

COMMUNICATION 973
Topics in Rhetorical Research
RACE & MEDIA ACTIVISM

Fall 2021 | Tu 3:30 - 6:10 PM
Johnston Hall 310

Instructor: Dr. Lia Wolock

Office hours: Thu 9:45-11:45am via Teams ([permalink](#)). Or by appointment.

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Course Description

This course is a graduate-level seminar exploring contemporary and foundational research on race and media activism from a critical-cultural communication and media studies perspective. How do activists, audiences, and corporations wrestle with media texts and practices to reshape ideas about race and identity, racism, and cultural citizenship? And with what consequences? We will explore a variety of media systems, texts, and practices from around the world (with an emphasis on the United States) and different ways of studying and understanding them. Students will write a conference-length original research paper on a topic chosen in consultation with the professor. Alternative final projects are also possible, undertaken in consultation with the professor. On a weekly basis, students are expected to engage actively with course readings and discussions, and support the other members of this learning community.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will:

- Be able to explain key theories of racialization and activism in relation to mainstream, social, and community media;
- Develop your knowledge about a diverse range of popular cultural forms (i.e. radio, television, social media, archives) across the world;
- Improve your research, writing, and analysis skills through class discussions and course assignments; and
- Deepen your understanding of the political, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of media on questions of race, identity, and cultural citizenship.

COM 973 COVID STATEMENT

These are extra-ordinary times. They pose unprecedented challenges.

Through no fault of our own we find ourselves in the midst of one of the biggest educational experiments ever. While I have tried to design this course for flexible delivery in a pandemic, there are many factors neither you nor I can control. In light of this, we will have to work together to make this a safe and productive semester.

In the face of these difficult circumstances, I ask that you:

- Show kindness and patience to yourself, to your peers, and to me as we all work together to build our classroom community.
- Know that everyone's learning experience in this class depends on the investment of everyone else in this learning community. This is more true now than ever before!
- Communicate with me often and thoughtfully about what is working for you in 973 and what is not.
- Expect that there'll be an adjustment period for all of us while we figure out which platforms and techniques allow us to best meet and share our ideas together.

OFFICIAL UWM COVID STATEMENT

Panther Community Health and Safety Standards: UWM has implemented reasonable health and safety protocols, taking into account recommendations by local, state and national public health authorities, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a member of our campus community, you are expected to abide by the Panther Interim COVID-Related Health & Safety Rules, which were developed in accordance with public health guidelines. These standards apply to anyone who is physically present on campus, UWM grounds, or participating in a UWM-sponsored activity:

- All individuals visiting UWM facilities must wear face coverings while indoors;
- Unvaccinated students coming to campus are required to test weekly for COVID-19; and,
- You should check daily for COVID-19 symptoms and not come to campus if you are feeling sick.

COURSE GRADING

Attendance & Participation

2 attendance participation grades x 5pts = 10%

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: doing the readings and marking them up with our notes, making connections across readings and media, listening to others, asking thoughtful questions, bringing up areas of confusion so we can discuss them, and being respectful.

We hope to be able to be physically present with each other in a safe and healthy fashion every class session. Under the current circumstances, however, we'll need to be flexible in case of illness, exposure, or family care needs with how we meet and share our ideas, and how that participation gets graded.

UWM's Fall '21 policy: *Do not attend your in-person class if you have COVID-19, if you are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19, if you have been in close contact with others who have symptoms, if you need to care for an individual with COVID-19, or have other health concerns related to COVID-19.*

Most of the time, most folks should attend our in-person class sessions. For those who cannot attend in person, every effort will be made to record class. We will frequently discuss logistics and expectations about recording class, attendance, and participation as the situation develops and as we gain experience with the technology available and its limitations. Your input is encouraged! I want this to be the best class it can under the given circumstances.

At each class session in-person students will turn in a Check-in Notecard as they leave the classroom which will count toward their attendance/participation grade. On the notecard the student will write their name and at least one thing about Race & Media Activism that they learned that day (from the prof, peers, the readings, etc.) and thought was interesting. **Those who are not physically present should watch the session recording and turn in a virtual version by emailing the professor with the subject line "973 [class date] Notecard [student name]"** and including their interesting tidbit in the body of the email. We'll discuss this further in class.

