

**JAMS 860.001: Seminar in Media Studies**  
**Public Culture in the Digital Era**  
Fall 2018 | Tues 4-6:40 PM | BOL 581

**Instructor:** Lia Wolock

**Office:** 568 Bolton

**Office hours:** Tues 1:45-2:45pm, Thurs 11am-noon, or by appointment

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***Course Description***

Can voting for a singer in a reality show spread and teach democratic principles? Is curating a social justice Tumblr “real work” that can make a real-world difference? This graduate-level seminar will explore these questions and the ways in which scholars, artists, and activists have tried to understand, promote, and problematize participatory and public culture. At stake is how we, as a society, define and encourage meaningful civic engagement and activism in the digital era through the production and sharing of media. Students will get hands-on experience exploring and creating digital and traditional media associated with the ideas of participatory and public culture, such as zines and podcasts. In addition, students will be responsible for doing weekly readings, participating in class discussions, posting brief reading response assignments, and writing a conference-length original research paper on a topic chosen in consultation with the professor.

***Course Objectives***

By the end of this course, you will:

- Be able to debate key theories of public and participatory culture;
- Develop your knowledge about a diverse range of popular cultural forms across the world and over time by reading about them, analyzing examples, and making some;
- Improve your research, writing, and analysis skills through class discussions and course assignments; and
- Deepen your understanding of the relation between media cultures and politics.

**GRADING**

***Participation***

**5 x 3 = 15%**

A seminar is a learning community. That means, for each of us, our personal progress and learning depends on each other and on the community as a whole. Students and teacher alike are expected to contribute to the discussion, by a variety of means. These include: coming to class have done the readings, making connections across readings and media, listening to others, asking thoughtful

questions, responding to instructor's questions, bringing up areas of confusion so we can discuss them, and being respectful and present.

Calculated three times for 5 points each time. After week five, after week nine, and at the end of the course.

*Note:* If you are shy about public speaking, please come see me and we can develop strategies for you to participate in ways that are more comfortable.

***Reading Responses***

**10 x 2 = 20%**

You will submit 5 reading responses to D2L each half of the course. Minimum 300 for graduate students. A handout will be given with more information on this assignment, but the general idea is to summarize at least one key idea from that days reading(s) and engage it by asking questions, connecting it to other course readings, or linking related media. These are due before the class session during which the reading will be discussed. Each response is worth 2 points. Late responses can earn no higher than 1 point.

***Media Production Assignments***

**33%**

These include zine-making and podcast production. Some lab time will be given in class to work on these projects. This will entail individual and group work.

<i>Personal zine</i>	7 %
<i>Contribution to class zine</i>	3 %
<i>Podcast episode proposal</i>	4 %
<i>Podcast episode</i>	15 %
<i>Podcast project reflection</i>	4 %

***Research project***

**32%**

Over the course of the semester, students will develop their research and writing skills through a multi-step project. We will devote class time on various days to practicing the skills necessary to conduct quality media studies research and write it up. 4500-6000 words.

<i>Proposal</i>	2 %
<i>Literature review</i>	8 %
<i>Introduction, thesis, outline</i>	4 %
<i>Presentation</i>	3 %
<i>Final paper</i>	15 %

### ***Course Grading Scale***

	<b>plus</b>		<b>minus</b>
<b>As</b>		100-93	92.9-90
<b>Bs</b>	89.9-87	86.9-83	82.9-80
<b>Cs</b>	79.9-77	76.9-73	72.9-70
<b>Ds</b>	69.9-67	66.9-65	

### **POLICIES, ETC.**

#### ***1. Attendance:***

Your attendance at every session is mandatory according to the policy of the School of Letters and Science at UWM.

You may miss one class without penalty. Each additional will result in a penalty of 1 point off your final grade. This one absence is to allow for illness or unforeseen circumstances. If you have to miss more than one class during each half, you should speak with me in person during my office hours.

When you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed and work to catch up. First, carefully read through all the slides for the day, which may include announcements as well as course material. Second, ask a friend if something is still unclear. Third, come talk to the professor if you have further questions.

