

CCS NOTES

The Official Newsletter of the Cultural & Critical Studies Division of AEJMC

In This Issue:

P1. Note from CCS Head

P3. PF&R Recipient

P5. Panel Selection Insights

P7. Theory in the Field

P8. Honoring CCS Mentors

P10. Research Reflections

P12. Tips for Night Teaching

P13. Field Work Reflections

P 15. Henry Giroux's PF&R
Acceptance Speech



**Submit to the
Midwinter
Conference!**

(more info on p. 5)



Panel: "Judging Publications Quality: From Scholarly Communities to Discourse Communities" at the 2019 Toronto Conference

Welcome from the Head of the Cultural and Critical Studies Division

*A note from Division Head
Peter Gloviczki*



I am honored to serve as Head of the Cultural and Critical Studies Division this year. For those who I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting, I wanted to take some time in this first newsletter to introduce myself. I work as an Associate Professor of Communication at Coker University in Hartsville, South Carolina.

2019-2020 CCS Officers

Head

Peter Gloviczki
pgloviczki(at)coker.edu

Vice-Head

Ruth DeFoster
rmdefoster(at)stkate.edu

Secretary

Khadija Ejaz
kejaz(at)barry.edu

Lead Research Chair

Errol Salamon
esalamon(at)umn.edu

Research Co-Chair

Krishnan Vasudevan
kvasu@umd.edu

PF&R Chair

Jeanne Criswell
jcriswell(at)uindy.edu

Teaching Chair

Chelsea Reynolds
chreynolds(at)fullerton.edu

Graduate Outreach

Steven Wang
wang797(at)wisc.edu

Newsletter Editor

Jessica Maddox
jlmaddox(at)ua.edu

Social Media Coordinator

Rebecca Kern
rebecca.kern(at)manhattan.edu

Website Editor

Camille Reyes
creyes(at)trinity.edu

I've been active in AEJMC for several years now, and I believe my first ever AEJMC affiliated event was a Southeast Colloquium in Auburn, Alabama, more than a decade ago. AEJMC is a wonderful organization, especially because it invites a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives. I have been active in our division for more than five years, and I especially admire the way Cultural and Critical Studies (CCSD) makes space for a plurality of perspectives. I am a case study researcher, an autoethnographer and a textual analyst and I feel fortunate because CCSD has allowed me to develop as a researcher.



It is my hope that our Division is similarly inviting for you. Please let me know how I can help facilitate that process for you. It is my pleasure to do so.

In this issue, you will find a host of engaging information, including a copy of Dr. Henry Giroux's inspiring remarks given in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, at AEJMC '19, information about the AEJMC '20 planning process for San Francisco, Canada, USA, and a variety of other thought-provoking content as well. Our 2019-2020 officers have produced the enclosed content, and I encourage you to reach out to them with your comments and feedback on their strong work. I also welcome you to be in touch with me, if there is anything that I can do to make your experience in our division even better. I am pleased to have weekly office hours from 1-2PM ET every Friday this year. Email <pgloviczki@coker.edu> is the best way to reach me.

Whether you are an undergraduate student, a graduate student, an adjunct faculty member, a tenure-track faculty member or a tenured

Stay connected!

Web: www.aejmc.us/ccs

Facebook: Cultural and Critical Studies Division @ AEJMC

Twitter: @aejmc_ccs

ListServ: Join our email list by contacting Peter Gloviczki: aejmc_ccs@gmail.com

Send us your news!

Your articles and news are welcomed for future editions of CCS NOTES.

Please submit your updates to Jessica Maddox:

jlmaddox@ua.edu.

Attach text in MS Word doc or docx format. Send photos in jpeg format.

faculty member, I hope that our Division continues to be a place in which you feel called to develop, share and engage your scholarly and teaching ideas.

As late Fall arrives in the Carolinas, I am excited for what is ahead. I hope that all is well with you, too. The work that you do to teach, research about and serve across journalism and mass communication is meaningful and important. Thank you all for the work you have done, the work you are doing and the work you will do. Again, I am honored to serve you. I hope you will be in touch, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Every good wish,

Peter

Peter Joseph Gloviczki, PhD

Associate Professor of Communication

Coker University

Head of the Cultural and Critical Studies Division, AEJMC

Henry Giroux Receives 2019 PF&R Award, Selection of 2020 Recipient Underway

*Note from the PF&R Chair
Jeanne S. Criswell*

Henry Giroux—an internationally renowned cultural studies scholar and public intellectual—was presented the Cultural and Critical Studies Division's 2019 Professional Freedom and Responsibility Award at the August AEJMC national conference in Toronto, Ontario.

