Critical communication studies
Comm 8211 / Fall 2022
Prof. Gil Rodman

Overview

There are a lot of "critical" territories to be found within Communication Studies, and this seminar doesn't pretend to cover all of them. We will focus on the intellectual and political projects that travel under the banner of **cultural studies**: i.e., one of the most important forms that critical communication studies has taken (and continues to take) over the past several decades.

From the beginning (regardless of where one believes that to have been), the range of work done in the name of cultural studies has been too diverse to allow for simple definitions of the project. Cultural studies isn't completely unbounded, but 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 lies at its core. Cultural studies' inherent open-endedness 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 the project's current shape and circumstances. We won't be able to cover all of the subjects that matter to cultural studies today, but we will survey some of the most significant of them. And we won't be able to map out cultural studies' various trajectories with absolute precision, but we will engage the question of where the project 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.

Contact

The most reliable way to reach me is email (rodman@umn.edu). I try to respond to student emails within 24 hours of when I first see them (which may be several hours after you contact me, especially if you do so after 10:00 pm). It is also possible to reach me via Canvas (both through the Canvas messaging system and by responding to feedback/comments I've left for you there), but Canvas notifications will reach me much slower than email does, so please don't use Canvas for time-sensitive messages. My "office hours" will happen on Zoom (see Canvas for the link) and by appointment. Simply email me to schedule a meeting, and I'll be delighted to set one up at a mutually agreeable day and time.

Canvas

Log in to the U's main Canvas page and select "COMM 8211" from either the Dashboard or the Courses menu. Canvas offers additional information about how to use the platform in both text and video formats

We will use Canvas for several things this semester:
- access to the official course documents
- access to all the readings (required and otherwise)
- a discussion forum where you will share questions/comments about the required readings
- the delivery point for proposals and drafts of your final paper
- business-related announcements about the course

There are Canvas apps for both Android and iOS, though these are **not** the most efficient way to use the platform. They can push notifications and reminders to you, and they can help you access (some) course content when you are away from a networked computer. But even the folks who make Canvas advise people **not** to use these apps as the primary platform for navigating a course.

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 productively to our conversations about the assigned readings. I do **not** expect you to demonstrate perfect and immediate mastery of the issues raised by our readings -- questions and requests for clarification are perfectly welcome contributions -- but I **will** expect you 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 things, but this course is not designed to be a spectator event.

Readings

There's a **lot** of reading on this syllabus: more than is probably reasonable, but still less (much less) than it would take to cover all the (sub)topics completely. The excess is intentional. This is **not** because I want to overload or overwhelm you (I don't), but because I believe it's better for you to have more reading than you can probably handle in one semester than it is for you **not** to have enough reading for you to know what you're talking about. An overstuffed reading list also gives you a curated set of resources to draw on later in your studies (and career).

And so I recognize (and understand) that you will **not** do all the reading. And that's perfectly fine, provided that:
- For any given week, enough of the group has done any given reading on that week's list so that we can have a productive conversation about it.
- For any given one of you, your "shortfalls" in doing the reading are neither so sizable nor so regular that you routinely struggle to contribute to our in-class discussions.

(To be clear, I'm also perfectly happy for any/all of you to take that as a challenge and do all the reading anyway.)

Discussion points (DPs)

Not counting Week One, we have 14 weeks of scheduled reading this semester (14 Sep - 14 Dec). For **at least 10** of those weeks, you should post 2-3 discussion points related to those readings to the Canvas discussion forum **by 5:00 pm the day before** the relevant class meeting. Exactly what those points should look like will vary from topic to topic (and from student to student), but you should aim for items that can serve as productive jumping-off points for our in-class discussions. Some rough guidelines:
- Your discussion points can be questions and/or comments. They can be requests for clarification or further background information. They can be criticisms of something that one (or more) of the authors wrote. They can be "a-ha!" moments you had while reading. And then some. What they should **not** be, however, are mere summaries of the readings.
- An overstuffed reading list means that there are always a **lot** of potential paths our in-class discussions might follow. DPs give you the opportunity to help steer us down paths that match up well with your own research interests, questions, concerns, and struggles.
- The "day before class" deadline is designed to help me prepare for our Wednesday meetings in (hopefully) helpful ways. I won't be completely inflexible with respect to the 5:00 pm timing, but please don't stretch that deadline **too** far. I teach my other class this semester on Wednesday mornings, so if your DPs aren't posted reasonably early on Tuesday evening, I may not see them in a timely fashion.
- I do **not** expect you to have completed all (or even most) of the reading for a given week by the DP deadline. Ideally, though, by that point in the week, you'll have done enough of it to have some preliminary comments and/or questions to share with the group.

