

Critical communication studies

Comm 8211

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office hours (253 Ford): TuTh 10-11:15a, W 10-11:30a, and by appointment

Syllabus

Fall 2008

Course description and objectives

There are a lot of different “critical” territories scattered across the disciplinary terrain of Communication Studies and this seminar can’t (and doesn’t) pretend to cover all of them. This semester, our focus will be on the various intellectual and political projects that travel under the banner of “cultural studies,” which is arguably one of the most important such “flavors” that critical communication studies takes these days.

As a label, “cultural studies” has come to describe an ever-expanding range of books, journals, conferences, courses, job descriptions, and academic programs. In spite (because?) of the widespread use of the term, there’s also widespread confusion as to just what “cultural studies” really is. From the very beginning, the range of work done in the name of cultural studies has been too diverse to allow for simple and straightforward definitions of the enterprise. While cultural studies isn’t completely unbounded, it also doesn’t have a clearly identifiable center: there is no single object of study, no body of theory, and no methodological paradigm that defines cultural studies completely.

Cultural studies’ inherent “fuzziness” places sharp limits on what we’ll be able to accomplish in less than four months. We won’t be able to examine cultural studies’ tangled and fractious history in its entirety, but we will trace out enough of that backstory to help make sense of cultural studies’ current shape and circumstances. We won’t be able to cover all of the subjects that are prevalent in cultural studies today, though we will spend several weeks surveying some of the most significant of those issues. And we won’t be able to map out cultural studies’ current trajectories with absolute precision, but we will engage the question of where cultural studies might -- and should -- head in the future. The best way to think of this course, then, is not so much as a source of definitive answers, but as an opportunity to wrestle with productive and important questions.

Grading policy

Presumably, you’re enrolled in this course because you genuinely want to learn about cultural studies, and so your presence is motivated by something other than the desire to add an(other) A to your transcript -- and that’s the way it should be. With this in mind, my default assumption is that it’s counter-productive for me to make you worry about how your work for this course translates into a letter grade. As of Day One, you begin the course with an A. If you show up for all our class meetings, participate intelligently in our discussions (both in class and online), and complete the required writing assignment(s) in satisfactory and timely fashion, you’ll keep that A. That being said, in cases where people are clearly slacking off, I reserve the right to go deeper into the alphabet when I submit final grades. Under such unfortunate circumstances, your grade will be calculated using the following formula:

Attendance/participation	15%
Course blog	15%
Written assignment(s)	70%

Readings

Our required book -- John Storey (ed.), *What Is Cultural Studies?* -- is available at the University Bookstore in Coffman Union. The rest of our readings will be made available in PDF format. [Reminder: department policy does not allow students to use the copier in 270 Ford to print these PDFs. Sorry.]

Attendance/participation

Our weekly meetings will be oriented around seminar-style discussions, rather than formal lectures. As such, your primary responsibility each week will be to show up prepared to contribute thoughtfully and productively to our conversations about the assigned readings. You are *not* expected to demonstrate perfect and immediate mastery of the issues raised by our readings -- questions and requests for clarification are more than welcome contributions to our conversations -- but you *are* expected to be an active and regular participant in our ongoing dialogue. I'll chime in often enough (and at enough length) that you'll certainly get my take on our readings, but this course is not a spectator event for any of us.

Course blog

We will conduct a significant amount of discussion and course business online via a course blog. Full details on how to access and contribute to the blog are available on a separate handout. Here's a partial list of the ways we will use the course blog this semester as:

- a central "bulletin board" for official course announcements and major course handouts
- an informal discussion space for continuing and/or augmenting our in-class conversations
- a collection point for various online resources relating to cultural studies and/or the course
- a space for mutual support and feedback with your course-related research and writing

Ideally, the course blog should function as a space that's serious enough for people to share more extended thoughts on the course material than it may be possible to share in person, but simultaneously casual enough to allow people to post textual fragments, "in progress" ideas, and jovial interaction.

