Communication 610R
Culture, Marginalization, & Resistance
Fall 2006

Instructor
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Office Hours: MW 10:00-12:30 and by appt.

Course Philosophy

Drawing from an emerging body of literature in subaltern studies, we will examine life experiences of individuals, communities and social systems that stand at the margins, and attempt to answer questions of silencing and voice. What does it mean to be silenced? What are the communication messages and processes through which marginalization is carried out? What are the ways in which resistance is enacted? What are the communicative dimensions of resistance? In answering these questions, the course will build upon the works of seminal subaltern studies scholars such as Mahasweta Devi, Ranajit Guha, Ileana Rodriguez, John Beverly, Gayatri Spivak, Ashis Nandy, Gyanendra Pandey, Dipesh Chakravarty, and Partha Chatterjee. These core readings will be complemented by excerpts from the writings of Marx, Engels, Gramsci, Adorno, Foucault, and Habermas.

Ultimately, the course will offer entry points for engaging in critical debates about the role of communication in the realms of participation, democracy, civil society, and social change. The study of the combinations of micro-, meso-, and macro-level communication processes presented here will provide theoretical and pragmatic insights regarding the ways in which cultural and social systems go through change.

Course Overview

This course will explore the intersections of culture, marginalization and resistance, paying particular attention to understanding those communication processes and messages that constitute marginalization and offer opportunities for social change through the enactment of resistance to the dominant social structures. The approach to culture proposed in the course will seek to elucidate those elements of the local context that are dynamic and offer opportunities for change. It is within this multilayered and dynamic web of culture that privileged social actors exert power and control, and create conditions of marginalization. The emphasis of the first part of the semester will be on studying the communication processes that constitute marginalization. The second part of the semester will focus on studying those communication processes that are manifestations of resistance.
Course Objectives

The student is expected to attain the following goals in this course:

- Understand the different approaches to the study of culture.
- Understand the role of culture in the construction of communication.
- Understand the relationship between structure and culture in the creation of marginalized conditions.
- Understand the relationship between marginalization and resistance.
- Develop an understanding of the communicative practices through which resistance is enacted.

Evaluation Criteria

1. Course Readings & Effective Class Participation (10% = 100): Effective class participation is based upon thorough engagement with the assigned course readings and is not automatically guaranteed. Special attention must be paid to understanding the objectives of the individual paper, the research methodology, and the presentation of the results. Since we will be discussing a wide range of topics on each day, synthesis will be highly valued in the class. In addition, each of you will turn in two research questions by noon on the Friday preceding the class. For instance, for the week of January 24, the questions are due by Friday, January 21. There are no exceptions to this policy. Please be prepared to discuss your questions with the class. Also, please be prepared to be individually called on to answer a question related to the course content.

2. Proposal (30% = 300): Each student will write a proposal for a research project. The proposal should examine how a particular aspect of culture plays out in the realm of marginalization and resistance. It should include a) introduction of the problem, (b) literature review, and (c) research questions you are going to ask.

3. Research Paper (40% = 400): After the development of an appropriate approach that fits the problem (in the proposal), students are required to design and implement a research project that enhances current understanding of culture, marginalization and resistance. The choice of topic must be relevant to the concept of culture. The end product is a high quality critical or synthesis paper that may be presented at a professional conference.

4. Final Examination (10% = 100): A take-home final will test your ability to compare, analyze, synthesize and apply the content discussed in class. The emphasis here will be on your ability to effectively criticize the current knowledge of cultural issues in the construction of health, disease, and medicine.

Academic Misconduct

As a student in this course, it is assumed that you have read and imbibed the official position of Purdue University on matters of academic misconduct (see the University
Regulations booklet). If misconduct occurs in the context of this course, it will be handled according to the procedures specified in the University Regulations booklet.

**Course Policies**

Late assignments will **not** be accepted except in case of documented emergency situations. The student is responsible to contact me and make other arrangements in case of an emergency. This is a graduate class and a key indicator of your performance is your ability to maintain and manage deadlines.

**Required Texts**


I. Rodriguez (Ed), *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader*.

**Course Readings**

The readings are divided into two components. The first Volume of readings provides the foundation to culture and marginalization. The second Volume of readings provides substantive insights into the intersections of resistance and culture.

**Preparation Week: Introductions**

- Basics of critical theory
- Conducting literature reviews
- Writing academic papers

**Week One: Foundations of Subaltern Studies**


**Week Two: Power and Culture**


**Week Three: Theories of Culture, Communication and Structure**


Williams, R. (1980). Base and superstructure in Marxist cultural theory. In R. Williams, Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays (pp. 31-49). London: Verso and NLB. 19


Week Four: Nation as structure


Week Five: Culture, Structure and Modernity


Week Six: Culture, Structure, and Indigenous Peoples


Week Seven: Culture and Resistance


Week Eight: Meaning and resistance


Week Nine: Micro-practices of Resistance


**Week Ten: Culture and Organizing for Resistance**


**Week Eleven: Culture, Civil Society and Subalternity**


**Week Twelve: Globalization, Public Sphere, & Resistance**


Transnational feminism and globalization: Bridging Third World women’s voices from the margin to the center. In R. P. Appelbaum & W. I. Robinson (Eds.), *Critical Globalization Studies*.

**Week Thirteen: Communication, Academy, & Activism: Points of Praxis**