You may "miss" one class (that is, not complete the necessary participation tasks for that session) without penalty, no questions asked. This covers illness, job interviews, etc. You do not need to notify me by email about such absences. Each additional "absence" will result in a penalty of 1 point off your final participation grade. Under difficult circumstances, and at the discretion of the professor, longer absences may be accommodated without penalty. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed and work to catch up.

This grade will be calculated twice. Once after Week 8, and once at the end of the semester.

Reading Responses (RRs)

8 reading responses x 2.5 pts = 20%

You will have 6 opportunities to submit RRs to Canvas each half of the semester. RRs are due by 3:30pm on the date we will discuss that assigned reading. **For each half of the term, your grade will be calculated by adding together your 4 best RR scores for a maximum of 10 points for each half of the term, 20 for the whole term.** For this reason, it is to your benefit to start writing them early, and write more than 4 until you have earned the maximum points.

Each RR should be a minimum of 300 of *your own* words. (Meaning: quotes, titles, URLs, etc. won't count toward the word minimum.) A handout will be posted with more information on this assignment, but the general idea is to **summarize 1 key scholarly concept from at least 1 of that day's reading(s) and engage with it** by asking questions, connecting it to other course readings, or linking related media. Each response is worth 2.5 points. Late responses can earn no higher than 1.5 point.

1st Half of Term: Sep 14 (Week 2) - Oct 19 (Week 7) - 6 opportunities

2nd Half of Term: Oct 26 (Week 8) - Dec 7 (Week 14) - 6 opportunities

Leading discussion & handout

2 leading sessions x 5 pts = 10%

Once during each half of the semester, you will be responsible, sometimes with one other student, to produce a 1-2 page handout and lead the class. You will sign up for your dates at our first meeting and the Leading Calendar will then be posted in Canvas. If something comes up and you need to switch your date, you will need to find another student with whom to switch. You will then send an email to the professor, including the other student, titled "973: Switching Leading Dates" and noting the dates being switched.

A document will be posted with more information on this assignment, but the general idea is that the **Leaders will post their handout before the designated class session to the pinned "Leading Handout" discussion thread. They will start the class session by summarizing key points, bringing up discussion questions or media examples, and offering some background on the author(s) when helpful.**

Reading Annotations

10 annotations x 2 pts = 20%

Social reading annotation allows us to start and deepen our classroom conversation while we read the materials for each week's session. Making this an official graded assignment allows me to give you credit for work I already know you're doing—reading and marking up your readings.

This grade will be calculated twice (worth 10 points each time). Once after Week 8, and once at the end of the semester. **To earn full credit (2 pts per class session), students are expected to offer 5 substantive annotations (i.e. highlighting a term is not enough, but 2-3 sentences per annotation is sufficient) across at least 3 readings for 5 of the weeks per each half of the term.** (Many weeks have 4 readings, so this setup means you can miss a reading or two any given week, and a week or so each half of term, without any penalty.) These annotations can be original comments or questions, or responses to other students' annotations

A non-exhaustive list of ideas for what to write about in your annotations:

- **Identify central argument(s), finding(s), or claim(s)** and paraphrase them in your own words.
- **Identify the reading's central question(s)** and paraphrase them.
- **Mark passages you find interesting** or exciting and suggest comments or questions about them for our discussion.
- **Mark passages you find confusing or poorly supported** and raise questions about them for our discussion.
- **Mark unfamiliar terms or concepts, or exciting terms/concepts.** Describe their meaning in your own words, or raise questions about them.
- **Connect a specific passage, term, or example from the reading to other scholarship or to media examples,** and explain why you think this connection is generative.
- **Reply to comments or questions** that others have raised.

1st Half of Term: Sep 14 (Week 2) - Oct 26 (Week 8) - 6 opportunities

2nd Half of Term: Nov 2 (Week 9) - Dec 7 (Week 14) - 6 opportunities

To earn all 10 points possible each half of term, you'll need to earn full credit on 5 annotation opportunities (2 pts each).

Research project

40%

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 research and write it up. **4500-6000 words, excluding references.** Consistent in-text parenthetical citations and a bibliography in a style of your choosing (e.g. APA, MLA, Chicago).

