



COMM 3650
Critical-Cultural Communication

Fall 2021
Daniel 205
4:00-5:15
Mon/Wed

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Office hours: Mon and Wed, 12-2 p.m. and by appointment

Catalog Description

Surveys the history and development of critical-cultural communication frameworks. Trains students in relevant theories and methods for contributing to critical-cultural communication through case studies and exemplars.

Course summary

It is perhaps obvious to say that we live in culture—we watch “popular culture,” we may be “highly cultured,” and we may hear commentators dismiss problems as being “part of the culture.” But what, exactly, does the word “culture” mean, and how does one go about *studying* culture? This class is designed to introduce Communication majors to Cultural Studies frameworks of thinking, theorizing, and analyzing, demonstrating how communication research can benefit from cultural studies approaches.

The course is divided into two major halves: the first half trains students in the foundational literatures and theories of Cultural Studies, tracing how it emerged in the middle of the twentieth century as a robust, interdisciplinary approach to analyzing current problems. The second half engages relevant literatures exploring the conditions of the present moment. For this version of the course, we will be reading from a special issue of *Cultural Studies* devoted to studying COVID-19. We conclude the course through working together to produce complex analysis of current and emerging cultural conditions.

By the end of the course, students should feel capable to perform complex and rigorous analysis couched in empirically and theoretically rich approaches to the study of communication and culture.

Student learning outcomes:

After completing this course, students will:

- Understand the histories and aims of critical-cultural communication
- Summarize major critical-cultural communication theories and approaches
- Apply critical-cultural communication frameworks to current events and case studies
- Demonstrate and develop written, oral, and visual communication skills

Prerequisites

Students should have completed COMM 2010 before enrolling in this course with a grade of C or higher.

Required materials:

All course readings will be made available as PDFs via our Canvas site. You should have access to a computer with reliable Internet to download course materials and interact with our online platform throughout the class. You should also have a word processing software—Microsoft Word, Google Docs, etc.—to complete written assignments, and a presentation software—Microsoft PowerPoint, Google Slides, etc.—to complete a presentation assignment.

Required technical skills

Assessment of your work in this class will assume you have advanced writing skills and a mastery of grammar and essay structure. You should also have minimum working knowledge of an Internet browser in general and the Canvas system in particular.

Learning Environment

My classroom is balanced between lecture, discussion, and various paired/group work to facilitate different styles of learning. Many class meetings oscillate between a series of discussions, incorporating pairs, groups, and whole class discussion, interspersed with lectures to help set up and expand on the day's readings and theories.

I do my best to cultivate a respectful and comfortable environment for each and every student, and ask that you respect the contributions of others. Inevitably, this class will touch on complicated political, social, and economic issues, among others. Your opinion, no matter what it is (and so long as it does not devalue or degrade the lived experiences of others), is valuable to me, and I want you to feel welcome to share it within our discussion. If you feel uncomfortable sharing your opinion or questions, please let me know so I can do my best to adjust my teaching style, if possible.

Student Support Services

The Americans with Disabilities Act

Clemson University seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need accommodations should make an appointment with Arlene Stewart, Director of Student Disability Services, to discuss specific

needs within the first month of classes. Students should present a Faculty Accommodation Letter from Student Disabilities Services when they meet with instructors. Please be aware that

accommodations are not retroactive and new Faculty Accommodation Letters must be presented each semester. In order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), faculty must follow instructions contained in letters issued by the office of Student Disability Services.

G-20 Redfern Health Center

<http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/sds/>

864-656-6848 sds-l@clemson.edu

Clemson Academic Integrity Policy

Students who violate the Clemson Academic Integrity Policy in any way will receive a failing grade (i.e., an “F”) for this course. The policy:

As members of the Clemson University community, we have inherited Thomas Green Clemson’s vision of this institution as a “high seminary of learning.” Fundamental to this vision is a mutual commitment to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of others. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of a Clemson degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form.

1. Any breach of the principles outlined in the Academic Integrity Statement is considered an act of academic dishonesty.
2. Academic dishonesty is further defined as:
 1. Giving, receiving, or using unauthorized aid on any academic work;
 2. Plagiarism, which includes the intentional or unintentional copying of language, structure, or ideas of another and attributing the work to one’s own efforts;
 3. Attempts to copy, edit, or delete computer files that belong to another person or use of Computer Center account numbers that belong to another person without the permission of the file owner, account owner, or file number owner.
3. All academic work submitted for grading contains an implicit pledge and may contain, at the request of an instructor, an explicit pledge by the student that no unauthorized aid has been received.
4. It is the responsibility of every member of the Clemson University community to enforce the Academic Integrity Policy.