Research paper

Your major project for the semester is a 6250-7500 word research paper. Topics can (and will) vary, but your project should demonstrate a clear and significant relationship to cultural studies. Major project deadlines are:

5 Oct	Preliminary 1-on-1 (Zoom) meeting
12 Oct	250-500 word proposal
t.b.d. by the group	Full-length draft
t.b.d. by the group [2 hours]	In-class group workshopping

We're a small enough group to (hopefully) negotiate the date/time for our final workshop in mutually agreeable ways. Our default option is to use the official final exam period for the course (i.e., 1:30-3:30 pm on 17 Dec), with drafts being due one week earlier (i.e., 1:30 pm on 10 Dec). The alternative is that we hold the workshop at any mutually agreeable date/time after the default option and before the official end of finals week (5:00 pm on 21 Dec), with drafts being due one week earlier. Please note that participating in the workshop is **not** an optional part of the course, and that you should come prepared to provide constructive feedback to your classmates' projects in the same spirit that you would want to receive feedback on your own draft.

To be clear, what you will share with the group in December is a **draft**. While your aspirational goal should be to produce something that, with additional polish and revision, could become a conference paper, journal article, and/or dissertation chapter, your draft does **not** need to be fully ready for publication. There is **no** formal obligation to revise and resubmit your draft after our workshop -- but I would be happy to receive such revisions if/when you make them, and to give you additional feedback on your project.

Grades

Presumably, you're in grad school because you genuinely want to learn more about your chosen discipline, and you're enrolled in this course because you genuinely want to learn something about cultural studies that is helpful to you. As such, traditional grades aren't a productive "carrot" or "stick." If anything, they may be counterproductive, since they encourage you to focus on numbers (e.g., how do I turn an 89 into a 90?), rather than on the substantive issues at the core of the course. With this in mind, you should assume that successfully completing the course requirements will earn you an A as a final grade. That said, in cases where people are clearly slacking off, I reserve the right to go deeper into the alphabet when I submit final grades.

Miscellaneous

- We will cover topics that may evoke strong differences of opinion. I don't expect the group to agree on everything, but I do expect our discussions to be characterized by mutual respect and collegiality. Strong opinions are acceptable, but verbal bullying and personal attacks will **not** be tolerated.
- The content of this course -- both in-person and online -- is not intended for public circulation or distribution. You can make audio and/or video recordings of class meetings for your personal use, provided you do so without disrupting the ordinary flow of the class. You can download copies of online materials to help you complete the course successfully, but not otherwise. The purchase and/or sale of either written notes or recordings of class meetings is strictly prohibited.
- I will do my best to accommodate your needs relating to religious holidays and/or documented disabilities. By University policy, you **must** provide me with written notice (for religious holidays) and/or official documentation (for disabilities) with **enough lead time** for such accommodations to be arranged.
- Please pay attention to the U's official notices regarding:
  - policy statements for syllabi
  - policy regarding makeup work
  - COVID-19 policies and guidelines

  In particular, please note that the last link is subject to updates as the pandemic situation changes.