Alternative projects - I'm happy to discuss students doing alternative media production or activism projects to earn these points. Please consult with me early. Instead of a traditional proposal, you will instead write up a document describing both the overall project and what deliverables you will turn in. You should turn in items on the same schedule as students doing a traditional research project, with the items being a

comparable amount of points and work to the traditional scaffolding and final assignments.

	Pts / % of Final Grade
Proposal	3
Literature Review	10
Introduction, Outline, Bibliography	7
Presentation	5
Final Paper	15

Course Grading Scale

	plus		minus
As		100-93	92.9-90
Bs	89.9-87	86.9-83	82.9-80
Cs	79.9-77	76.9-73	72.9-70
Ds	69.9-67	66.9-65	64.9-60
Fs		below 60	

OTHER COURSE & UNIVERSITY POLICIES

1. Office Hours & Email

I am very eager to talk to you, and to help you be successful in this class! I prefer, whenever possible, to do it face-to-face rather than by email, so I strongly encourage you to take advantage of our office hours, or catch me before or after class. Striving toward more face-to-face communication ensures that I spend as much time as possible focused on your learning and intellectual growth, rather than on being a micro-manager.

You don't have to be struggling or have a problem to come by Office Hours.

When you do email, please include "973" in the subject line. You can expect a response within 1 business day. Emailed questions for which the answers are already available in posted course documents (e.g. assignment sheets, slides, syllabus) may receive a response directing you to look at the document.

2. **Technology Policy -- Paying Attention, Limiting Distractions, Respecting Privacy**

During our in-person sessions, you should only use your electronic devices to do course-related work, such as looking at our Canvas and course readings, etc. Your email, your job, your other classes, they can wait. If you want to get the education you're paying for, you need to commit your full attention to class during class time. Students who abuse technology privileges in the class may lose them for the day or the semester.

Phones in general should be turned to silent and placed out of your sight and reach during our live class sessions. (Studies show even leaving your phone face down next to you makes you more distracted than if you put it away out of sight, even if you never touch it or look at the screen.) Of course, if you are expecting an important message from a family member (ex. a parent is in surgery and you're waiting to hear they're ok) it's okay to keep your phone at hand on vibrate.

If we should have to run some classes with a livestream component, I would appreciate, when bandwidth allows, seeing students' faces. It's really hard to teach to a screen rather than a classroom. The more cues I can get (ex. when your eyes look excited by an idea, or confused by a term) as to how class is going for you, the better I can shape class to meet your needs.

Please note that students are prohibited from photographing, taking video, or otherwise recording class activities, unless given express permission by the instructor. For more information, see [UW System policies regarding recording](#).

3. **Readings**

There is no required text to purchase for this class. All readings will be uploaded to our class Canvas or linked there.

Before the class date during which a given reading will be discussed, you are expected to read the assigned texts and take notes. You will then come to class with your marked-up copy, ready to refer to it throughout our discussions.

Some of the readings are harder than others and it's okay to read through a text and feel a little uncertain about its meaning, application, and so on. We will work together as a learning community to process each reading, and to build our critical reading skills throughout the semester, through assignments and in-class activities.

4. **Assignments and Extensions**

All major assignments are listed on the syllabus and will be discussed well before they are due. Late assignments will lose 5% per day for 7 days (including weekends), and then it will get an automatic 0%.

7 Late Days: Each student has a bank of 7 Late Days that they can apply to most assignments (not Leading, Presentations, or the Final Paper). You can pull from your overall bank of 7 Late Days to turn in your chosen assignment 1-7 days late without penalty. No questions asked. You can spread your Late Days across multiple assignments, for example turning in your Lit Review 2 days late, a specific Reading Response 2 days late, and a particular Reading Annotation 3 days late. You must email me each time you want to draw from your Late Day bank. Your email subject line should read: "973 7LD [Your name] [Assignment name]" (Ex. "973 7LD Nakamura RR"). In your email you will note the assignment for which you're applying late days from your bank, how many days it will be late, and, this current assignment included, how many of your total Late Days you've used so far out of your 7 total.

5. **Grade Changes**

I work hard throughout the semester to ensure that grading is consistent and based on the assignment sheets and rubrics provided for each assignment.

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 feel welcomed to 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.

6. **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.

7. ***Accommodations***

If you 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.

8. ***Academic Misconduct***

Cheating on assignments and 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 me or visit the Writing Center. You should familiarize yourselves with UWM's description of academic misconduct. For more information, see <https://uwm.edu/deanofstudents/academic-misconduct/>.