CCS members honored Giroux for his work in numerous areas. Based at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Giroux is Chair for Scholarship in the Public Interest and the Paulo Freire Distinguished Scholar in Critical Pedagogy. His research



interests include cultural studies, youth studies, popular culture, media studies, and critical education studies. His work focuses on what he calls the war on youth, the neoliberalization and corporatization of higher education and culture more broadly, and youth social movements. He is the author or co-author of more than 65 books, including *The Public in Peril: Trump and the Menace of American Authoritarianism* (2017), *America's Education Deficit and the War on Youth: Reform Beyond Electoral Politics* (2013), *Zombie Politics and Culture in the Age of Casino Capitalism* (2011), and *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education* (1992). Giroux also has authored hundreds of journal articles, delivered more than 250 public lectures, and regularly contributed critical commentaries to news media outlets. He also is director of the Public Intellectuals Project, which provides a forum for academics, students, and other community members to communicate and discuss ideas about political issues of mutual concern. (See <https://www.henrygiroux.com/>)

The award was presented on August 9 at the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel, during the CCSD Members' Meeting, at which Giroux also delivered a presentation on his work. Giroux has graciously allowed his remarks to be published in our newsletter for all to read, and these can be found at the end of the newsletter.



Henry Giroux received the 2019 PF&R Award, presented by 2018-2019 CCSD Division Head Suman Mishra.

Giroux joined some 42 past recipients of the annual PF&R Award, which CCS has for four decades presented to individuals and

Submit to the Midwinter Conference!

Submissions are now be accepted for the **2020 AEJMC Midwinter Conference** at the University of Oklahoma!

March 6-7, 2020, Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Oklahoma

The AEJMC Midwinter Conference is an annual forum for the presentation of research and debate in areas of relevant to the AEJMC groups (divisions, interest groups, and commissions) sponsoring the event. The conference provides a platform for presentations and extended discussions in a relaxed setting.

Paper abstract submissions: Authors are invited to submit research paper abstracts of 600 and 800 words (word count excludes author information and references) appropriate to one of the Divisions of Interest Groups represented at the conference. Abstracts should give a clear sense of relevant literature, research objectives, methodological approach, stage of research project (conceptual, data gathering, data interpreting), findings, and conclusions.

(continued on next page)

organizations demonstrating dedication, courage, leadership or achievement in one or more areas of (1) free expression, (2) ethics, (3) media criticism and accountability, (4) racial, gender and cultural inclusiveness, (5) public service, and (6) equal opportunities for students. (More information on these areas is available on the AEJMC Web site at <http://www.aejmc.org/home/2011/03/ethics-prf/>.) Past winners of the award have included Ben Bagdikian, Molly Ivins, Noam Chomsky, Nina Totenberg, Studs Terkel, James Carey, Bill Moyers, Leonard Pitts Jr., and many others.

The selection process for the 2020 PF&R Award is well underway, and the recipient will be honored at next year's conference in San Francisco. A call for nominations went out Aug. 28 and closed in October. From a slate of nominees, CCS members vote each year for one recipient, and the winner is invited to participate in a special PF&R Award session at the conference.

Insights on the Panel Selection Process

Note from Vice-Head Ruth DeFoster

I have attended the annual AEJMC national conference since my first year of graduate school in 2009, when I went to Boston with several of my cohort to present my first piece of academic research, a cross-cultural analysis of mass shootings in the U.S. And Finland, co-authored with a brilliant colleague who was a Finnish Fulbright Scholar. The experience was exciting and eye-opening. I remember the excitement of meeting scholars from all over the world, and the new experience of attending panels and lectures each day in Boston. At the time, however, I did not know much about the lengthy process that went into the production of this kind of rigorous national academic conference.



As the research chair – and now the Vice-Head – of the Cultural and Critical Studies Division, it has been fascinating to have this

Submit to the Midwinter Conference!

