

Comm 6200 Seminar: Communication and Democracy in Everyday Life Fall 2008
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COURSE CONCEPT:

Theories and practices of communication and democracy are inevitably intertwined. For the most part conceptions of liberal democracy have been central to communication studies and discussions of argumentation and the public sphere. The communication focus has been on the expression of interests and experience rather than their social formation. And, models of communication and dialogue have emphasized commonality and consensus.

Increasingly the contemporary concern has been more with “culture wars,” “identity politics,” and more generally the politics of everyday life. Authors here tend to emphasize “agonistic democratic politics” over liberal ones. And, communication theories from this perspective emphasize deliberation in decision making, conflict and difference rather than commonality and consensus. The course will focus on these “alternative” literatures discussing both concepts of democracy and the invention of new communicative practices.

TEXTS

Barber, B. (1984) *Strong democracy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Rose, N. (1990). *Governing the soul: The shaping of the private self*. London: Routledge.

Benhabib, S. (2002). *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Reading for the second half of the course will be distributed as the course develops.

EXPECTATIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

The course assumes a working familiarity with contemporary communication theory but no specific prior course work is required. Needless to say, all class members are expected to attend regularly, read assigned as well as other relevant materials, and actively participate in class. The course grade will be based on class discussions/presentations and the research paper for the course. Specific arrangements and assignments may be worked out with individual students to individualize the course assignment and grading to optimize learning.

The research paper for the course should identify an interesting problem related to communication and everyday democracy and synthesize the “best thinking” on the issue. The paper (5000-6000 words in length) is due December 8st and should be in final form following the APA style sheet. I encourage everyone to turn in earlier drafts so that I may offer writing suggestions and be involved in the formative processes.

ROUGH SCHEDULE

Weeks 1 and 2: Barber; Weeks 3 and 4: Rose; Weeks 5 and 6: Benhabib; Weeks 7-12: identified topics and distributed readings; Weeks 13-15: Individual paper reports and synthetic discussions