9. ***Discriminatory Conduct (such as sexual harassment):***

Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated. It poisons our learning community and threatens the careers, educational experience, and 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 who may or may not share this information with law enforcement.

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/norris/health-services/survivor-support/>) or Norris Counseling services (<https://uwm.edu/norris/crisis-and-consultation/>). I am happy to walk you over to such services if you are feeling anxious.

10. ***Announcements:***

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

11. Absences for Religious Observances or to Represent the University

Students will be allowed to complete requirements that are missed because of a religious observance. Best efforts will be made to accommodate those missing class to officially represent the university in sports and similar venues. 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.

12. Knitting, Doodling, Snacking, etc.

As long as these activities do not:

- keep you from paying attention to your instructor and peers,
- taking the notes you need,
- or participating in group activities and discussions.

And it is not disruptive to other students, and does not pose a risk to public health.

You can feel free to do various activities—such as knitting, doodling, or snacking—during our classes.

13. University Policies

See the Secretary of the University's Syllabus Links page for further information about general university policies: <https://uwm.edu/secu/syllabus-links/>.

UWM's Fall '21 classroom and campus COVID Policies- <https://uwm.edu/cetl/covid-19-syllabus-statements/>

UWM's COVID Dashboard - <https://uwm.edu/coronavirus/dashboard/>

UWM student COVID testing - <https://uwm.edu/coronavirus/faqs/where-do-i-get-a-covid-19-test/>

UWM student vaccination info - <https://uwm.edu/coronavirus/vaccination-incentive-program/>

REQUIRED READINGS

Further readings posted on Canvas.
Calendar subject to change.

Week 1 (Sep 7) INTRODUCTION

- Syllabus

Week 2 (Sep 14) RACE

- Omi & Winant (1994), "Racial Formation"
- Bonilla-Silva (2013), "The Central Frames of Colorblind Racism"
- Kim (1999), "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans"
- Tuck & Yang (2012), "Decolonization is not a metaphor"

Week 3 (Sep 21) RACE & MEDIA

- Hall (1990), "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" & definition of diaspora from Wolock (2020), "Diaspora and Digital Media," p. 190*
- Feng (2020), "The Burden of Representation in Asian American Television"*
- Gomer (2020), "Introduction" to *White Balance: How Hollywood Shaped Colorblind Ideology and Undermined Civil Rights*
- Lopez (2016), "The Role of Asian American Media Activism"

Sep-23 Sep 24, 5pm - Proposal due

Week 4 (Sep 28) ETHNIC PRESS

- Matsaganis (2013), "How ethnic media producers constitute their communities of practice: An ecological approach"
- Squires (2002), "Rethinking the Black Public Sphere: An Alternative Vocabulary for Multiple Public Spheres"
- Lopez (2011), "The Yellow Press: Asian American Radicalism and Conflict in *Gidra*"
- Shukla (2003), "India in Print, India Abroad"

Week 5 (Oct 5) HEARING & SPEAKING RACE

- Hilmes (1997), "Who We Are, Who We Are Not: The Emergence of National Narratives"
- Brekke (2020), "The Sound of Yellow Rain: Resisting Podcasting's Sonic Whiteness"
- Casillas & Stoeberl (2020), "Listening to Racial Injustice"*
- Florini (2015), "This Week in Blackness, the George Zimmerman acquittal, and the production of a networked collective identity"

Week 6 (Oct 12) MEDIA FANDOM

- Harris-Lacewell & Mills (2004), "Truth and Soul: Black Talk in the Barbershop"
- Lopez (2016), "Utilizing Skills and Passion to Spread Online Activism"
- Martin (2019), "Fandom while black: Misty Copeland, Black Panther, Tyler Perry and the contours of US black fandoms"
- Kalman-Lamb (2013), "The Athlete as Model Minority Subject: Jose Bautista and Canadian Multiculturalism"

Week 7 (Oct 19)