Submissions should be done online and be submitted by **December 1, 2019** at: <http://bit.do/Midwinter2020> or at the full link: <https://cmt3.research.microsoft.com/AEJMCMW2020>

When submitting, follow these steps:

- Go to the conference website (listed above).
- In the "AEJMC Midwinter 2020 Login" box, click on "Sign up here" as a new user if you have not used this service before. Otherwise, just log in using your existing login.
- It will take you to a sign-up wizard, which is self-explanatory and guided. Finish signing up by confirming your email address.
- Once the account is setup, sign in using your email and password.
- To submit the abstract, click on "Create New Paper Submission," and select the division/interest group you want to submit your abstract to.

(continued on next page)

glimpse "behind the curtain," into the hard work that goes into attracting the best and most cutting-edge critical communication research, and ensuring that each submission is carefully reviewed by peers in the correct area of expertise.

This year, in my capacity as Vice-Head, I am responsible for setting up the panel programming for our division, in coordination and cooperation with other divisions. With 18 divisions, 10 interest groups, and two commissions that include members from 50 countries around the world, this is an enormous and labyrinthine task that requires a lot of cooperation and engagement – each division has a certain number of "chips" to expend on programming needs, which are almost always "split" or shared with other divisions.

Consequently, the process of choosing the best and most interesting panels for our division is a question not just of which topics are the strongest and most compelling, but also a question of thinking about which divisions CCSD should partner with in order to be able to offer truly interdisciplinary opportunities for networking and scholarship.

This year, we have several exciting panels lined up for the 2020 conference that will involve the intersection of cultural and critical studies with the Media Ethics, Magazine Media, Public Relations, and History Divisions, as well as the LGBTQ and Entertainment Studies Division and the Commission on the Status of Women.

These panels feature exciting research about everything from accessibility and justice in culinary journalism to questions about methodology, and teaching about race, class and gender in a complex 21st century media landscape.

In CCSD, and in the field of critical and cultural studies as a whole, our work is characterized by cross-cultural, inclusive, and interdisciplinary work, and the process of planning our conference programming this year has underlined how important these connections are. I am excited by the caliber of research and panel submissions we received this year, and I look forward to seeing them in person at the 2020 conference.

Submit to the Midwinter Conference!

- The next step will require you to provide the title of the paper, an abstract (9,000 characters maximum). If your abstract's character count exceeds 9,000 characters, you can also attach it as a Word doc or PDF file. **However, you cannot leave the abstract box empty. Write a brief abstract or keywords for your paper if you choose to upload it as an attachment.**
- Next, you can add additional authors, if there are any. You can add as many as you need.
- Finally, click the submit button to upload the abstract.
- You will get a confirmation message once the submission is completed.
- You can log in to the site at any time to check the status of your submission or if you need to edit something. You can only do this up to the submission deadline of **December 1, 2019, 11:59 p.m. Central Time.** You would not be able to make any changes to your submission after the deadline. **Please do not submit fill papers.** Acceptances will be sent by email in mid-January 2020.
- For more information, please contact Elanie Steyn, Conference Site Host at elanie@ou.edu

Critical Theory in the Field and on the Job

*A Note on Research and Teaching as Praxis from Secretary
Khadija Ejaz*

Fall 2019 has been my first semester at Barry University in Miami Shores, FL. Armed with a brand new doctorate degree from the University of South Carolina, I am now an assistant professor of communication at Barry's department of communication. I teach 3 courses a semester, I advise the student television channel, and continue my service and research responsibilities. And I don't think I have ever heard the phrase "social justice" as many times in as short a period of time as I have at my new institution.



Barry University is a private Catholic university that originally began in 1940 as a women's school. Their most popular programs today – social work, nursing, and education – are a reminder of the school's original emphasis on female empowerment from a time when those were the only fields that employed women. That women's school is now a co-educational university; walk around the campus today, and one can still see evidence of the school's stance on social justice with signs and flyers that loudly declare their activism in climate change, recycling, and gun violence. The campus is very diverse, most of the students are female and not white, and faculty are reminded to incorporate the Dominican ideals of the founders – learn, reflect, serve – into their syllabi.