Title IX (Sexual Harassment) Statement

Clemson University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, genetic information or protected activity in employment, educational programs and activities, admissions and financial aid. This includes a prohibition against sexual harassment and sexual violence as mandated by Title IX of the Education Amendments of

1972. This policy is located at <http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/access/title-ix>.

Academic Success Center

The Academic Success Center provides free services, including tutoring, academic coaching, and academic skills workshops, for all Clemson students. Visit <https://www.clemson.edu/asc> for more information.

Writing Center

Clemson University's Writing Center offers free one-on-one tutoring for all Clemson students. Visit <https://clemson.mywconline.com> for more information.

Cooper Library

Reference librarians are available in person and via text, phone, email, and chat to answer your research questions. Visit Ask a Librarian for more information at <https://libraries.clemson.edu/ask>

Technical Support

If you are having hardware or software problems, CCIT's Service Desk may be able to help you. Contact them at ITHELP@clemson.edu with a detailed description of your problem.

Academic Advising

Academic advising (<https://www.clemson.edu/academics/advising/index.html>) is an ongoing educational process that connects the student to the University. Academic advising supports the University's mission of preparing students for learning beyond the confines of the academy. Academic advisors represent and interpret University policies and procedures to students and help students navigate the academic and organizational paths of the institution.

Registrar

The Registrar's office provides information about important deadlines, degree and program requirements, and other key information, including use of iROAR to add, drop, or withdraw from courses.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Stress, anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders are increasingly common among undergraduate students across the United States. The university provides students with counseling and psychological support services. If you are struggling with your mental health and well-being in any way, I encourage you to reach out to these services. You can find more information at <http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/redfern/menta-health>

Grading Policies

A grade of "A" is not simply given for effort, or for completing the basic requirements of any given assignment, but is rather earned through thoughtful engagement. You are welcome to meet with me at any time during the semester to discuss your grade in the class.

Grading Criteria

A (90-100) – Excellent and Exemplary. Work or performance that goes beyond meritorious to the extent of providing an example or model of excellence for others.

B (80-89) – Good/Meritorious. Work or performance that not only meets all requirements but exceeds them, demonstrating depth, originality, and other marks of quality that give the work distinction.

C (70-79) – Satisfactory. Work or performance that fully meets all requirements competently and shows the ability to function as a college student.

D (60-69) – Marginal. Work or performance that either 1) fails to meet all requirements, though what is done may be considered competent; 2) meets all requirements but not at a basic level of competence; or 3) both of the above but not poor enough to be considered failing.

F (0-59) – Failing. Work or performance that falls significantly short of requirements, basic competence, or both. This also includes, of course, work not done.

Late Work

If you foresee a problem meeting a deadline, it is your responsibility to contact me **well** in advance to discuss the possibility of an extension. Extensions will only be granted in extreme circumstances. Consult the syllabus for all due dates. Written assignments are due to appropriate submission portals on our Canvas website. Late submissions will receive a 10% penalty for each 24-hour period after the due date, including weekends. Work submitted a week after a due date will receive a zero.

Exams

Any exam scheduled at the time of a class cancellation due to inclement weather will be given at the next class meeting unless contacted by the instructor.

Mid-term grades

No later than 10 days before the last day students can drop courses without receiving final grades, instructors of every undergraduate course shall make available for each student (a) the student's numerical course grade or (b) the student's letter ranking to date (A-F or P/NP). This feedback reflects the student's performance up to that time; the final grade may change based upon subsequent coursework.

Attendance

I do not take formal attendance in this course. I assume that you have enrolled in it and paid the tuition for it because you want to be here. If you need to miss class for any circumstance, I am glad to meet with you to go over any missed material or help you catch up. If you are consistently absent from the course, it will negatively effect your participation grade as well as your understanding of the course material. If I feel students are abusing this policy, I reserve the right to reinstate a formal attendance policy at any point.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Participation: 10%

Weekly response posts: 15%

Midterm exam: 20%

Journal article presentation: 15%

Conjunctural analysis: 30%

Analysis presentation: 10%

Participation (10%): You are expected to contribute thoughtfully to each class discussion, ask questions, and respond to others. Not attending class or staring at your laptop monitor will negatively impact your participation grade.

Weekly response posts (15%): Once each week, you should post to the weekly Canvas discussion forum. You should post at least one **Lightbulb** (something you found important, useful, meaningful in the day's reading) and at least one **Roadblock** (a question you have about the material or something that still seems confusing). These should be posted by noon before a class meeting so I can review your questions before we meet and make sure to prepare answers for them. You cannot submit a post retroactively.

