



FRIDAY, MAY 8

9:15 - 9:45

Coffee

9:45 - 10:00

Opening Remarks: Ron Eyerman and Ron Jacobs

10:00 - 11:00

Session I

Chair: Ron Jacobs

Inge Brooke Schmidt

When Good Ballots Go Bad: Voting Ritual Failure in the 2000 Presidential Election

Jason Mast

Political Turning Points: Clinton, Gingrich, and the Oklahoma City Bombing

Commentator: Joseph Klett

Discussion

11:00 - 12:00

Session II

Chair: Rui Gao

Brian McKernan

Celebrity as a Symbol: The Use of Celebrity in American Intellectual Magazines

Julia Sonnevend

The Peculiar Lives of Newspaper Photographs

Commentator: Carolyn Ly

Discussion

12:00 - 1:00

Lunch

1:00 - 2:00

Session III

Chair: Volker Heins

Jingsi Wu

Enlightenment or Entertainment:

The Convergence of Politics and Entertainment Media Brought about by China's *Super Girl*

Sam Nelson

Sacramental Ambiguities:

Universalism Versus Radical Difference In Early Modern Missionary Encounters

Commentator: Jason Mast

Discussion

2:00 - 2:15

Coffee Break

2:15 - 3:15

Session IV

Chair: Sonja van Wichelen

Anne Lin

Transnational Cultural Exchange in East Asian Media

Matthias Revers

Towards a Cultural Understanding of Media Systems

Commentator: Ates Altinordu

Discussion

Inge Brooke Schmidt, Yale University, CCS Junior Fellow

“When Good Ballots Go Bad: Ritual Failure in the 2000 Presidential Election”

There is an enormous breadth to the literature on voting and elections. From voter participation to electoral systems to civic culture and beyond, the field covers a vast territory of sociological and intellectual inquiry. Yet one aspect of voting and elections remains consistently absent: the ballot. Though often ignored, the premise of this paper is that the significance of the ballot far surpasses the role of technological medium designed for pragmatic need. To make such an argument, however, requires a theory of voting that goes beyond instrumental, rational action. In this paper, I will develop a culturally-sensitive theory of voting as political ritual. In doing so, I will argue that the ballot is a sacred object, the representative of democracy which the voting ritual protects and celebrates. And finally, I will present a brief case study of the 2000 Presidential Election. In it, I will illustrate that the crisis of the 2000 Election was not technological failure, but instead, the symbolic failure of the ballot.

Jason Mast, University of California, Los Angeles, CCS Junior Fellow

“Political Turning Points: Clinton, Gingrich, and the Oklahoma City Bombing”

The focus of this presentation is the public life of democratic politics: the performative dimensions, causes, and consequences of the struggle for political power in a fragmented and differentiated society committed to democracy and regulated by open and unabashed struggles for influence and public legitimation. Unfortunately, social scientific approaches to power and politics have had little to say about such processes, for they have been mired in instrumental approaches that emphasize calculation and domination, and by an understanding of power that is thoroughly inappropriate to the democratic struggle for power and governance in a civil society.

Marxist, Gramscian, Weberian, and post-modern approaches tend to reduce the significance of process and symbols in the problem of legitimation in democratic politics. Victory is often theorized as the result of prior power, of self-confirming hegemony, or else the contingent result of calculations that are thought to be material and interest-based only. The approach I propose departs decisively from these schools of thought. Legitimation can only be fully understood when the processural flow of symbolic give-and-take are positioned at the center of analysis in a nonreductive way.

Brian McKernan, University at Albany, State University of New York

“Celebrity as a Symbol: The Use of Celebrity in American Intellectual Magazines”

Traditionally, the majority of scholarly research has treated celebrity as either a reflection of more “macro” social characteristics such as modernity or has attempted to reveal celebrity’s true meaning to all of society. However, very little work has empirically addressed the meanings social groups instill into celebrity and the societal impact of these meanings. By adopting a cultural sociology framework, this study provides an empirical account of celebrity’s meanings for one social group, namely the aesthetic public sphere occupied by America’s most popular intellectual general readership magazines. Through a semiotic analysis, this study illustrates how within this aesthetic public sphere, celebrity is most often instilled with meanings that situate it along the profane side of a binary relationship opposite to such positively attributed symbols as skill and achievement. Additionally, this study makes use of narrative analysis to examine how this specific understanding of celebrity helps shape the worldview of these intellectual magazines. The conversations on celebrity located within these intellectual magazines present a narrative of contemporary America’s decline. Further, within this narrative there exists an elitist element, as those members of society considered to be outside of this aesthetic public sphere are identified as responsible for this decline. By employing a cultural sociology framework, this study not only provides empirical insight into celebrity’s meanings for one specific aesthetic sphere, but also provides insight into some of the complexities of the celebrity phenomenon that traditional approaches have failed to recognize.