Schedule

7 Sep   0. Getting started
Rodman, "The Impossibility of Teaching Cultural Studies"

14 Sep   1. Intellectual work as/and politics
Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*
Morris, "Politics Now (Anxieties of a Petty-Bourgeois Intellectual)"
Hall, "The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the Crisis in the Humanities"
Hall, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies"
Lipsitz, "Academic Politics and Social Change"
McRobbie, "Stuart Hall: The Universities and the 'Hurly Burly'"
Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* [selections]
Rodman, "Cultural Studies and History"

21 Sep   2. Some definitions
Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983*
Frow & Morris, "Introduction" [*Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader*]
Rodman, "Cultural Studies: What It Is"

28 Sep   3. Race, ethnicity, and nation
Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media"
Hall, "New Ethnicities"
Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities"
Carby, "Lost in Translation"
Harris, "Black British, Brown British, and British Cultural Studies"
hooks, "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination"
Stabile, "Criminalizing Black Culture"
Ang, "On Not Speaking Chinese: Diasporic Identifications and Postmodern Ethnicity"

Sharma, "Taxi Cab Publics and the Production of *Brown Space* After 9/11"
Shome, "'Global Motherhood': The Transnational Intimacies of White Femininity"
Wald, "American Studies and the Politics of Life"
Gilroy et al., "A Diagnosis of Contemporary Forms of Racism, Race and Nationalism: A Conversation With Professor Paul Gilroy"
Calvente, "Racism Is a Public Health Crisis!: Black Power in the COVID-19 Pandemic"
Rodman, "What We (Still) Need to Learn: Stuart Hall and the Struggle Against Racism"

5 Oct   4. Gender, sexuality, and feminism
Brunsdon, "A Thief in the Night: Stories of Feminism in the 1970s at CCCS"
McNeil, "Early Feminism in the CCCS: Stories and Reflections"
Balsamo, "Feminism and Cultural Studies"
Stabile, "The Nightmare Voice of Feminism: Feminism and Cultural Studies"
Wallace, "Negative Images: Towards a Black Feminist Cultural Criticism"
Crimp, "Portraits of People With AIDS"
Henderson, "Queer Visibility and Social Class"
Halberstam, "Go Gaga: Anarchy, Chaos, and the Wild"
Kearney, "Pink Technology: Mediamaking Gear for Girls"
Driscoll and Gregg, "Convergence Culture and the Legacy of Feminist Cultural Studies"
Banet-Weiser, "Branding Consumer Citizens: Gender and the Emergence of Brand Culture"
Littler, "The Rise of the 'Yummy Mummy': Popular Conservatism and the Neoliberal Maternal in Contemporary British Culture"
Daily, "'We Bleed for Female Empowerment': Mediated Ethics, Commodity Feminism, and the Contradictions of Feminist Politics"
Radway, "Interview With Janice Radway"
McRobbie, "Notes on the Perfect: Competitive Femininity in Neoliberal Times"

12 Oct   5. Birmingham: In the beginning?
Steele, "A Lost Genealogy: Adult Education and the Project of British Cultural Studies"
Williams, "The Future of Cultural Studies"
Williams, "Defining a Democratic Culture"
Hoggart, "Contemporary Cultural Studies"
Hall, "Cultural Studies and the Centre: Some Problematics and Problems"
Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms"
Hebdige, *Subculture* [selections]
McRobbie, "Settling Accounts With Subcultures: A Feminist Critique"
Hall, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview With Stuart Hall"
Clarke, "Cultural Studies: A British Inheritance"
Gray, "Formations of Cultural Studies"
Gray et al., "Introduction" [*CCCS Selected Working Papers*, Vol. 2]
Hall, "Stuart Hall Interview -- 2 June 2011"

19 Oct   6. Birmingham: On second thought
Webster, "Cultural Studies and Sociology at, and After, the Closure of the Birmingham School"
Marsh, "Sociology and Cultural Studies at Birmingham and Beyond: A Response to Frank Webster"
Webster, "A Reply to David Marsh"
Gray, "Cultural Studies at Birmingham 1985-2002 -- The Last Decades"
Vincent, "Space for Cultural Studies: Conversations With the Centre"
Littler, "On Not Being at the CCCS"
Brunsdon, "On Being Made History"
Hebdige, "The Worldliness of Cultural Studies"
Hall, "Stuart Hall Interviewed by Kieran Connell"
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"
Moran, "Milk Bars, Starbucks and the Uses of Literacy"

Lewis, "Racializing Culture Is Ordinary"
Grossberg, "CCCS and the Detour Through Theory"
Grossberg, "Rereading the Past From the Future"
Grossberg, "Conjunctural Thinking -- 'Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will': Lawrence Grossberg
      Remembers Stuart Hall"
Rodman, "Cultural Studies: What It Was"