Midterm exam (20%): At the midpoint of the semester, you will complete a take-home essay exam that asks you to synthesize the theoretical ideas from the first half of the class and demonstrate your knowledge and understanding.

Journal article presentation (15%): At the conclusion of the first half of our course, we will have a sort of "book club" ("article club" doesn't have the same ring to it...) day where each of you will find, summarize, and present on an academic research article to the class. You should find an article from one of the following journals: *Cultural Studies*, *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, *Continuum*, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*. More details and a presentation rubric will be provided in the weeks leading up to the presentation.

Conjunctural analysis (30%): For your final project, you will perform a conjunctural analysis: a research paper that demonstrates and analyzes the meaningful connections between different structural and cultural elements. The final paper should be about 10 double-spaced pages in length (excluding references) and should include a variety of academic and popular sources to support your points. The final weeks of the semester will be devoted to workshops to help you develop your research and analysis.

Analysis presentation (10%): In the final week of the semester, you will present a provisional version of your conjunctural analysis as a 5-7 minute presentation. As a class, we will listen and respond to each others' presentation and offer feedback to help revise the analysis for the final paper.

COURSE CALENDAR

Week One: Introductions

Wednesday, August 18: Introduction to the course and to Cultural Studies

Part 1: Theories, Approaches, Traditions

Week Two: Culture/Cultural Studies

Monday, August 23: Defining Culture

Read: Raymond Williams, “Culture is Ordinary”

Wednesday, August 25: The Birmingham Centre
Read: Michael Green, “The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies”

Week Three: Power and Practice

Monday, August 30: Gramscian hegemony
Read: Stuart Hall, “Domination and hegemony”

Wednesday, September 1: Everyday practice
Read: Meaghan Morris, “Things to do with shopping centers”

Week Four: Structuralism and Culturalism

Monday, September 6: Paradigms
Read: Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies: Two paradigms”

Wednesday, September 8: Structures of feeling
Read: Raymond Williams, “Structures of feeling” and “Dominant, residual, and emergent”

Week Five: Articulation

Monday, September 13: Articulation as theory and method
Read: Jennifer Daryl Slack, “The Theory and Method of Articulation in Cultural Studies”

Wednesday, September 15: Conjuncture
Read: Lawrence Grossberg, “The Heart of Cultural Studies”

Week Six: Identity/difference

Monday, September 20: Race and ethnicity
Read: Stuart Hall, “Old and new identities, old and new ethnicities”

Wednesday, September 22: Pluralizing cultures
Read: Raka Shome, “Thinking Culture and Cultural Studies— from/of the Global South”

Week Seven: Applications and Midterm

Monday, September 27: Assignment: Journal article “book club” day

Wednesday, September 29: Assignment: Midterm exam

Part Two: The COVID Conjuncture

Week Eight: Introduction to the COVID Conjuncture

- Monday, October 4: Read: John Nguyet Erni and Ted Striphas, “COVID-19, the multiplier”
- Wednesday, October 6: Read: John Clarke, “Following the science? COVID-19, ‘race,’ and the politics of knowing”
Read: Jack Bratich, “Give me liberty or give me Covid!: Anti-lockdown protests as necropopulist downsurgency”

Week Nine: COVID Conjuncture II: Race and contagion

- Monday, October 11: **Fall break, no class meeting**
- Wednesday, October 13: Read: Lisa B Y Calvente, “Racism is a public health crisis! Black Power in the COVID-19 pandemic”
Read: Madhavi Mallapragada, “Asian Americans as racial contagion”

Week Ten: COVID Conjuncture III: Crisis and Everyday Life

- Monday, October 18: Read: Josh Smicker, “COVID-19 and ‘crisis as ordinary’: pathological whiteness, popular pessimism, and pre-apocalyptic cultural studies”
Read: Raka Shome, “The long and deadly road: the covid pandemic and Indian migrants”
- Wednesday, October 20: Read: Chris Ingraham, “New normals, from talk to gesture”
Read: Jeffrey A. Bennett, “Everyday life and the management of risky bodies in the COVID-19 era”

Week Eleven: COVID Conjuncture IV: Technoculture and/as Crisis

- Monday, October 25: Read: James Hay, “Virus government—A twenty-first century genealogy of the ‘Dusk Mask’ as biopolitical technology”
Read: Yeran Kim, “Bio or Zoe?: dilemmas of biopolitics and data governmentality during Covid-19”
- Wednesday, October 27 Read: James N. Gilmore, “Predicting Covid-19: wearable technology and the politics of solutionism”
Read: Fan Yang, “Learning from Lana: Netflix’s *Too Hot to Handle*, COVID-19, and the human-nonhuman entanglement in contemporary technoculture”