Written assignment(s)

Choose one of the following two options:

(1) One 6250-7500 word research paper. Topics can (and will) vary, but your overall project should demonstrate a clear and significant relationship to cultural studies. Ideally, the finished product should be suitable -- at least in terms of its subject matter -- for submission to a conference or a refereed journal. Major deadlines for this project are as follows:

Preliminary 1-on-1 meeting	30 Sep
250-500 word proposal	7 Oct
Full-length draft	9 Dec
In-class group workshopping	17 Dec (1:30-3:30p)

(2) Three 2000-3000 word critical response papers. You are free to write on whatever topic(s) you like from the assigned readings associated with each due date. These essays should be thoughtful, critical engagements with the course material in question. They should *not* be mere summaries of the readings or of our in-class/online conversations. Due dates (with associated readings) are as follows:

Paper #1 (9 Sep-7 Oct)	14 Oct
Paper #2 (14 Oct-4 Nov)	11 Nov
Paper #3 (11 Nov-9 Dec)	17 Dec

Miscellaneous

As some of you may already know, I'm the founder/manager of CULTSTUD-L: a cultural studies listserv that has more than 2000 subscribers from over 40 countries around the world. You're welcome to join the listserv, but are under no formal obligation to do so. If you're interested, you should read the list's FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) first to (1) find out how to subscribe and (2) learn the basic rules of conduct for the list. The FAQ is available online here: <http://www.comm.umn.edu/~grodman/cultstud/>

Reading/assignment schedule

2 September **Introduction and overview**
no readings

9 September **Defining cultural studies**
Johnson, "What Is Cultural Studies Anyway?" [WICS]
Hall, "The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the Crisis in the Humanities"
Hall, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies"
Nelson, Treichler, and Grossberg, "Cultural Studies: An Introduction"
Bérubé, "Pop Goes the Academy: Cult Studs Fight the Power"
Nelson, "Always Already Cultural Studies: Academic Conferences and a Manifesto" [WICS]
Grossberg, "Introduction: 'Birmingham' in America?"
Grossberg, "The Circulation of Cultural Studies"
Grossberg, "Cultural Studies: What's in a Name (One More Time)"
Morris, "A Question of Cultural Studies"

16 September **Historicizing and placing cultural studies**

Sparks, "The Evolution of Cultural Studies . . ." [WICS]
Green, "The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies" [WICS]
Steele, "A Lost Genealogy: Adult Education and the Project of British Cultural Studies"
Carey, "Reflections on the Project of (American) Cultural Studies"
Grossberg, "Where Is the 'America' in American Cultural Studies?"
Schwarz, "Where Is Cultural Studies?"
Frow and Morris, "Australian Cultural Studies" [WICS]
Ang, "Doing Cultural Studies at the Crossroads: Local/Global Negotiations"
Denning, "Globalization in Cultural Studies: Process and Epoch"

23 September **Disciplining cultural studies**

Nelson and Gaonkar, "Cultural Studies and the Politics of Disciplinarity: An Introduction"
Grossberg, "Toward a Genealogy of the State of Cultural Studies: The Discipline of Communication and the Reception of Cultural Studies in the United States"
Rooney, "Discipline and Vanish: Feminism, the Resistance to Theory, and the Politics of Cultural Studies" [WICS]
Pfister, "The Americanization of Cultural Studies" [WICS]
Diawara, "Black Studies, Cultural Studies: Performative Acts" [WICS]
Johnson, "Historical Returns: Transdisciplinarity, Cultural Studies and History"
Morris, "History in Cultural Studies"
Felski, "The Role of Aesthetics in Cultural Studies"
Gibson, *Culture and Power: A History of Cultural Studies* [selections]
Birchall, "Cultural Studies and the Secret"
Striphias, "The Long March: Cultural Studies and Its Institutionalization"

30 September **Birmingham -- part 1**
DEADLINE -- research paper meeting

Williams, "Defining a Democratic Culture"
Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, selections from Annual Reports
Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms" [WICS]
Hall *et al.*, "The Law-and-Order Society: Towards the 'Exceptional State'"
Hall, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview With Stuart Hall"
Gray, "Formations of Cultural Studies"
Editorial Team, "Introduction" [*CCCS Selected Working Papers*, vol. 2]
Hall, "Preface" [*CCCS Selected Working Papers*, vol. 1]
Hall, "Preface" [*CCCS Selected Working Papers*, vol. 2]
Grossberg, "CCCS and the Detour Through Theory"