26 Oct   7. Popular culture and media studies: Theory
Kearney, "How to Cook an Artichoke"
Jenkins, McPherson, & Shattuc, "Defining Popular Culture"
Williams, "The Technology and the Society"
Hall, "Encoding/Decoding"
Hall, "Reflections Upon the Encoding/Decoding Model"
Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular'"
Morris, "Banality in Cultural Studies"
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"
Grossberg, "Mapping Popular Culture"
Felski, "The Role of Aesthetics in Cultural Studies"
Caldwell, "Para-Industry, Shadow Academy"
Littler, "Cultural Studies and Consumer Culture"
Morley, "Cultural Studies, Common Sense and Communications: The Infra-Ordinary, the Interdisciplinary and the
      Particular"
Rodman, "Notes on Reconstructing 'the Popular'"

2 Nov   8. Popular culture and media studies: Analysis
Radway, "Mail-Order Culture and Its Critics: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Commodification and Consumption,
      and the Problem of Cultural Authority"
Penley, "Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Study of Popular Culture"
Kipnis, "(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading *Hustler*"
Berlant, "The Face of America and the State of Emergency"
Morris, "Learning From Bruce Lee: Pedagogy and Political Correctness in Martial Arts Cinema"
Acland, "Matinees, Summers, and the Practice of Cinemagoing"
Striphas, "A Dialectic With the Everyday: Communication and Cultural Politics on Oprah Winfrey's Book Club"
Rodman & Vanderdonckt, "Music for Nothing or, I Want My MP3: The Regulation and Recirculation of Affect"
Hesmondhalgh, "Audiences and Everyday Aesthetics: Talking About Good and Bad Music"
Teurlings, "Media Literacy and the Challenges of Contemporary Media Culture: On Savvy Viewers and Critical
      Apathy"
Hayes & Rodman, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Film: What Does It Mean to Be a Black Film in Twenty-
      First Century America?"
Littler, "#Damonsplaining and the Unbearable Whiteness of Merit"
Morgan Parmett, "Site-Specific Television as Urban Renewal: Or, How Portland Became *Portlandia*"

9 Nov   9. Technology and digital culture
Slack & Wise, *Culture and Technology* [selections]
Carey, "Historical Pragmatism and the Internet"
Striphas, "Algorithmic Culture"
Sterne, "Format Theory"
Sterne, "Thinking the Internet: Cultural Studies Versus the Millennium"
Rodman, "The Net Effect: The Public's Fear and the Public Sphere"
Ross, "Technology and Below-the-Line Labor in the Copyfight Over Intellectual Property"
McPherson, "Why Are the Digital Humanities So White? or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation"
Striphas, "The Abuses of Literacy: Amazon Kindle and the Right to Read"
Davis, "E-Books in the Global Information Economy"

Ingraham & Reeves, "New Media, New Panics"
Coleman, "Theorizing the Present: Digital Media, Pre-Emergence and Infra-Structures of Feeling"

16 Nov   10. The university, academic labor, and critical pedagogy
Henderson, "Communication Pedagogy and Political Practice"
Ross, "The Mental Labor Problem"
Watt, "What Would an Ethical Graduate Program Be?"
Bousquet, "Students Are Already Workers"
Jones, "A University, If You Can Keep It: James W. Carey and the University Tradition"
Striphas, "Acknowledged Goods: Cultural Studies and the Politics of Academic Journal Publishing"
Striphas, "Performing Scholarly Communication"
Morris & Hjort, "Instituting Cultural Studies"
Hjort & Morris, "Institutional Culture: A Manifesto With Rules"
Ahmed, "Institutional Life"
Davidson, "Why Higher Education Needs a Paradigm Shift"
Hall, "The Uberification of the University"
Clarke, "'Voices in My Head': Thinking Critically as Dialogic Practice"