Week Twelve: COVID Conjuncture V: Society and Making Do

- Monday, November 1 Read: Ravindra N. Mohabeer, “COVID bread-porn: Social stratification through displays of self-management”
 Read: Nicholas Holm, “No time for fun: the politics of partying during the pandemic”
- Wednesday, November 3 Read: Rebecca A. Adelman, “Enduring COVID-19, nevertheless”
 Read: Leon Gurevitch, “The spectacle of competence: global pandemic and the redesign of leadership in a post neo-liberal world”

Week Thirteen: COVID Conjuncture VI: Ongoing Emergencies

- Monday, November 8 Read: Elspeth Probyn, “Doing Cultural Studies in rough seas: The COVID-19 ocean multiple”
 Read: Alexander J. Means and Graham B. Slater, “Collective disorientation in the pandemic conjuncture”
- Wednesday, November 10 Read: Christiaan De Beukelaer, “COVID-19 at sea: ‘the world as you know it no longer exists’”
 Read: Ien Ang, “Beyond the crisis: transitioning to a better world?”

Part Three: Conjunctural Analysis

Week Fourteen: Conjuncture Workshop I

- Monday, November 15: No reading; come prepared with your ideas for conjunctural analysis topics
- Wednesday, November 17: No reading; bring laptop or other materials to work in groups on conjunctural analysis

Week Fifteen: Conjuncture Workshop II

- Monday, November 22: Workshop day
- Wednesday, November 24: **Thanksgiving holiday**

Week Sixteen: Conjuncture Workshop III and Course Conclusions

- Monday, November 29: Presentations of conjunctural analysis
- Wednesday, December 1: Wrap-up and conclusions

Reference list

- Bennett, J.A. (2021). Everyday life and the management of risky bodies in the COVID-19 era. *Cultural Studies* 35(2-3): 347-357.
- Bratich, J. (2021). 'Give me liberty or give me Covid!': Anti-lockdown protests as necropopulist downsurgency. *Cultural Studies* 35(2-3): 257-265
- Calvente, L.B.Y. (2021). Racism is a public health crisis! Black Power in the COVID-19 pandemic. *Cultural Studies* 35(2-3): 266-278.
- Clarke, J. (2021). Following the science? Covid-19, 'race' and the politics of knowing. *Cultural Studies* 35(2-3): 248-256.
- Erni, J.N. and Striphas, T. (2021). COVID-19, the multiplier. *Cultural Studies* 35(2-3): 211-237.
- Gilmore, J.N. (2021). Predicting Covid-19: wearable technology and the politics of solutionism. *Cultural Studies* 35(2-3): 382-391.
- Green, M. (1996). The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. In *What is Cultural Studies? A Reader*, ed. John Storey (pp. 49-60). St. Martin's Press.
- Grossberg, L. (2010). *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*. Duke University Press.
- Hall, S. (2019/1991). Old and new identities, old and new ethnicities. In *Essential Essays, Vol. 2: Identity and diaspora* (pp. 63-83). Duke University Press
- Hall, S. (2019). *Cultural Studies 1983: A theoretical history*. Duke University Press.
- Hay, J. (2021). Virus government—A twenty-first century genealogy of the 'Dusk mask' as biopolitical technology. *Cultural Studies* 35(2-3): 358-369.
- Ingraham, C. (2021). New normals, from talk to gesture. *Cultural Studies* 35(2-3): 336-346.
- Kim, Y. (2021). Bio or Zoe? Dilemmas of biopolitics and data governmentality during COVID-19. *Cultural Studies* 35(2-3): 370-381.
- Mallapragada, M. (2021). Asian Americans as racial contagion. *Cultural Studies* 35(2-3): 279-290.
- Morris, M. (1998). *Too soon too late: History in popular culture*. Indiana University Press.
- Shome, R. (2021). The long and deadly road: the covid pandemic and Indian migrants. *Cultural Studies* 35(2-3): 319-335.
- Slack, J.D. (1996). The theory and method of articulation in cultural studies. In *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies*, eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen. Routledge.

Smicker, J. (2021). COVID-19 and 'crisis as ordinary': pathological whiteness, popular pessimism, and pre-apocalyptic cultural studies. *Cultural Studies* 35(2-3): 291-305.

Williams, R. (1983). *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford University Press.

Williams, R. (2000/1959). Culture is ordinary. In *The Everyday Life Reader*, ed. Ben Highmore (pp. 91-100). New York: Routledge.