This is a pleasant surprise for me. I spent my doctoral career immersed in critical theory, a paradigm that still faces resistance in many schools in the United States; most of my time, I clung to my advisor, a scholar of critical cultural studies, and tried to speak the language with others at AEJMC'S Cultural & Critical Studies Division. There just aren't that many of us around...yet critical theory is just as relevant as ever in the world we live today. The

We need reviewers!

Curious about upcoming research in the division? Need to bolster your CV? Do all that when you volunteer to review abstracts for the AEJMC Midwinter 2020 conference. Remember, you'll only be reviewing abstracts and not full-length papers. Enter your information on the following Google form: <https://forms.gle/Lcpymt1Vvhtanhxt5>



paradigm immediately resonated with me the first time I heard about it as a doctoral student; how could it not given my background as an Indian Muslim female who grew up in the Middle East, has lived in North America for two decades, and is married into an Indian Hindu family? My maternal grandfather – a journalist, mufti, and academician – and his companions participated in the Indian struggle for independence and were contemporaries of Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohandas K. Gandhi. All I have ever done my whole life is play hopscotch with all the people, norms, institutions, nations, and ideologies that have power over me and over one another. Of course it makes total sense to me that power would emerge in how we construct knowledge as well.

At the moment, I'm still getting used to the smaller class sizes, the commute, and the paperwork at Barry University. I constantly receive emails from the university about potential service opportunities for students, and I am learning how to incorporate the Dominican practice of "sharing the fruits of one's contemplation over one's knowledge" into my syllabi (I'm not religious, but I can get with that practice). I noticed in my first week that my personal experiences and observations and those of others I have known in my journey keep making their way into my lectures. This has never happened before. I never knew that I had so much to say, and I'm realizing that maybe nobody was really asking me before. Critical theory helps me understand my life and the turbulent world we are all living in; only six weeks into my job, I can't wait to see where it will take me in the future at Barry University.

Honoring our CCSD Mentors

Newsletter chair Jessica Maddox interviews her mentor, Dr. Carolina Acosta-Alzuru

Can you tell me a little bit about your current home institution? What do you teach there? (continued below)

I'm a professor in the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. I've been here 20

Member News

Publications

Chelsea Reynolds has new publication forthcoming in *Communication, Culture, & Critique*: "So far, my zines are less political than other work I've produced": Communicative capitalism among queer feminist zinesters.

Errol Salamon has a new publication out now in *New Media & Society*: Digitizing freelance media labor: A class of workers negotiates entrepreneurialism and activism.

Jessica Maddox has a new publication out now in *Feminist Media Studies*: "Be a badass with a good ass": Race, freakery, and postfeminism in the #StrongIsTheNewSkinny beauty myth.

Awards

Congratulations to **Chelsea Reynolds** for being one of the Department of Communication's recipients of California State University-Fullerton's Outstanding Teaching Award.

years as faculty, but I'm also a Grady grad. I received both my M.A. and Ph.D. from Grady.

At the undergraduate level I teach courses in public relations. At the graduate level, I teach the qualitative methods seminar. I also teach a course that stems from my research: *Telenovelas, Culture, & Society*.

What do you research?

I try to unravel the tight braid that media, culture, and society conform, and for the past 20 years my research has focused on serialized melodramatic content. The bulk of it has been on *telenovelas*. In the past three years, I've included Turkish dramas (*dizis*) because these shows are also watched around the world and are the most serious competition that Latin America telenovelas have encountered in the global market.

Tell me a little bit about your history with AEJMC and CCSD.

My first AEJMC was in Anaheim in 1996. I was a master's student and presented a paper to the CCSD (then called the Qualitative Studies Division). It was not only my first AEJMC, it was my first big conference. I was wide-eyed and a little terrified. By the end of the conference I had learned a ton about my research interests, the Division's struggle to change its name, and AEJMC. I also met scholars that I admired and whose work was already shaping mine.

Have you ever served on the CCSD board? Have you, or do you currently, serve on any committees within AEJMC?