Julia Sonnevend, Columbia University, CCS Pre-doctoral Fellow

“The Peculiar Lives of Newspaper Photographs”

At the beginning of the rise of newspaper photographs, many editors declined to include them into newspapers. In contrast, currently we are experiencing a growing relevance of news photos both in traditional print media and in new media. On the one hand, the history of newspaper photography is a history of continuous debates about the controversial cultural impact of having photographs in newspapers: about the truth value of the photos and their ability to transmit messages. On the other hand, we can no longer imagine a newspaper culture without photos, which indicate that photographs might have won the legitimacy debate. Both the anti-newspaper photo and the pro-newspaper photo approach, however, tend to lack sophisticated theoretical backing and often even revitalize elements of the old iconoclasm/iconodulism debate.



To move beyond the binary structure of this discourse, a comprehensive theory of newspaper photographs has to consider, whether there are any distinctive characteristics of newspaper photographs vis-à-vis other visual representations. In this paper I would like to carve out a special place for newspaper images in the world of images by asking: How newspaper photos relate to newspaper texts? How newspaper photos get recycled in new contexts? And what is the relevance of the scarcity of newspaper space for photographs?

Jingsi Wu, University at Albany, State University of New York

“Enlightenment or Entertainment:

The Convergence of Politics and Entertainment Media Brought about by China's *Super Girl*”

There has been a long running debate among media scholars over what entertainment media can do in political life as an alternative media content to the traditionally lauded public policy program genres, such as news. In opposition to the “television malaise thesis,” which essentially views entertainment media as endangering civic life, new perspectives have argued that aesthetic evaluations of diverse media contents, most prominently entertainment programs, can oftentimes cross over to discussions about serious civil issues and common concerns. In this process, the aesthetic public sphere surrounding entertainment media contents essentially provides an extension of the formal Habermasian public sphere, thus suggesting a more significant civic role for entertainment programs.

This study looks at the debate in a specific context—China, where “public sphere” is a less developed concept in civic life, and explores the interesting convergence of politics and entertainment media. The empirical analysis is focused on the popular talent show, *Super Girl*, which has fostered unprecedented national enthusiasm as well as conflicting evaluations. In using narrative analysis to map out the structures of representation surrounding the show, the study provides two important findings. First, it supports the idea that there is more than one dominant interpretation of media contents in the civic discourse. Second, aesthetic evaluations and discussions more often than not extend into areas of broader concerns, such as education, cultural policy, moral standards and so on. In talking about a popular entertainment program, the cultural critics have undoubtedly helped nurture public spheres in which civic issues can be enthusiastically and creatively talked about.

Samuel Nelson, Yale University, CCS Junior Fellow

“Sacramental Ambiguities: Universalism Versus Radical Difference In Early Modern Missionary Encounters”

This presentation explores the evolution of Christian missionary assumptions in the context of early modern European imperial expansion. It identifies divergent patterns in missionary understandings of the cultural conditions of religious conversion outside of historic Christendom. These missionary engagements are described as struggles to define the limits and terms of religious indigenization and syncretism. These involved decisions as to whether aspects of indigenous culture should be rejected, incorporated into, or regarded indifferently with respect to the religious truths promoted. They run parallel, and in many ways influenced similar discursive explorations in early Enlightenment encounters with Europe's others. The resulting practical missionary theories often stood in tension with models of religious incorporation derived in European contexts. They also implicate the political and material realities of imperialism as these touch on missionary practice. In closer detail, I contrast the practices of Dutch and German missionaries in South Asia in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, which I described as confessionalist and evangelical conversion models respectively.