7 October Birmingham -- part 2**DEADLINE -- research paper proposal**

Clarke, "Cultural Studies: A British Inheritance"

Carrington, "Decentring the Centre: Cultural Studies in Britain and Its Legacy"

Wright, "Dare We De-centre Birmingham?: Troubling the 'Origin' and Trajectories of Cultural Studies"

McNeil, "De-centring or Re-focusing Cultural Studies: A Response to Handel K. Wright"

Hall, "Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* and the Cultural Turn"

Grossberg, "Rereading the Past From the Future"

Moran, "Milk Bars, Starbucks and the Uses of Literacy"

Lewis, "Racializing Culture Is Ordinary"

Gray, "Cultural Studies at Birmingham: The Impossibility of Critical Pedagogy?"

Webster, "Cultural Studies and Sociology at, and After, the Closure of the Birmingham School" [with responses]

14 October Race, ethnicity, and nation**DEADLINE -- short paper #1**

Hall, "Race, Culture, and Communications: Looking Backward and Forward at Cultural Studies" [WICS]

Carby, "Lost in Translation"

hooks, "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination"

Michaels, "Bad Aboriginal Art"

Berlant, "The Face of America and the State of Emergency"

Rodman, "Race . . . and Other Four Letter Words: Eminem and the Cultural Politics of Authenticity"

Gray, "The New Conditions of Black Cultural Production"

Stabile, *White Victims, Black Villains* [selections]

Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities"

Hall, "New Ethnicities"

Werry, "National Cinema, Global Markets, and the Politics of Post-Ethnicity: Notes From Middle Earth"

Ang, "On Not Speaking Chinese: Diasporic Identifications and Postmodern Ethnicity"

Hall, "Epilogue: Through the Prism of an Intellectual Life"

21 October Gender, sexuality, and feminism

Brunson, "A Thief in the Night: Stories of Feminism in the 1970s at CCCS"

Winship, "Introduction" [section on "Women's Studies and Feminism" in *CCCS Selected Working Papers*, vol. 2]

Franklin, Lury, and Stacey, "Feminism and Cultural Studies: Pasts, Presents, Futures" [WICS]

Long, "Feminism and Cultural Studies" [WICS]

Wallace, "Negative Images: Towards a Black Feminist Cultural Criticism"

Kipnis, "(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading *Hustler*"

Crimp, "Portraits of People With AIDS"

Stabile, "'A Garden Inclosed Is My Sister': Ecofeminism and Eco-Valences"

Deem, "The Scandalous Fall of Feminism and the 'First Black President'"

McRobbie, "The Es and the Anti-Es: New Questions for Feminism and Cultural Studies"

Berlant, "Intimacy, Publicity, and Femininity"

28 October Popular culture, mass media, and entertainment -- part 1

Jenkins, McPherson, and Shattuc, "Defining Popular Culture"

Grossberg, "Mapping Popular Culture"

Rodman, "Elvis Culture"

Acland, "Matinees, Summers, and the Practice of Cinemagoing"

Penley, "Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Study of Popular Culture"

Miller, "A View From a Fossil: The New Economy, Creativity and Consumption -- Two or Three Things I Don't Believe In"

Jenkins, "The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence"

Hesmondhalgh, "Audiences and Everyday Aesthetics: Talking About Good and Bad Music"

Rodman and Vanderdonckt, "Music for Nothing or, I Want My MP3: The Regulation and Recirculation of Affect"

Ouellette and Hay, "Introduction" [from *Better Living Through Reality TV*]

4 November Popular culture, mass media, and entertainment -- part 2

- Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular'"
Morley, "Introduction" [section on "Media" in *CCCS Selected Working Papers*, vol. 2]
Hall, "Encoding/Decoding"
Hall, "Reflections Upon the Encoding/Decoding Model"
Fiske, "British Cultural Studies and Television" [WICS]
Morris, "Banality in Cultural Studies" [WICS]
Radway, "Reception Study: Ethnography and the Problems of Dispersed Audiences and Nomadic Subjects"
Grossberg, "Wandering Audiences, Nomadic Critics"
Ang, "Culture and Communication: Towards an Ethnographic Critique of Media Consumption in the Transnational Media System" [WICS]
Erni, "Media Studies and Cultural Studies: A Symbiotic Convergence"