- No class. Work on Lit Reviews

Oct 22, 5pm - Lit Review due

Week 8 (Oct 26) MEDIA PRODUCTION

- Berglund (2016), "'I'm Just an Indian Standing Before You with No Feathers Popping Out of My Head': Critiquing Indigenous performativity in the YouTube performances of the 1491s"
- Day & Christian (2017), "Locating black queer TV: Fans, producers, and networked publics on YouTube"
- Okada (2015), "The Center for Asian American Media and the Televisual Public Sphere"
- Ahmad & Thorpe (2020), "Muslim Sportswomen as Digital Space Invaders: Hashtag Politics and Everyday Visibilities"

- - - Attendance/Participation, Leading, RR. Annotation grades halfway point - - -

Week 9 (Nov 2) SOCIAL MEDIA

- Glatt & Banet-Weiser (2021), "Productive Ambivalence, Economies of Visibility, and the Political Potential of Feminist YouTube"
- Stevens (2021), "Blackfishing on Instagram: Influencing and the Commodification of Black Urban Aesthetics"
- Cisneros & Nakayama (2015), "New Media, Old Racisms: Twitter, Miss America, and Cultural Logics of Race"
- Abidin (2019), "Minahs and minority celebrity: Parody YouTube influencers and minority politics in Singapore"

Week 10 (Nov 9) INFORMATION

- Safiya Noble (2018), "Searching for Black Girls"
- Mantz (2008), "Improvisational economies: Coltan production in the eastern Congo"
- Clayton (2020), "How Eugenics Shaped Statistics"
- Chun (2003), "Orienting Orientalism, or How to Map Cyberspace"

Week 11 (Nov 16) ARCHIVES

- Rawlins (2021), "Archival Interventions: Instagram and Black Interiority"
- Thirumal & Kommaraju, "Listening to the Sonorous: Digital Archiving as a Political Practice"
- Wolock (2021), "South Asian American Digital Archive"
- Caswell, Cifor, Ramirez (2016), "'To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing': Uncovering the Impact of Community Archives"
- Raval (2014), "The Encyclopedia Must Fail! - Notes on Queering Wikipedia"

Nov 19 Nov 22, 5pm, Intro-Outline-Bibliography due

Week 12 (Nov 23) INTERSECTIONALITY & SOLIDARITY

- Cooper (2016), "Intersectionality"
- Burris (2019), "Palestine in Black and White"
- Gutierrez (2020), "Situating Representation as a Form of Erasure: #OscarsSoWhite Black Twitter, and Latinx Twitter"
- Yao (2018), "#staywoke: Digital Engagement and Literacies in Antiracist Pedagogy"

Week 13 (Nov 30) SURVEILLANCE & TERROR

- Bloodsworth-Lugo & Lugo-Lugo (2008), "Citizenship and the Browning of Terror"
- Mudambi (2015), "The Construction of Brownness: Latino/a and South Asian Bloggers' Responses to SB 1070"
- Casillas (2014), "Sounds of Surveillance: US Spanish Language Radio Patrols La Migra"
- Puar & Rai (2002), "Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots"

Week 14 (Dec 7) DREAMING SOMETHING ELSE

- Lowe (2015), "The Intimacies of Four Continents"
- Brock (2020), "Black Technoculture and/as Afrofuturism"
- Maghbouleh (2017), "At Summer Camp" and "Being Brown"

Week 15 (Dec. 14) PRESENTATIONS & REFLECTIONS

Finals Period PAPER DUE - Tue Dec 21, 5pm

*These three chapters are from *Race and Media: Critical Approaches*, edited by Lori Kido Lopez (2020).

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I owe many thanks to the innumerable individuals—mentors, friends, colleagues, librarians, students—who have shaped my ideas and teaching. In the case of this class I am particularly grateful to Sriram Mohan, David Kocik, Amanda Cote, Padma Chirumamilla, Nicole Hentrich, Michael Mirer, Pallavi Rao, Yuki Nakayama, and the folks working with the Center for Critical Race and Digital Studies for their fabulous Critical Race & Digital Studies Syllabus.

TIME ALLOCATION

(this section of the syllabus is required by the Higher Learning Commission)

The average student will be expected to invest the following amounts of time in order to achieve the learning objectives of COM 973:

- Time in the classroom (synchronous instruction): 15 meetings x 160 minutes = 2400 minutes or 40 hours
- Time spent reading: 4 hours per class meeting x 14 meetings = 56 hours
- Time completing assignments (research and writing): 51 hours
- Total = 147 hours

REFERENCES

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