Anne Lin, University at Albany, State University of New York

"Transnational Cultural Exchange in East Asian Media"

Technological advancement, especially rapid development in telecommunication, has made issues concerning globalization and transnationalism more crucial to the study of sociology and of culture. Theorists take different stands while encountering issues of globalization and transnationalism. Some look at globalization as the passage to modernization and democratization. Some see it as global "hybridization" while others are cautious of its cultural imperialist power. Existing studies in the field do address certain important aspects of globalization, but are not yet exhaustive. Most studies emerge and develop from a Western context. While leaving out processes of transnational cultural exchange in the Asian area, these studies also assume globalization and transnational cultural relationships among these regions work the same way as those of the West. This project aims to examine the processes of transnational cultural exchange in the East Asian region through the study of media. Trans-cultural relationships among East Asian countries are more complex and intricate. While unequal power dynamics do exist, cultural influences cannot be explained only by the understanding of hegemonic power systems. Nor could it be interpreted as mere cultural hybridization. Power as well as cultural influences flow back and forth among East Asian countries, creating cultural hybrids while maintaining structural yet fluid power relations. Media representations could serve as condensed indexes for pointing out national and cultural elements specific to a region, where change and alterations can be identified across different time periods. Commentaries on these representations in the aesthetic public sphere shows how audiences interpret, relate to, accept or reject performative elements specific to a particular cultural region. Through the study of the aesthetic public sphere, the project aims to draw a map of how cultural elements are recognized, transformed and transposed across regions and how power operates transnationally. In addition, this particular project will focus specifically on media representations and commentaries of "maleness" in TV drama series in Japan, Taiwan, Korea and Hong Kong, as a part of the larger research project.

Matthias Revers, University at Albany, State University of New York

"Towards a Cultural Understanding of Media Systems"

In the last decade there has been an increasing interest in macro-studies on media systems, mostly but not only in the field of communication sciences. As comparative research suggests, there are significant differences in the way US-American and European media systems are structured (whilst the latter are far from homogeneous). What all of these studies have failed to recognize is the significance of journalistic culture as structuring variable for these perceived differences. The central argument of this paper is that culture not only affects how media are organized, but, even more significantly, that it shapes media discourse, which is consequential for the information environment and the structure of the public sphere in a society. Furthermore, the fields with which media are interrelated (i.e. politics, business, art, etc.) and their own cultural structure have an impact on journalistic culture.

Most recently, Bourdieuan field theory has been introduced as a framework to cross-culturally study media and field relations in these systems. In order to bridge the cultural gap that these approaches present, an empirical project is suggested which compares U.S. American and German-speaking media systems. In order to reach the level of specificity that is needed in addressing these issues, this research is invested in hermeneutic analysis of comparable cases of politically significant and polarizing media stories which are thus adequate to map the journalistic fields of interest. At this stage a preliminary analysis of one comparable case which deals with deportation is presented. Future research will be dedicated on detailed narrative analysis of different cases and interviewing of media professionals. Starting from cases, journalists who were involved in narrating the respective stories of deportation will be interviewed about their perceptions of the social space they inhabit and the narratives that govern their practices.





SATURDAY, MAY 9

9:30 - 10:00 Coffee

10:00 - 11:00

Session V

Chair: Christine Slaughter

Sorcha Brophy-Warren

Continuity and Tradition in the Anglophone Caribbean:

An Exploration of Embodied Social Memory

Lukas Fendel

Just Another Brick in the Wall:

Employing Cultural Trauma Theory to Understand the Discontents of German Reunification

Commentator: Volker Heins

Discussion

11:00 - 12:00

Session VI

Chair: Anibal Gauna-Peralta

Tanya Omeltchenko

Publicity without Solidarity:

What does it mean to participate in a social movement in the digital age?

Ian Steinheit

Good 'Ol Boy Talk vs. the Blogosphere in the Case of Former Senator George Allen

Commentator: Jingsi Wu

Discussion

12:00 - 1:00

Lunch

1:00 - 2:00

Session VII

Chair: Tim Malacarne

Jonathan Roberge

The Performance and Rhetoric of Theater Critics in Quebec:

A Tale of Tough Love's Sociology

Francisco Raul Cornejo de Souza

Kulturkampf als Küchekampf

Commentator: Andrea Cossu

Discussion

2:00 - 2:15

Coffee Break

2:15 - 3:15

Session VIII

Chair: Alison Gerber

Caroline Gray

The Intolerable Monstrous: The Case of Face Transplantation

Nickie Michaud Wild

"And That's When He Snapped":

A Comparison of Domestic Violence Narratives on the Oprah Winfrey Show and NBC News Programs

Commentator: Mishel Filisha

Discussion

3:15 - 4:00

Closing remarks and discussion

6:00

Conference banquet - Scoozzi Restaurant (Conference participants only)

Sorcha Brophy-Warren, Yale University

“Continuity and Tradition in the Anglophone Caribbean: An Exploration of Embodied Social Memory”

Caribbeanist scholarship of the last forty years has committed itself principally to uncovering the unique sociocultural dynamics of postcolonial states. To this end, much of the research done in the Caribbean makes use of analytical metaphors like "creolization," and "syncretism" to describe the particularities of social change and societal transformation. These heuristic metaphors serve to orient researchers to identify heterogeneity and creativity in practices, institutions, and rituals of the Caribbean. However, the proliferation of these metaphors has occluded consideration of the role of tradition and continuity within a social science framework.