#### ***2. Email policy:***

Email is a time vampire. Almost every issue that you will face during the semester can be addressed by checking this syllabus, by asking a quick question before or after class, or by scheduling a meeting in my office (in that order). I am very eager to talk to you, and to help you be successful in this class, I just prefer where possible to do it face to face rather than by email. Striving toward more in-person communication ensures that I spend as much time as possible focused on your learning and intellectual growth, rather than on being a manager. Please do not use my desire to communicate in person over email as an excuse not to talk to me about issues you're having. Office hours are a great and under-utilized resource. You don't have to be struggling or have a problem to come by.

#### ***3. Getting to Class Late and Leaving Early:***

Late arrivals and early departures distract and disrupt class. If you know that you have to leave early, let me know before class and please leave the classroom quietly. Sit by an aisle and close to the door. Everyone occasionally runs late. It's okay. Just be courteous. If you make a habit of being late or leaving early, however, it will affect your grade. Arriving substantially late or leaving substantially early may use up one of your free absences. Please do not begin rustling your bags and coats before

class ends. I know you're busy and have places to be, so if I lose track of time, raise your hand and let me know.

#### **4. *Electronics policy:***

The research on computer use in the classroom is definitive. It distracts everyone around you, it distracts you, and produces poorer quality notes than if you took notes by hand. Since you will not be using screens to take notes, I will post my complete lecture slides to D2L within 24 hours of each session (usually sooner). Further accommodations are possible with proper documentation. Please come see me as soon as possible.

Occasionally, electronic devices will be allowed for class activities. You will not be penalized if you do not have one. At that time, students are expected to use the devices for the course activity only. Not for email, messaging, etc.

#### **5. *Readings:***

**Students are required to bring a copy of the pertinent readings for each class session.** You can't go to math class without the problem sets you've been working on. Why would a class where the primary work we'll be doing is reading and thinking be different? Your readings should be marked up with your notes, as are mine. Ask to see mine if you'd like one example of how to do it.

Tablets/e-readers, used only for accessing course readings, and which can be laid flat on the table, are always allowed.

#### **6. *Assignments and Extensions:***

All assignments are listed on the syllabus and will be announced well before they are due. **Extensions may be granted if sought before the due date.** Late assignments without prior approval will lose 5% per day for 7 days (including weekends), and then it will get an automatic 0%.

#### **7. *Grades:***

I grade assignments on performance and effort, and your grade is relative to the other students in the class. Fulfilling the assignment requirements earns you an average score, while producing exceptional work will earn you an above average score. Do not expect an "A" simply for fulfilling the requirements of the assignment. Please visit me during office hours to ask questions when you are working on an assignment or reviewing material. If you have questions about a grade, please take at least 24 hours to process the written feedback you've received. Then come see me during office hours to get further feedback. If you have problems with mechanics, I recommend the Writing Center (<http://uwm.edu/writing-center/>). The Writing Center is staffed with highly qualified tutors who can make a difference. I will hold you to university-level written communication standards.

These are the circumstances under which I would change a grade: (a) if I have made an error, or (b) if I have failed to hold you to the same standard as everyone else. If you believe that you have received an undeserved grade, you should make your case in writing to your professor within two weeks of receiving the grade.

**8. Incompletes:**

A notation of “incomplete” may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of a semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond the student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work.

**9. Students with disabilities:**

If you will need accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this course, please contact the instructor as soon as possible. I am happy to work with you and the Accessibility Resource Center <http://www.uwm.edu/arc/> on this matter.

**10. Academic misconduct:**

Cheating on exams or plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, including failing an assignment or course, or even suspension or dismissal from the University. If you need help learning to summarize, paraphrase, attribute, or cite sources, please see the professor or visit The Writing Center.

You can familiarize yourself with UWM's description of academic misconduct here: <http://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/facultystaff/policies/academic-misconduct/>.

**11. Discriminatory conduct (such as sexual harassment):**

Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated. It poisons our learning environment and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. If you have concerns about our classroom or other spaces on campus, please feel free to come talk with me about it.