23 Nov   11. Public intellectuals and the public sphere
Bérubé, "Bite Size Theory: Popularizing Academic Criticism"
Bérubé, "Cultural Criticism and the Politics of Selling Out"
Graff, "Academic Writing and the Uses of Bad Publicity"
Penley, "From NASA to *The 700 Club* (With a Detour Through Hollywood): Cultural Studies in the Public Sphere"
Highmore, "Aesthetic Matters: Writing and Cultural Studies"
Giroux, "Cultural Studies, Public Pedagogy, and the Responsibility of Intellectuals"
Halberstam, "Low Theory"
Carey, "Configurations of Culture, History and Politics"
Clarke, "Stuart Hall and the Theory and Practice of Articulation"
Ang, "Stuart Hall and the Tension Between Academic and Intellectual Work"
Grossberg, "Learning From Stuart Hall"
Morris, "In and Out of Love: Moments in Criticism, Theory, and Management"
Fredriksson, "Copyright Culture and Pirate Politics"
Quinn, "Occupy Wall Street, Radical Neoliberalism, and New York's Hip-Hop Moguls"
Pezzullo, "Contextualizing Boycotts and Buycotts: The Impure Politics of Consumer-Based Advocacy in an Age
          of Global Ecological Crises"

30 Nov   12. Affect, everyday life, and cultural space(s)
Seigworth, "Sound Affects"
Gregg, "A Mundane Voice"
Gregg, "Communicating Investment: Cultural Studies, Politics and Affect"
Highmore, "Feeling Our Way: Mood and Cultural Studies"
Highmore, "Cultural Feelings (Some Theoretical Coordinates)"
Pedwell, "Transforming Habit: Revolution, Routine and Social Change"
Massey, "Travelling Thoughts"
Seigworth, "Everyday Life Is Always Somewhere Else"
Wise, "Home: Territory and Identity"
Morris, "Things to Do With Shopping Centers"
Thompson, "The Micro-Ethics of Everyday Life"
Veldstra, "Bad Feeling at Work: Emotional Labour, Precarity, and the Affective Economy"
Sharma, "Jet-Lag Luxury: The Architecture of Time Maintenance"
Sharma, "Because the Night Belongs to Lovers: Occupying the Time of Precarity"

7 Dec   13. Thinking globally and locally
Said, "Traveling Theory"
Schwarz, "Where Is Cultural Studies?"
Hall, "Whose Heritage?: Un-Settling 'the Heritage,' Re-Imagining the Post-Nation"

Morris, "Interview with Meaghan Morris"
Ang, "Doing Cultural Studies at the Crossroads: Local/Global Negotiations"
Xiao, "Who Needs Cantonese, Who Speaks?: Whispers Across Mountains, Delta, and Waterfronts"
Schäfer, "The Re-articulation of Cultural Studies in Japan and Its Consequences for Japanese Studies"
Shome, "Post-colonial Reflections on the 'Internationalization' of Cultural Studies"
Shome, "Thinking Culture and Cultural Studies -- From/of the Global South"
Pelillo-Hestermeyer, "Undoing (B)Orders in Academia: Language, Diversity and Cultural Studies"
Pelillo-Hestermeyer, "Translating Cultural Studies"
Gopal, "On Decolonisation and the University"

14 Dec   14. Looking forward
Clarke, "A Sense of Loss?: Unsettled Attachments in the Current Conjuncture"
Grossberg, "Cultural Studies in Search of a Method, or Looking for Conjunctural Analysis"
Rustin, Massey, Gilbert, & Hall, "Cultural Studies Now"
Rodman, "Cultural Studies Is Ordinary"
Rodman, "Cultural Studies: What Next?"
Grossberg, "Pessimism of the Will, Optimism of the Intellect: Endings and Beginnings"
Hickey, "Halcyon Daze: Cultural Studies' Crisis Narratives and the Imagined Ends of a Discipline"
Yousman, "'Something Nasty Down Below': Stuart Hall and the Contradictions of 'So-Called Cultural Studies' in
        the Multi-Crisis Era"
Couldry, "The Project of Cultural Studies: Heretical Doubts, New Horizons"
Couldry, "Cultural Studies: Can We / Should We Reinvent It?"
Morris, "On the Power of Exhilaration"
Ang, "On Cultural Studies, Again"
Wood, "On 'Telling Better Stories'"