

SOCIAL JUSTICE & COMMUNICATION, SPRING 2015

TTh 11:30-12:45pm SOC 010

Instructor

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Office hours are by appointment, LT 907

Description

In this course we will examine the implications of communication processes and practices for democracy and social justice. We will pay particular attention to: (1) tensions in the U.S. in the past century between progressive theories that promote an ideal of a rational, informed public and communication practices guided by a view of publics as emotional, uninformed, and easily manipulated; and (2) interconnections between issues of social justice and opportunities for cultivation of situated impartial thinking.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to articulate and defend their conception of the role of communication in achieving a just society and demonstrate an understanding of how existing communication institutions, laws, and norms impede or assist movement towards that goal. More particularly, students will be able to articulate criteria they believe are essential to judging acts or states of affairs as socially just or unjust. Additionally, they will be able to discuss how various communicative practices, norms, processes, and institutions contribute to or impede social justice. Finally, students will be able to identify and act upon social justice issues in a manner informed by their experience in the course.

Reading Materials

Stuart Ewen, PR! A social history of spin (Basic Books, 1996).
Nancy Fraser, Scales of justice: Reimagining political space in a globalizing world (Columbia UP, 2008). Available as Kindle e-book on multiple platforms.
Joseph E. Stiglitz, The price of inequality (W.W. Norton & Co., 2013).
Other reading material will be made available via Sakai or in class.

Assessments

Midterm examination: 200 points. Due **Mar 1** @ 12:45pm (on Sakai)
Wiki project: 200 points. Due **May 3** @ 3 pm (online and on Sakai). **This is the deadline for the class: the overview group will require materials from other groups at an earlier date to be announced.**
Reflection paper: 100 points. Due **April 23** @ 5pm (on Sakai)

Ground Rules

- **Academic dishonesty:** Plagiarism, whether in papers or on examinations, is the ultimate offense to academic values. Any student who plagiarizes will receive a grade of F in the course, and will be reported to the dean's office for consideration of further penalties. Plagiarism is the appropriation of the ideas or words of another without proper public acknowledgement or citation. A rough rule of thumb is that you should always cite the source not only of direct quotations, but also of paraphrasing of the argument, interpretation, or claim of another. In addition, you should never present the work of another as your own. If you have further questions about this matter, you may consult me. There also is information about rules for citation in style manuals such as those of the Modern Language Association (MLA) or the American Psychological Association (APA). You also may consult the university website page on Academic Integrity.
- **Due dates:** Make up exams will not be given. If you have reason to believe that you will be unable to turn in an assignment on time, contact me as far in advance as possible to see if an extension will be granted. Extensions may be granted at the discretion of the instructor. All electronic materials (e.g., Word documents) should be backed up by students. Failure of a storage medium is not an excuse for missing a deadline.
- **Written work:** All written work must be submitted via Sakai, using 12 pt type and following MLA or APA guidelines for margins, pagination, etc., and should be saved as Word file or PDF.
- **Attendance:** Regular attendance is mandatory. A note from a doctor or from the Student Health Service will excuse you for an illness.
- **Grade scale:** A=92+; A-=90+; B+=88+; B=84+; B-=80+; C+=77+; C=74+; C-=70+; D+=67+; D=64+; F=below 64