Please be aware, however, that I am what's called a **Mandatory Reporter**. That means that I am required by law and by UWM policy to report anything you tell me about sexual misconduct, harassment, or stalking at UWM—or happening to a member of the UWM community—to the Title IX Office. If you want to speak with someone who does not have to report what you say, I can help connect you with what are called **Confidential Resources**, like the UWM Victim Advocate (<https://uwm.edu/titleix/get-help/confidential-victim-advocacy/>) or Norris Counseling services (<https://uwm.edu/titleix/get-help/medical-care/>).

### ***12. Announcements:***

Any changes to the syllabus, class cancellations, or other matters pertaining to the class will be posted on the D2L website for the course. You should check the site at least once a week.

### ***13. Absences for religious observances***

Students will be allowed to complete requirements that are missed because of a religious observance. Please let me know in the first weeks of class if this will be an issue for you so we can come up with a game plan.

### ***14. Food***

As long as it does not go against university policy and it is not disruptive to other students, food may be eaten in class.

For further information about university policies, please see the Secretary of the University's Syllabus Links: <https://uwm.edu/secu/syllabus-links/>

## **COURSE CALENDAR**

NOTE: Calendar is subject to change. This is a media course and we will regularly update readings depending on what is in the news. Please check the D2L site and your email regularly.

### **Week 1 Introductions Public sphere**

Sep 4

#### **Required readings:**

Excerpts from Scannell, "Communication and Publicness"  
Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique  
of Actually Existing Democracy"

#### **In-class activity:**

Introduction zines

#### **Further reading:**

Cody, "Public and Politics"

**Week 2**  
**Public culture**  
**Whose public? Whose culture?**

Sep 11

**Required readings:**

Appadurai and Breckenridge, "Public Modernity in India"  
Delli Carpini, "The Inherent Arbitrariness of the 'News' versus  
'Entertainment' Distinction," <http://publicsphere.ssrc.org/delli-carpini-the-inherent-arbitrariness-of-the-news-versus-entertainment-distinction/>  
Barney et al., "The Participatory Condition: An Introduction"  
Bouie et al., "Being Black in Public," <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/04/a-conversation-about-starbucks-white-fear-and-being-black-in-public.html>

**Further reading:**

Appadurai & Breckenridge, "Why Public Culture?"

**Week 3**  
**Public culture before the digital turn**  
**The immigrant press & public access**

Sep 18

**Required readings:**

Singh, "The Gadar Party: Political Expression in an Immigrant  
Community"  
Read at least two articles from any issue of SAADA's collection of *The  
Independent Hindustan*, <https://www.saada.org/source/the-independent-hindustan>  
Mallick & Caswell, "Against Precarity: Towards a Community-based  
Notion of Fiscal Sustainability"  
Lopez, "The Yellow Press: Asian American Radicalism and Conflict in  
*Gidra*"  
Skim – Lee, "The Forgotten Zine of 1960s Asian-American Radicals,"  
<https://www.topic.com/the-forgotten-zine-of-1960s-asian-american-radicals>  
Naficy, "Narrowcasting in the Diaspora: Middle Eastern Television in  
Los Angeles"

**Further reading:**

Afzal, *Lonestar Muslims: Transnational Lives and the South Asian  
Experience in Texas*  
Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging: US Spanish-language Radio and Public  
Advocacy*

Han, "Ethnic/Diasporic/Transnational: The Rise and Fall of  
ImaginAsian TV"  
Shukla, *India Abroad: Diasporic Cultures of Postwar America and  
England*

**Sep 21 Proposal due, 5pm, D2L Dropbox**

**Week 4  
Zine-ing communities**

**Sep 25 Required reading:**  
Rowe, "Introduction" to *The Book of Zines*  
Radway, "Zines, Half-Lives, and Afterlives: On the Temporalities of  
Social and Political Change"  
Piepmeier, "Why Zines Matter: Materiality and the Creation of  
Embodied Community"  
Nguyen, "Riot Grrrl, Race, and Revival"  
Three short pieces from *Symposium: Feminist Zines* (Freedman, Riot  
Coco, Villacorta)  
Read any two zines. <https://archive.org/details/zines>. More sources and  
zine archives posted on D2L  
Skim – <https://www.rookiemag.com/>

