

GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE SYLLABUS

Course: COMM 480: **Cross Cultural Communication**
Narrative Identities

Credits: 3 Credits

Instructor: **Pierluca Birindelli, Ph.D.**



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Office Hours: by appointment (pierluca.birindelli@email.it) and/or directly after class

Meeting times: Tuesday: 15:35 - 18:15

Course description and objectives

The aim of the course is to introduce the concepts of communication and culture, and to develop an understanding of communicative processes across cultural boundaries. Having clarified that culture is both a producer and product of communication, we will then focus on: some media representations of typical (or stereotypical) Italian, European and American cultural features (especially through films) – paying special attention to communicative-cultural incidents/dilemmas, and their effects on personal and collective identity construction; the mediatization of experience (television, internet and mobile phones), and the sense of otherness. Moreover we will discuss the social impact of old and new media on the shaping of communities and public spheres, trying to grasp how modern communication affects the “sense of place” and the “sense of time”.

Part of the course will be dedicated to the communicative and cultural experience of young American students abroad. They are immersed in the new media, and this state of mind influences their experience of a culture – they are connected with “home”; they have a Facebook profile through which they can display their “on-line Self”; they instantly communicate (Skype, email etc.) their (undigested?) cultural encounters.

Finally, students will be able to answer in a critical and thoughtful way – that is by identifying the disturbed (the double bind) or the disturbing (propaganda) communication – to the questions: “How does one's socio-cultural background affect values and communication styles?; “Which kind of stories (culturally grounded) do I use to interpret my experience abroad?”.

The basic concepts (theories, paradigms etc.) adopted – and shared with the students – are part of Communication Studies, Sociology, Psychology, Cultural Studies and Cultural Anthropology. The narrative approach will be our “discipline glue”.

Method

The course has a seminar format. Lectures will introduce the main topic, with the support of slides synthesizing concepts, paradigms, theories and examples extracted from the readings. We will also project films that students shall interpret (writing some reflections and participating to the following class discussion).

Requirements

Throughout this course you are expected to engage in active participation by contributing your thoughts, ideas and questions. To do so it is crucial that you study the required readings and are ready to share your opinions on the topics discussed in class. Course requirements include a midterm exam, an autobiographical paper and a research paper.

The *autobiographical paper* (5-10 pages) consists of the reconstruction of the student cultural and communicative practices (especially facebook) and their effects on self-identity.

The *research paper* (10-15 pages) is about one of the topics discussed during the course (or linked to them). In this work students are expected to make reference to the interpretative concepts and methods of analysis acquired during the course as well as finding (at least) one newspaper article and one scholar article about the chosen theme. Students will be working on the two papers throughout the course, and will be submitting elements of them at various times.

Attendance is mandatory. Unauthorized absences will have negative consequences for your final grade.

Technology policy

Please be advised that laptops are allowed only to take notes during the lecture. You may not use your computer to surf the Web or for any other personal purpose. Please remember to turn off your cell phone.

Grading

Grading is based on a scale of 500 total points.

- Class participation: 100 points (20%).
- Mid-term exam: 100 points (20%).
- Autobiographical research paper: 100 points (20%).
- Research paper: 200 points (40%).

Textbook

A course pack will be made available. In addition further readings will be given as class hand-outs or by email in a PDF-format

Basic References

- BAKER, C. (1999) *Television, Globalization and Cultural Identities*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- BATESON, G. (1972) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. S. Francisco: Chandler.
- BAUERLEIN, Mark (2008) *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future (Or, Don't Trust Anyone Under 30)*. New York: Penguin.
- BOLTANSKI, L. (1999) *Distant Suffering*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- BRUNER, J. (1990) *Acts of Meaning*. London: Harvard University Press.
- CAREY, J.W. (1989) *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and society*. Winchester: Hyman.
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- CRANE, D., KAWASHIMA, N. and K. KAWASAKY (eds., 2002) *Global Culture. Media, Arts, Policy and Globalization*. New York: Routledge.
- DAYAN, D. (2007) *On Morality, Distance and the Other. Roger Silverstone's Media and Morality*, in "International Journal of Communication", 1: pp.113-122.
- DAYAN, D. and E. KATZ (1992) *Media events: The live broadcasting of history*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- DE KERCHOVE, D. (1995) *The Skin of Culture*. Toronto: Somerville.
- DEFLEUR, M. and S. BALL-ROKEACH (1989) *Theories of Mass Communication*. New York: Longman.
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- GEERTZ, C. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic.
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- GIDDENS, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Stanford: University Press.
- GOFFMAN, E. (1959) *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.
- HALL, S. and P. DU GAY (eds., 1996) *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage.
- KATZ, E. and T. LIEBES (2007) 'No More Peace!': *How Disaster, Terror and War Have Upstaged Media Events*, in "International Journal of Communication", 1: 157-166.
- KLUCKHOHN C. and A. KROEBER (1952) *Culture. A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. New York: Vintage.
- LIPPMANN, W. (1922) *Public Opinion*. New York: The Free Press.
- LIVINGSTONE, S. (1997) *The Work of Elihu Katz: Conceptualizing Media Effects in Context*, in Corner, J., Schlesinger, P. and R. Silverstone (eds.) *International media research: a critical survey*. London: Routledge: 18-47.
- MARTIN, J.N. and T.K. NAKAYAMA (2007) *Intercultural Communication in Contexts*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- MEYROWITZ, J. (1985) *No Sense of Place. The impact of electronic media on social behaviour*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- PARK, R.E. (1938) *Reflections on Communication and Culture*, in "The American Journal of Sociology", Vol. 44, No. 2: 187-205.
- ROBERTSON, R. (1995) *Glocalization: time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity*, in M. Featherstone, S. Lasch and R. Robertson (eds.) *Global Modernities*. London: Sage.
- SCHUDSON, M. (2003) *The Sociology of News*. New York: Norton.
- SILVERSTONE, R. (2006) *Media and Morality: On the Rise of the Mediapolis*. Cambridge: Polity.
- SLATER, D. (1997) *Consumer Culture & Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- THOMPSON, J. (1995) *The Media and Modernity. A Social Theory of the Media*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- TURKLE, S. (1995) *Life on screen: Identity in the Age of Internet*. New York: Simon and Shusters.
- WATZLAWICK, P., J. BEAVIN and D. JACKSON (1967) *Pragmatic of Human Communication*. New York: Norton.

Course Outline & Schedule (*the order could be changed according to professor's judgment*)

Week 1	Communication and culture: concepts, theories and paradigms <i>Exercise and/or Discussion</i>
Week 2	The digital age and its effects on experience and learning <i>Exercise and/or Discussion</i>
Week 3	Facebook: the on-line self <i>Introduction to the autobiographical paper</i>
Week 4	Self-image and self-conception within interaction <i>Exercise and/or Discussion</i>
Week 5	Media narrations: old and new heroes <i>Introduction to the research paper</i>
Week 6	Media ceremonies <i>Review</i>
Week 7	Mid-Term Exam
Week 8	Media, community, society: sense of place, sense of time Otherness: loving the alien and the mediated experience of suffering <i>Exercise and/or Discussion</i>
Week 9	Cultural incidents and miscommunication: double bind <i>Deadline for the choice of the research paper</i>
Week 10	Cultural shocks and cultural tranquilizers: make it strange, make it familiar <i>Exercise and/or Discussion</i>
Week 11	Communicating cultural differences: values, beliefs, lifestyles <i>Exercise and/or Discussion</i>
Week 12	The rhetoric of cross cultural communicative dialogues and conflicts <i>Review</i>
Week 13	Final paper (autobiographical and research paper) and presentation