, Race and Class in Media*: Available at the University Book Store.
- (2) Photocopied articles: Available at the reserve desk of the USF Library and in the Communication Department Library (3026 CIS).

Grading schedule:

Attendance/participation	10%
In-class presentation	10%
Three (3) 3-4 page essays	30% (10% each)
Midterm exam	25%
Final exam	25%

In-class presentation:

Starting September 14, each of our class periods (except those on October 26 and December 7) will begin with student presentations arising from the readings for that week. Each of these presentations will run approximately thirty minutes and be given by a group of three students.

All the major decisions concerning these presentations (e.g., how to divide up a given week's reading amongst your group, whether to organize the presentation as a group project or as a series of individual presentations, how you'll respond to the material in question, etc.) will be up to you. If your group chooses to make three separate presentations, however, I would *strongly* recommend that you meet, at least briefly, as a group in order to avoid duplicating each other's work. Regardless of whether your group presents singularly or collectively, grades will be assigned on an individual basis.

While your presentations can take a variety of forms, they should *not* be mere summaries of the readings in question; instead, they should involve some sort of engaged and critical response to the issues at hand. The idea here is not to explain to the class what the readings say (your audience, after all, has done the reading themselves), but to begin the evening's discussion in a thoughtful -- and perhaps even provocative -- fashion. If you are unsure (individually or as a threesome) of just what to do with your presentation, feel free to come talk to me during my office hours (or to make an appointment to meet at some other time).

Essays:

You will write three 3-4 page essays during the course of the semester. The first of these will be due at the start of class on September 7 and is described in more detail on a separate handout. The remaining two essays will each be a *critical* response to one or more of the assigned readings. The due dates here are (somewhat) flexible. One paper must be written in response to material covered in sections 2-4 (i.e., from September 14 through October 19), while the other must address readings from sections 5-8 (i.e., from November 2 through November 23). In both cases, you *must* turn in your essay *before* we've discussed the material in question in class.

As with your in-class presentations, these essays should *not* be summaries of the material in question; rather, they should consist of thoughtful, critical responses to the readings. For instance, you may disagree with a given article and want to write a rebuttal to it. Or you may wish to compare two pieces that take opposing sides on an issue and explain why one of them is wrong.

Your papers *must* be typed and double-spaced. The page lengths given are based on pica-sized type (10 characters per inch) and one inch margins, and should be seen as estimates of how much you'll need to write to complete the assignments well. I will not automatically penalize shorter papers, but it's highly unlikely that you will be able to do "A" work if your papers are shorter than 3 pages. Also note that fudging margins and font sizes to make your papers *look* longer will *not* help your grade -- so concentrate on writing *good* papers, not (what appear to be) long ones.

In light of the flexible due dates involved here, late assignments are *heavily* frowned upon and will generally *not* be accepted. In the event that I do agree to accept late work, I reserve the right to reduce the corresponding grade in direct proportion to your paper's tardiness. The *minimum* such penalty, however, will be the equivalent of one letter grade.

Exams:

The midterm (October 26) and the final (December 14) will consist entirely of *long essay* questions and will be based on both the readings and our in-class discussions. The final *will* be cumulative. Barring verifiable emergencies of the highest order, make-up exams will *not* be given.

Attendance/participation/pop quizzes:

This course is geared towards in-class participation. It will thus be more enjoyable for all of us (and you'll do better) if you (1) attend class regularly, (2) do the required reading and (3) be prepared to discuss what we've read. Consistently lackluster discussions will force me to take drastic measures (i.e., pop quizzes) to assure me that y'all are doing the required work. In the event quizzes become necessary, final grades will be calculated on a revised schedule:

Attendance/participation	10%
In-class presentation	5%
Three (3) 3-4 page essays	15% (5% each)
Midterm exam	25%
Final exam	25%
Pop quiz(zes)	20%

Because we only meet once a week, and because issues will be raised in class that will not necessarily be apparent from the readings, it is vital not just that you show up every week, but that you do so on time. Attendance will be taken at the start of every class period, with both absences *and* late arrivals noted. If you have more than one unexcused absence, or if you are consistently and/or excessively late to class, I reserve the right to lower your semester grade by more than just the 10% listed for "attendance/participation" on the grade schedule above.