In this paper, I investigate the ways that "British" traditions provide a framework for meaning-making in the Anglophone Caribbean. This investigation challenges assumptions made by postcolonial and postmodern theory concerning agency by attempting to incorporate practices such as these "mnemonics of the body" into a theory of identity for actors typically conceived of as objects of colonial oppression. Where these actors have been treated as performing "legitimate" identity, it is only where their action can be identified as part of a subaltern political response to hegemony. In this paper, I consider bodily conventions of tradition and propriety as more than the residues of a colonial heritage, but as part of the cognitive context for identity in the Anglophone Caribbean.

Lukas Fendel, Albert-Ludwigs-University, Freiburg, Germany, Yale University Exchange Scholar

“Just Another Brick in the Wall.

Employing Cultural Trauma Theory to Understand the Discontents of German Reunification”

Two decades after the reunification of Germany, why is there still a persisting sense of division between East and West? And how to explain for the haunting proliferation of political extremism in the East? Applying the analytical framework of cultural trauma theory can help understand some of these discontents of German reunification. I argue that among many East Germans, reunification and rapid assimilation led to a sense of insecurity about their origin, their identity, and their aims.

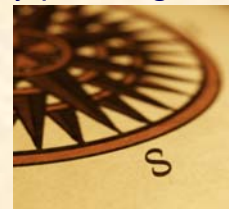
Different carrier groups constructed competing, polarizing narratives of who was to blame for the difficult situation. These aspects constituted a tear in the social fabric and were prone to set in motion a cultural trauma process.

In the hegemonic public discourse, the East German trauma is constructed along the lines of socialist dictatorship and division. Yet this official version ignores how the reunification process itself brought about traumatizing potential, it fails to "work through" reunification and thereby fosters a persisting "wall in the heads". Political extremists take advantage of the discursive void to put forth alternative trauma narratives, marketing distorted ideas of guilt and victimhood.

Tatiana Omeltchenko, University of Virginia, CCS Pre-Doc Fellow

“Publicity without Solidarity: What does it mean to participate in a social movement in the digital age?”

Participation in a social movement in the digital age is often defined as not requiring solidarity or collective identity, due to the ease of accessing the public sphere technologically. Defining the internet as a tool for publicity without solidarity, I ask what kind of cultures of activism may emerge out of this condition. My analysis is based on interviews and participant observation of online and online-offline actions of activists in the US anti-human trafficking movement. I identify what I see as a culture of performativity emerging in the activists' interactions that are short of long-term connections or personal ties. I conclude by questioning the democratic potential of publicity that is devoid of solidarity.





Ian Sheinheit, University at Albany, State University of New York

“Good ‘Ol Boy Talk vs. the Blogosphere in the Case of Former Senator George Allen”

In this paper we demonstrate how New-Media savvy operators and changing mores on public expressions of racism combined to alter the course of a senate election and quite possibly the course of the nation as well. We are, of course, referring to the now infamous racist epithet spoken by then Senator George Allen (R - Virginia) during the 2006 election cycle. During a campaign event, in front of an almost entirely white and conservative audience on the western border of his state, Senator Allen made what was to become a very unfortunate (for him) characterization of the young oppositional research worker of Indian descent filming the event for the Democratic candidate, Jim Webb. How George Allen’s casual drawing of the color line in front of a live audience, likely sympathetic to his remarks, went on to cause him to lose his Senate seat illuminates changing standards for representations of race in American political discourse. This is especially evident in a context where there is an increasingly interactive relationship between New Media (such as blogs) and News Media. In order to demonstrate this, a narrative and network analysis will be conducted. Articles and texts, written on the incident, will be traced and the present cultural structures illuminated. We argue that the narrative structures along with rapid-fire interaction within New Media set a new precedent for the political playing field. (with Cynthia Bogard)

Dr. Jonathan Roberge, CCS Post-Doctoral Fellow

“The Performance and Rhetoric of Theater Critics in Quebec: A Tale of Tough Love’s Sociology”

Drawing from the Cultural Pragmatics of Alexander (in the U.S.), and from the work of Ricoeur, and Boltanski\Thevenot (in France), this paper would argue that the relationship between performers and their publics gives rise to more complex networks of mediations. In this instance, states, associations, and all sorts of “hermeneutical powers” play an important role. More particularly, if theatre and social life are to mirror one another, this would prove to be impossible without the involvement of critics in the public sphere. It is thus our central argument that looking at critics’ work should allow for a better understanding of how critical discourses evolve as a ‘competence’ within culture and society—and not above them as in former models of critical theory.