**Further reading:**  
Ramdarshan Bold, "Why Diverse Zines Matter: A Case Study of the  
People of Color Zines Project"  
Zobl, "Cultural Production, Transnational Networking, and Critical  
Reflection in Feminist Zines"  
Guzzetti & Gamboa, "Zines for social justice: Adolescent girls writing  
on their own"

**In-class activity:**  
Starting personal zines  
Planning class zine

**Week 5  
Broadcasting publics**

**Oct 2 Required Reading:**  
Douglas, "Popular Culture and Populist Technology: The Amateur  
Operators, 1906-1912"  
Peters, "Dialogue and Dissemination"

Squires, “Rethinking the Black Public Sphere: An Alternative Vocabulary for Multiple Public Spheres”  
Livingstone, “On the relation between audiences and publics”

**Further reading:**

Hilmes, “Introduction: The Nation’s Voice”

**In-class activity:**

Sharing personal zines  
Finishing class zine

**Week 6**  
**Podcasting publics**

Oct 9

**Required Reading:**

Lacey, “Smart radio and audio apps: the politics and paradoxes of listening to (anti-) social media”  
Florini, “The Podcast ‘Chitlin’ Circuit’: Black Podcasters, Alternative Media, and Audio Enclaves”  
Florini, “This Week in Blackness, the George Zimmerman acquittal, and the production of a networked collective identity”  
Groth & Samson, “Audio Essays – A Manifesto,”  
[http://seismograf.org/fokus/fluid-sounds/audio\\_paper\\_manifesto](http://seismograf.org/fokus/fluid-sounds/audio_paper_manifesto)  
Quirk, “Guide to Podcasting,” <http://towcenter.org/research/guide-to-podcasting/>

Read: Executive Summary, Intro, Case Studies, Conclusions  
Listen to a podcast. What are the various components of it? What are some genre conventions it displays?

**In-class activity:**

Brainstorm for class podcast

**Oct 11-15 Literature Review due, noon, D2L Dropbox**

**Week 7**  
**The politics of entertainment television**

Oct 16

**Required reading:**

Kraidy, “Contesting Reality: Star Academy and Islamic authenticity in Saudi Arabia”  
Hashmi, “At the Limits of Discourse: Political Talk in Drag on *Late Night Show with Begum Nawazish Ali*”

Meng, “Who Needs Democracy if We Can Pick Our Favorite Girl?:  
Super Girl as Media Spectacle”

**In-class activity:**

Introduction to recording audio

**Week 8**

**Fan studies**

**The cultural resistance problematic**

Oct 23

**Required Reading:**

Radway, “The Readers and Their Romances”

Fiske, “The Cultural Economy of Fandom”

Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, “Introduction: Why Study Fans?”

Brough and Shreshtova, “Fandom meets activism: Rethinking civic  
and political participation”

*Dramas Over Flowers*, “Ep 16: Men Behaving Badly,”

<https://player.fm/series/dramas-over-flowers/ep-15-men-behaving-badly-deep-dive-special>

**In-class activities:**

Managing audio files

Introduction to audio editing part 1

**Week 9**

**Mobile, mobilization, the mob**

Oct 30

**Required reading:**

Srinivas, “Star mobilization in South India: What have films got to do  
with it?”