11 November Everyday life, lived experience, and cultural space**DEADLINE -- short paper #2**

- Probyn, "The Politics of Experience"
Seigworth, "Everyday Life Is Always Somewhere Else"
Seigworth, "Sound Affects"
Gregg, "Communicating Investment: Cultural Studies, Politics and Affect"
Gregg, "A Mundane Voice"
Clifford, "Traveling Cultures"
Frith, "The Cultural Study of Popular Music"
Morris, "Things to Do With Shopping Centers"
Hebdige, "Redeeming Witness: In the Tracks of the Homeless Vehicle Project"
Wise, "Home: Territory and Identity"
Pezzullo, "Touring 'Cancer Alley,' Louisiana: Performances of Community and Memory for Environmental Justice"

18 November Science, technology, and digital culture

- Sterne, "A Machine to Hear for Them: On the Very Possibility of Sound's Reproduction"
Stabile, "Shooting the Mother: Fetal Photography and the Politics of Disappearance"
Carey, "Historical Pragmatism and the Internet"
Rodman, "The Net Effect: The Public's Fear and the Public Sphere"
Rodino-Colocino, "Laboring Under the Digital Divide"
Ross, "Technology and Below-the-Line Labor in the Copyfight Over Intellectual Property"
Everett, "The Revolution Will Be Digitized: Afrocentricity and the Digital Public Sphere"
Packer, "Safety and Security: Future Orientations of Automobility"
Andrejevic, "The Discipline of Watching: Detection, Risk, and Lateral Surveillance"

25 November The university, cultural institutions, and pedagogy

- Nelson and Watt, "Between Meltdown and Community: Crisis and Opportunity in Higher Education"
Rutherford, "Cultural Studies in the Corporate University"
Messer-Davidow, "Whither Cultural Studies?"
Appadurai, "Diversity and Disciplinarity as Cultural Artifacts"
Readings, "Culture Wars and Cultural Studies"
Ross, "Global U"
Giroux, "Resisting Difference: Cultural Studies and the Discourse of Critical Pedagogy"
Henderson, "Communication Pedagogy and Political Practice"
Bennett, "Putting Policy Into Cultural Studies"
Radway, "Mail-Order Culture and Its Critics: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Commodification and Consumption, and the Problem of Cultural Authority"
Striphias, "A Dialectic With the Everyday: Communication and Cultural Politics on Oprah Winfrey's Book Club"

2 December Public policy, public intellectuals, and the public sphere

Morris, "Politics Now (Anxieties of a Petty-Bourgeois Intellectual)"
Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* [selections]
West, "The Postmodern Crisis of the Black Intellectuals"
Graff, "Academic Writing and the Uses of Bad Publicity"
Moran, "Cultural Studies and Academic Stardom"
Bérubé, "Bite Size Theory: Popularizing Academic Criticism"
Bérubé, "Cultural Criticism and the Politics of Selling Out"
Penley, "From NASA to *The 700 Club* (With a Detour Through Hollywood): Cultural Studies in the Public Sphere"
Carey, "Configurations of Culture, History and Politics"

9 December Cultural studies: Now and in the future

DEADLINE -- full-length draft of research paper

Williams, "The Future of Cultural Studies" [WICS]
Gray, "Is Cultural Studies Inflated?: The Cultural Economy of Cultural Studies in the United States"
Morley, "So-Called Cultural Studies: Dead Ends and Reinvented Wheels"
Johnson, "Reinventing Cultural Studies: Remembering for the Best Version"
Rodman, "Subject to Debate: (Mis)Reading Cultural Studies"
Morris, "Truth and Beauty in Our Times"
Morris, "The Truth Is Out There . . ."
Baetens, "Cultural Studies After the Cultural Studies Paradigm"
D'Acci, "Cultural Studies, Television Studies, and the Crisis in the Humanities"
Jenkins, McPherson, and Shattuc, "The Culture That Sticks to Your Skin: A Manifesto for a New Cultural Studies"
Grossberg, "Does Cultural Studies Have Futures? Should It? (or What's the Matter With New York?): Cultural Studies, Contexts and Conjunctures"
Cho, "We Know Where We're Going, But We Don't Know Where We Are: An Interview With Lawrence Grossberg"