I began my involvement with CCSD when I was a doctoral student. Later I was part of the team that produced the CCSD Newsletter, which was printed and mailed back then. After being involved with the board for a few years, I served as CCSD head in



Top Conference Papers

Top Faculty Papers

1. Korean Popular Culture Consumption as a Way among First and-a-half generation Korean Immigrant Children in the United States to Develop Their Ethnic Identities: **Jiwoo Park**, Northwood University-Michigan
2. Hacking Culture not Code: Qualitative Analysis of How the Russian Government Used Facebook Social Ads During the 2016 Presidential Election: **Bobbie Foster, Johanna Nasrin**, University of Maryland, **Krishnan Vasudevan**, Phillip Merrill College of Journalism, University of Maryland, College Park.
3. Whose Vision Is It? Lessons of European Integration from Advocacy for the Roma in Romania: **Adina Schneeweis**, Oakland University

the period 2005-2006.

Last year I finished my period serving on the AEJMC PF&R Committee, where I chaired the Equality and Diversity Award subcommittee.

Who has been a CCSD mentor to you?

My CCSD mentor was my major professor, Elli Lester Roushazamir. Elli held my hand through my first few AEJMC conference and taught me early on that I should be involved in CCSD. I can't put into words how much I owe Elli. She changed my life.

What was your favorite AEJMC conference to attend? Why was it so special?

This is a tough question because I love going to AEJMC. But, I think AEJMC 2016 in Minneapolis is my favorite because my family was there to see me receive the Scripps Howard-AEJMC Journalism and Mass Communication Teacher of the Year Award. It was a truly special time in which I had the privilege of having family, friends, students, and colleagues with me.

What would be your best advice to new CCSD members or individuals thinking about joining the division?

Definitely join, get involved. You will have insightful conversations and the best sounding board for your research question and thoughts. You won't be alone.



Research Reflections

A personal note on the research process from research co-chair Krishnan Vasudevan

Alternative media such as newsletters, websites and radio shows are essential to



Top Conference Papers

Top Student Papers

1. #WhiteWednesdays, Femonationalism, and Authenticity: A Twitter Discourse Analysis on the role of the Hijab in Feminist Activism: **Sara Shaban**, University of Missouri-Columbia
2. Mapping Representations of the Subaltern: The case of Indigenous Environmental Activists Bertha Caceres & Isidro Baldenegro: **Dominique Montiel Valle**, University of Texas–Austin.
3. The Visual Rhetoric of Disaster: How Bodies are Represented in Newspaper Photographs of Hurricane Harvey: **Ever Figueroa**, University of Texas-Austin

the fabric of social movements. These media forms provide a space for activists and grassroots organizers to not only contest mainstream reporting through their own journalism, but also a canvas through which to cultivate collective voice and shared ideals (Couldry, 2010). In 2017, while producing a film about the emergence of a driver-owned taxi cooperative, my friend Dave Passmore a former Austin-based driver handed me a copy of the *UTCC Voice*.

Since 2008, the *UTCC Voice*, a newsletter written by and for taxi drivers has been crucial to the organizing efforts of the United Taxiworkers Community Council (UTCC) of Chicago. In the years prior, I had been studying the labor struggles of taxi drivers in Austin, during the emergence of transportation network companies such as Uber and Lyft. I was fascinated the *Voice* as this provided another vantage point through to understand how taxi drivers were navigating precarious labor conditions in the current epoch. I found that nearly all of the issues were available on the UTCC's website and I downloaded them. Additionally, I conducted five days of ethnographic fieldwork with the *Voice's* editorial team in late 2018. I conducted a grounded analysis to understand what taxi drivers wrote about in the *Voice* and three key findings emerged. I employed Couldry's (2010) construct of voice and Hall's (1990) construct of "cultural identity" as a way to situate the grounded findings. The newsletter provides a space for both original reporting and commentary on issues such as violence against taxi drivers and labor exploitation by the taxi industry, that drivers in the *Voice* felt were unreported by mainstream local media. I described how this is illustrative of how voice is both an embodied process and a form of "reflexive agency." The *Voice* was also a crucial recruitment tool for the UTCC and featured photographs of its members with local politicians and national labor organizations to show that the UTCC was a well-networked, successful organization worth joining.

Finally, I found that the newsletter serves a space for alternative cultural representation about taxi drivers that contests dominant stereotypes. The newsletter featured personal essays, obituaries and art by taxi drivers that presented them as caring parents, spouses, citizens rather than as deviant *Others*.