Punathambekar, “Reality TV and Participatory Culture in India”

Navar-Gill & Stanfill, “We Shouldn’t Have to Trend to Make You  
Listen’: Queer Fan Hashtag Campaigns as Production  
Interventions”

**In-class activities:**

Introduction to audio editing part 2

Planning the class podcast

**Week 10**

**Laboring in/for the digital era**

Nov 6      **Required reading:**  
Nakamura, “Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture”  
Jarrett, “The Relevance of “Women’s Work”: Social Reproduction and Immaterial Labor in Digital Media”  
Adair & Nakamura, “The Digital Afterlives of *This Bridge Called My Back*: Woman of Color Feminism, Digital Labor, and Networked Pedagogy”  
Casilli, “Digital Labor Studies Go Global: Toward a Digital Decolonial Turn”

**Further reading:**

Balance, “How It Feels to Be Viral Me: Affective Labor and Asian American YouTube Performance”  
Jarrett, *Feminism, Labour and Digital Media: The Digital Housewife*  
Duffy, “The romance of work: Gender and aspirational labour in the digital culture industries”  
Nakamura, “The Unwanted Labour of Social Media: Women of Colour Call Out Culture as Venture Community Management”  
Lopez, “Asian American Food Blogging as Racial Branding: Rewriting the Search for Authenticity”

**In-class activities:**

Audio editing part 3

Nov 8      **Podcast proposal due, 5pm, D2L Discussion**

**Week 11  
Conferences**

Nov 13      Individual conferences. Use extra time to work on semester projects or read ahead.

Nov 16      **IOB paper due, noon, D2L Dropbox**

**Week 12  
Making the open web work**

Nov 20      **Required reading:**  
Nafus, “‘Patches don’t have gender’: What is not open in open source software”

Irani & Silberman, “Turkopticon: Interrupting Worker Invisibility in Amazon Mechanical Turk”  
Gillespie, “All Platforms Moderate”  
Farnel, “Kickstarting trans\*: The crowdfunding of gender/sexual reassignment surgeries”

**Further reading:**

van Doorn, “Platform labor: On the gendered and racialized exploitation of low-income service work in the ‘on-demand’ economy”  
Bishop, “Anxiety, panic and self-optimization: Inequalities and the YouTube algorithm”  
Irani, “Difference and Dependence among Digital Workers: The Case of Amazon Mechanical Turk”

**In-class activity:**

Watch *Field of Vision* – [The Moderators](#) documentary

**Week 13**

**Tweeting other possibilities**

Nov 27

**Required reading:**

Yang, “China’s Long Revolution”  
Brock, “From the Blackhand Side: Twitter as a Cultural Conversation”  
Bayat, “Introduction: The Art of Presence”  
Zayani, “Mediatizing the Revolution: The Appeal of Social Networks”

**Further reading:**

Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*  
Bayat, *Revolution without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring*  
Zayani, *Networked Publics and Digital Contention: The Politics of Everyday Life in Tunisia*

**In-class activity:**

Podcast lab time  
Sign up for presentation slots

**Week 14**

**Platforms for what?**

Dec 4      **Required reading:**  
van Djick, “Engineering Sociality in a Culture of Connectivity”  
Plantin, Edwards, & Sandvig, “Infrastructure studies meet platform  
studies in the age of Google and Facebook”

**In-class activity:**  
Research presentations

**Research presentation slides due, 3pm, D2L Dropbox**

**Week 15**  
**Race and region online**

Dec 11      **Required reading:**  
Mohan & Punathambekar, “Localizing YouTube: Language, cultural  
regions, and digital platforms”  
Noble, “Searching for Black Girls”

**In-class activity:**  
Share podcasts

**MP3 files + podcast blurb due, 3pm, D2L Dropbox**

Dec 14      **Podcast reflection due, 5pm, D2L Discussion**

Dec 17      **Final paper due, 5pm, D2L Dropbox**

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I owe many thanks to the innumerable individuals—mentors, friends, colleagues librarians, students—who have shaped my ideas and teaching. For help with imagining and executing this class, I am particularly indebted to Aswin Punathambekar, especially his Fall 2011 graduate seminar at the University of Michigan, *Citizenship After Television*. I am also grateful to my fellow classmates from that seminar. I owe thanks to the undergraduate students of the Summer 2014 seminar I taught, *Participatory and Public Culture in the Digital Era*. Finally, this syllabus has benefited from many thoughtful conversations with and suggestions from Sriram Mohan.