17 December Workshop for final research papers (1:30-3:30p)

DEADLINE -- short paper #3

Reference list
(PDF readings only)

- Acland, Charles R. 2003. Matinees, summers, and the practice of cinemagoing. In *Screen traffic: Movies, multiplexes, and global culture*, 45-81. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Andrejevic, Mark. 2007. The discipline of watching: Detection, risk, and lateral surveillance. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23(5): 391-407.
- Ang, Ien. 1998. Doing cultural studies at the crossroads: Local/global negotiations. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 1(1): 13-31.
- Ang, Ien. 2001. On not speaking Chinese: Diasporic identifications and postmodern ethnicity. In *On not speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West*, 21-36. New York: Routledge.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. Diversity and disciplinarity as cultural artifacts. In *Disciplinarity and dissent in cultural studies*, ed. Cary Nelson and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, 23-36. New York: Routledge.
- Baetens, Jan. 2005. Cultural studies after the cultural studies paradigm. *Cultural Studies* 19(1): 1-13.
- Bennett, Tony. 1992. Putting policy into cultural studies. In *Cultural studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, Linda Baughman, and J. Macgregor Wise, 23-37. New York: Routledge.
- Berlant, Lauren. 1996. The face of America and the state of emergency. In *Disciplinarity and dissent in cultural studies*, ed. Cary Nelson and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, 397-439. New York: Routledge.
- Berlant, Lauren. 2008. Intimacy, publicity, and femininity. In *The female complaint: The unfinished business of sentimentality in American culture*, 1-31. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Bérubé, Michael. 1994. Bite size theory: Popularizing academic criticism. In *Public access: Literary theory and American cultural politics*, 161-178. New York: Verso.
- Bérubé, Michael. 1994. Pop goes the academy: Cult studs fight the power. In *Public access: Literary theory and American cultural politics*, 137-160. New York: Verso, 1994.
- Bérubé, Michael. 1998. Cultural criticism and the politics of selling out. In *The employment of English: Theory, jobs and the future of literary studies*, 216-242. New York: New York University Press.
- Birchall, Clare. 2006. Cultural studies and the secret. In *New cultural studies: Adventures in theory*, ed. Gary Hall and Clare Birchall, 293-310. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Brunsdon, Charlotte. 1996. A thief in the night: Stories of feminism in the 1970s at CCCS. In *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, 276-286. New York: Routledge.
- Carby, Hazel. 2007. Lost in translation. In *CCCS Selected Working Papers* (vol. 2), ed. Ann Gray, Jan Campbell, Mark Erickson, Stuart Hanson, and Helen Wood, 563-570. New York: Routledge.
- Carey, James W. 1997. Reflections on the project of (American) cultural studies. In *Cultural studies in question*, ed. Marjorie Ferguson and Peter Golding, 1-24. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Carey, James W. 2005. Historical pragmatism and the internet. *New Media and Society* 7(4): 443-455.
- Carey, James W. 2006. Configurations of culture, history and politics. In *Thinking with James Carey: Essays on communication, transportation, history*, 199-225. New York: Peter Lang.
- Carrington, Ben. 2001. Decentring the Centre: Cultural studies in Britain and its legacy. In *A companion to cultural studies*, ed. Toby Miller, 275-297. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. 1965-1976. selections from Annual Reports.
- Cho, Younghan. 2008. We know where we're going, but we don't know where we are: An interview with Lawrence Grossberg. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 32(2): 102-122.
- Clarke, John. 1991. Cultural studies: A British inheritance. In *New times, old enemies: Essays on cultural studies and America*, 1-19. London: HarperCollins.
- Clifford, James. 1992. Traveling cultures. In *Cultural studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, Linda Baughman, and J. Macgregor Wise, 96-116. New York: Routledge.

- Crimp, Douglas. 1992. Portraits of people with AIDS. In *Cultural studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, Linda Baughman, and J. Macgregor Wise, 117-133. New York: Routledge.
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- Grossberg, Lawrence. 1997. The circulation of cultural studies. In *Bringing it all back home: Essays on cultural studies*, 234-244. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
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