This research titled, "Taxi Drivers as Reporters: Studying the Distinctive Journalism of the UTCC Voice Newsletter," was first presented at a paper session of the CCSD at the 2018 AEJMC annual meeting and a revised version was recently published in *Journalism Studies*. I am following up this research by examining taxi organizing in other cities and will publish a documentary in 2020 titled *One Driver, One Mic* that chronicles the efforts of a group of immigrant taxi drivers to start their own driver-owned cooperative.

Teaching the late shift

Teaching chair Chelsea Reynolds reflects on academic life as a night owl

Have you ever worked with a Department Chair that deeply understood your teaching needs? It's a treat. I knew my boss was a good one when he offered to lock me into an evening teaching schedule. Between Southern California commuter traffic and my aversion to early mornings, teaching the "late shift" was a gift.



Here are five reasons why teaching after 4 p.m. makes academic life endlessly more pleasant:

1) Your mornings are reserved for research

I've never been someone who can jump out of bed at 7 a.m. That's why I'm not cut out for a 9-to-5. Now that my office hours start after 1 p.m., I'm able to lounge at home all morning working on my writing, grading, or e-mails. Believe me: There's nothing like responding to an R&R while drinking coffee in your PJs. And having some scheduled alone time every morning makes me feel centered before my long commute.

2) Long classes let you cover more ground

If you've met me in real life, you know I talk a mile a minute. Yet I still find myself rushing through content in 50-minute lectures held three days a week. Night classes, on the other hand, are scheduled in three-hour blocks once a week. My skills workshops and critical-cultural lectures both seem to "run" better when students are offered more time to grasp each lesson's content. An added bonus: you can actually screen and discuss a full-length feature film in a night class.

3) Nontraditional students take night classes

The journalist in me loves working with students who have unique life stories. I'm guaranteed to meet those pupils when I teach a night class. Most of my evening enrollees have full-time jobs, parenting responsibilities, or other obligations that keep them off campus during the day. And at my university, graduate seminars are universally scheduled at night.

4) You can avoid departmental drama

Did I mention that I'm rarely on campus before 1 p.m.? That means I've missed at least half of the daily gossip by the time I open my office door. For a sensitive extrovert like myself, this helps me protect my emotional energy so I can put my best foot forward where it matters: In the classroom.

5) Your day is over after class

When I taught daytime lectures, there was always work to do after class was dismissed. Only one problem: Class leaves me totally beat. Rather than rush to my house for a midday nap, now I'm able to leave work confident that I can put my laptop down for good as soon as I get home. Whether I want to cook dinner, grab a drink with a friend, or just hit the hay, I know I'll have the following morning to play catch-up.

A Summer Field Note

Graduate co-chair Yidong (Steven) Wang reflects on his international ethnography

It was very hot a summer in Beijing. It took me an hour to commute to Liufang Station from my home. I usually bought

an iced tea from the 7-Eleven inside of the subway station to cool off. Two major Chinese LGBT organizations, Beijing LGBT Center and Common Language, resided in a tall office building right by the station. I visited their offices several times and interviewed their staff as part of the summer fieldwork for my project on queer media ecology. These two organizations were located at the heart of Dongcheng District, an area with the most vibrant LGBT communities in Beijing.



This was the first time I conducted fieldwork in my home city, and with a community of which I considered myself a member. I got edgy—the iced tea was also to calm my nerve. I wanted to do this right and was more than a little bit ambitious to contribute to my community in a meaningful way, academically. Then I was told that as a researcher, I entered the field with baggage. As the “representatives” of the community, i.e., the accessible sources for media and academics, these LGBT organizations had been asked so many times for “collaboration.” They rarely heard back from their academic collaborators after completing their part of the deal, a staffer told me. I floundered when the staffer asked me what my research results would be like and how they should present the relevance of those results to the community. In the academic world, these questions are often asked after we have collected the data and messed with the community. And very few people would hold us accountable for serious answers to these questions.

The deeper I was into the fieldwork, the more I understood that my informants were not being harsh on me. The question of relevance was what they asked themselves all the time. Who are my community? Where do they live? What do they do in their spare time? Do we cater too much to the urban elite? They are who can most likely afford to participate in the queer visibility we create. Do we hit the balance between

transnational appeal and local needs? We get our money from foreign embassies and multinational companies, as the local government rejects us public funding. In a scorching summer afternoon, who would travel across the city to attend a hundred-dollar fundraising party hosted in English half of the time?