TEN TIPS ON HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE

(1) Read your syllabus and assignment handouts. Aside from telling you what to read and when you need to do so, these documents contain the basic ground rules by which this course works. And while, under exceptional circumstances (e.g., life and death emergencies), I may be willing to bend some of these rules, ignorance of the rules on your part isn't one of them.

(2) Read the required course materials as scheduled. This should be self-explanatory. But to drive the point home: *everything* you'll do for a grade this semester depends on your having thoughtfully consumed the assigned readings. If you blow these off, you will have *lots* of trouble with our in-class discussions, the short papers, and the exams.

(3) Think about what you read. None of the material for this course is intended to be consumed passively. If you're *only* reading to absorb "facts" or to be entertained, you will not do well. And while you're certainly allowed (and even encouraged) to learn new facts and have fun, it's more crucial that you approach the assigned readings in a critical and thoughtful fashion.

(4) Attend class . . . and show up on time. Not just because I'll take attendance, but because our discussions will raise questions about the material at hand that won't always be obvious to you from the readings alone. Our class periods will be spent discussing (and often arguing about) the readings, *not* summarizing them. You can (and should) expect issues raised in class to be on the exams. Also, be forewarned that I *will* treat consistently late arrivals as if they were absences.

(5) Come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Think about what the readings are trying to say and then share those thoughts with the class. Even if you don't understand a given article, feel free to ask questions about it. Not all of these readings are easy: if you're confused, it's likely other people are as well. The more people who participate in our discussions, the more we'll all get out of them.

(6) Write clearly. This is not a remedial writing class, so you aren't guaranteed a good grade on either your papers or your exams merely by constructing grammatical sentences made up of properly spelled words. Nevertheless, if your grammar (or spelling or punctuation) interferes with my ability to understand what you're trying to say, your grade *will* be negatively affected.

(7) Argue your points. Do not merely assert them. For example, simply saying that you think that affirmative action is harmful is far less convincing (and receives far less credit) than explaining *why* you think it's harmful. On a related note, avoid using terms like "obviously," "clearly," and "of course." In most cases, if you have to say something is "obvious," it isn't obvious at all.

(8) Argue your points well. Make sure the facts support your case. Avoid overly broad generalizations. And, perhaps most importantly, anticipate potential counter-arguments or alternate explanations to your position -- *especially* if your argument runs contrary to ideas we've already covered in the course. You *don't* have to agree with any of the authors we'll read, but if you take a contrary position to an argument made in the assigned course material, you *do* have to explain *why* you're right and the reading in question is wrong.

(9) See me as necessary. If you don't understand why you received a particular grade, or the reading has you baffled, or you have any other questions about the course, feel free to come talk to me during my office hours (or make an appointment to meet with me at some other time).

(10) Think ahead. The chances of my accepting late work without penalizing you improve dramatically with advance notice *and* a reasonable justification for the anticipated delay. Similarly, do *not* wait until the night before the exam to catch up on all the reading. This is not a course where simple rote memorization of names and dates will earn you an acceptable grade. Bear in mind that the semester will go by faster than you think and plan accordingly.

- 0: Introduction and Overview
- Aug 31 no readings
- 1: Culture and Diversity
- Sep 7 **Essay #1 due**
 Williams, "Culture Is Ordinary"
 Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication"
 Kellner, "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism . . ." [GRCM, ch. 1]
 Beck, "Troubling Deeds Under the Banner of `Diversity'"
 Quindlen, "The Mosaic vs. the Myth"
 Lapham, "Who and What Is American?"
- 2: Race
- Sep 14 Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes" [GRCM, ch. 2]
 Mills, "Fire and Race"
 Cohen, "The Color of Anger"
 Gray, "Television, Black Americans . . ." [GRCM, ch. 49]
 Rhodes, "Television's Realist Portrayal . . ." [GRCM, ch. 48]
 Rose, "Fear of a Black Planet" [GRCM, ch. 60]
 Cassidy & Katula, "The Black Experience in Advertising" [GRCM, ch. 12]
 Seiter, "Different Children, Different Dreams" [GRCM, ch. 13]
 Brown, "Which Black Is Beautiful?"
- Sep 21 Pieterse, "White Negroes" [GRCM, ch. 3]
 Frankenberg, "Introduction: Points of Origin, Points of Departure"
 Omi & Winant, "On the Theoretical Status of the Concept of Race"
Newsweek, "What Color Is Black?"
Village Voice, "Black Like Who?"
 DiLeonardo, "White Fright"
 Jones, "Mama's White"
 Rensberger, "Forget the Old Labels"