Theater journalists form what Zelizer calls “interpretative communities”, which might be less and less institutionalized, but nevertheless still well-structured. In turn, the principle shaping these communities could be best described as a “conflict of interpretation”, wherein critics engage with artists, on the one side, and audiences, on the other. The purpose of either negotiation always is the struggle for their recognition. In this process, critics display a series of justifications among which three are particularly noteworthy. First, they constantly try to situate themselves in regard to the debate between high and low culture; and most often as the defender of the former. Second, it is important to look at the tension between subjectivity and objectivity, the use of metaphors, but also the need for clear standards. Third, one has to analyze where critics stand in the dispute over whether theatre should be considered for its fictional-aesthetic worth or its socio-anthropological value.

In the end, what is common to these three conflicts is that they are never able to provide any meta-criteria. Critical discourses remain normative and it is their deep meaning as well as their cultural and political consequences that have yet to be fully understood.

Francisco Raul Cornejo de Souza , University of São Paulo, Fox International Fellow at the MacMillan Center, Yale University

Kulturkampf als Küchekampf

The event known as the “Kitchen Debate” conforms a considerably famous affair amidst the episodes that comprise the narratives of the period we came to define as the Cold War. This theatrical happening had as its protagonists the Soviet President Nikita Krushchev and the then Vice-President Richard Nixon; its background the ideological disputes between the two nations’ political systems; and its scenario the American Pavillion in Moscow for the 1959 exhibition. But the aspect which will be chiefly approached by this paper is the particular place occupied by the daily usages of applied science in the dispute. Such an enterprise has as its main purpose the outlining of the cultural underpinnings of this debate through two axial discourses that are here intertwined: the role of technology in the setting of modern life and the specific ways through which each country tried to depict the routine of its citizens. Therefore, taking into account the historical singularity of the event and its context, the task that will be pursued here is that of trying to understand how and why these elements came to play a central role, even if briefly, in the power struggles that characterized this uniquely spectacular conflict.

Caroline Gray, Yale University, CCS Junior Fellow

“The Intolerable Monstrous: The Case of Face Transplantation”

In 2005, a group of reconstructive surgeons performed what was described as the first human face transplantation, where a donor’s face was implanted upon the face of another badly disfigured individual. While many have debated the ethical ramifications of this procedure, this presentation instead examines the cultural categories that justify the need for such a risky, radical intervention. In particular, I focus on the categories of normal/abnormal, form/function, and the figure of the “monster,” and I describe how they symbolically position the face transplant recipient.

Nickie Michaud Wild, University at Albany, State University of New York

““And That's When he Snapped”: A Comparison of Domestic Violence Narratives on The Oprah Winfrey Show and NBC News Programs”

Domestic violence continues to be a substantial problem for women in the United States and around the world. Talk shows and news programs often tell its story in a way that puts the focus on the individual and ignores structural factors. However, when narrators describe violence against women in other countries, there are different genres used to describe it than when it happens in the United States. In this article, I conduct a narrative analysis of a set of 32 transcripts from The Oprah Winfrey Show that discuss domestic violence incidents. Five discuss violence against women outside of the country, while the others focus on events within the United States. I compare these to NBC news transcripts from the NBC Nightly News, Dateline, and Today. First, I demonstrate that narrators claim that domestic violence happens in the U.S. when a psychological event occurs called “the snap”: when a man has a psychotic-type break, departs from his normal behavior, and attacks the woman. Second, I show that news-type programs on the NBC network are remarkably similar in their telling of how domestic violence unfolds, even when comparing the same incident. In the United States, the shows present domestic violence as unrelated to gendered social structures. Third, I demonstrate that the Oprah narratives are more developed and elaborated, especially when they discuss the problem in other countries - speakers are more likely to foster a sense of outrage against social structures, but also to present victims as “the other.”