- 3: Gender
- Sep 28 Goldman, "Constructing and Addressing . . ." [*GRCM*, ch. 11]
 Steinem, "Sex, Lies and Advertising" [*GRCM*, ch. 15]
 Kilbourne, "Beauty and the Beast of Advertising" [*GRCM*, ch. 16]
 Lee, "Subversive Sitcoms" [*GRCM*, ch. 53]
 Firestone, "Attacking Stereotypes in Toys"
 Spender, "An Alternative to Madonna"
 Faludi, "Introduction: Blame It On Feminism"
 Heibel, "The Jig Is Up"
 Baber, "Guerilla Feminism"
 Pollitt, "Are Women Morally Superior to Men?"
- Oct 5 Gross, "Out of the Mainstream" [*GRCM*, ch. 9]
 Clark, "Commodity Lesbianism" [*GRCM*, ch. 19]
 Goldstein, "Base Instinct"
 O'Connor, "Gay Images"
 Katz, "Advertising and the Construction . . ." [*GRCM*, ch. 18]
 Heibel, "What's a Guy to Do?"
 Heibel, "Me and the Men's Movement"
 Houppert, "Separatist But Equal"
 Stabile, "Erasing Racism"
- 4: Class
- Oct 12 Fussell, *Class* [selections]
 Brandon, "6-Figure Families Claim Life Isn't Grand for Them"
 Ehrenreich, "The Silenced Majority" [*GRCM*, ch. 6]
 hooks, "Confronting Class in the Classroom"
- Oct 19 Reed, "The Underclass as Myth and Symbol"
 Butsch, "Ralph, Fred, Archie and Homer" [*GRCM*, ch. 46]
 Fiske, "Class and Family Values"
 Dent, "The New Black Suburbs"
 Steele, "On Being Black and Middle Class"
 Gates, "Must Buppieship Cost Homeboy His Soul?"
- Oct 26 **MIDTERM**
- 5: Pornography
- Nov 2 Dworkin, "Pornography and Male Supremacy" [*GRCM*, ch. 27]
 Rubin, "Misguided, Dangerous and Wrong" [*GRCM*, ch. 28]
 Myers, "Towards a Feminist Erotica" [*GRCM*, ch. 30]
 Kuhn, "Lawless Seeing" [*GRCM*, ch. 31]
 Collins, "Pornography and Black Women's Bodies" [*GRCM*, ch. 32]
 Mayall & Russell, "Racism in Pornography" [*GRCM*, ch. 33]
 MacDonald, "Confessions of a Feminist Porn Watcher" [*GRCM*, ch. 35]

- 6: Hate Speech and Speech Codes
- Nov 9 Hentoff, assorted *Village Voice* columns on hate speech cases
Hentoff, "'Speech Codes' and Free Speech"
Williams & Williams, "Freedom of Hate Speech"
Fish, "There's No Such Thing as Free Speech . . ."
Schmidt, "Universities Must Defend Free Speech"
Dershowitz, "Justice"
Playboy, "Hate Speech"
Goldstein, "Body English"
Corrigan, "University Administrators' Dilemma"
Weiner, *Professors, Politics, and Pop* [selections]
- 7: Multiculturalism and Canon Revision
- Nov 16 D'Souza, "Illiberal Education"
Howe, "The Value of the Canon"
Gates, "Whose Canon Is It, Anyway?"
Pollitt, "Why Do We Read?"
National Association of Scholars, "Is The Curriculum Biased?"
Teachers for a Democratic Culture, "Statement of Principles"
- 8: Affirmative Action
- Nov 23 *Newsweek*, special section on affirmative action
Adler, "Evening the Score"
Roberts and Stratton, "Color Code"
National Review, "Equality of Opportunism"
Canady, "Which Direction for America?"
Wilkins, "Racism Has Its Privileges"
Kinsley, "The Spoils of Victimhood"
Kahlenberg, "Class, Not Race"
Willis, "Close to the Wedge" (Parts 1-2)
Ledbetter, "The Unbearable Whiteness of Publishing" (Parts 1-2)
Kindrow, "The Candidate" [with letters to the editor in response]
- Dec 7 Review for final
- Dec 14 **FINAL (6-8pm)**