I am visiting Beijing again this winter to do follow-up fieldwork. Among teaching and school duties, I struggle to find the time for preparing something public-facing to share with my community partners. It has been inspiring and rewarding to work with a community intimate to me, although the intimacy sometimes hurts.

Rethinking the Normalization of Fascism in the Post-Truth Era

*Remarks from our 2019 PF&R Henry A. Giroux
August 7, 2019, Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

INTRODUCTION—I want to begin by saying how deeply honored I am to receive the Personal Responsibility Award, particularly at a time in which journalists can and have played a crucial role in both educating people against the emerging increase in right-wing populism and exhibiting the civic courage necessary to understand how power works in our time. Civic courage does not come easy and many journalists have been killed in their pursuit of uncovering injustices and holding power accountable. In 2018 alone, 53 journalists have been killed, with one of the most notorious cases being Jamal Khashoggi. We live at a time in which free speech, critical inquiry, and democracy itself are under siege. In this historical moment, it is impossible to say enough about the important role that journalists can and have played in fighting against injustices and the rise of authoritarianism across the globe. In what follows, I want to talk about my work on fascist politics and the growing elements of extreme capitalism, which I call neoliberal fascism, which is attacking the most fundamental elements of democracy. In doing so, I will stress the central role that education now plays in politics, not only as part of a language

of critique but also as a discourse of possibility that allows us to imagine a better world. Finally, I want to dedicate this talk to those brave journalists who trade in conviction, truth, and courage across the globe.

Talk of a fascist politics emerging in the United States is often criticized as either a naive exaggeration or a failure to acknowledge the strength of liberal institutions. Yet, the case can be made that rather than harbor an element of truth, such criticism further normalizes the very fascism it critiques, allowing the extraordinary and implausible to become ordinary. After decades of the neoliberal nightmare both in the United States and abroad, the mobilizing passions of fascism have been unleashed unlike anything we have seen since the 1930s. The architects and managers of extreme capitalism have used the crisis of economic inequality and its “manifestly brutal and exploitative arrangements” to sow social divisions and resurrect the discourse of racial cleansing and white supremacy. In doing so, they have not only tapped into the growing collective suffering and anxieties of millions of Americans in order to redirect their anger and despair through a culture of fear and discourse of dehumanization, they have also turned critical ideas to ashes by disseminating a toxic mix of racialized categories, ignorance, and a militarized spirit of white nationalism. While there is no perfect fit between Trump and the fascist societies of Mussolini, Hitler, and Pinochet, “the basic tenets of extreme nationalism, racism, misogyny, and a hatred for democracy and the rule of law are too similar to ignore.



In this instance, neoliberalism and fascism conjoin and advance in a comfortable and mutually compatible project and movement that connects the exploitative values and cruel austerity policies of casino capitalism” with fascist ideals. Such ideals include: the veneration of war, anti-intellectualism; dehumanization; a populist celebration of ultra-nationalism and racial purity; the suppression of freedom and dissent; a culture of lies; a politics of hierarchy, the spectacularization of emotion over reason, the weaponization of language; and a discourse of decline, and state violence in heterogeneous forms. Fascism is never entirely interred in the past and the conditions that produce its central assumptions, are with us once again, ushering in a period of modern barbarity that appears to be reaching towards homicidal extremes.

The urgency of addressing the rise of fascism both in the United States and abroad might begin with the regime of untruth and manufactured illiteracy that allows and helps normalize the catastrophic conditions that make neoliberal fascism a potent source of identity, fantasy, pleasure, and investment. One place to

start, and many journalists do this, would be a critical analysis of the Trump administration's efforts to abandon and discredit traditional sources of evidence, facts, and analysis in its attempt to normalize fake news, a culture of lying, and the world of alternative facts. At stake here is making visible a radically altered relationship between the public and truth and the ensuing demise of civic culture and the public institutions that make it possible. As the public's grip on civic literacy weakens, language is emptied of any substantive meaning and the shared standards necessary for developing informed judgements and sustained convictions are undermined. In a world where nothing is true, all that is left to choose from are competing fictions. One consequence is that everything begins to look like a lie. Of course, there is more at stake here than the creation and normalization of a culture of lying, there is also the threat to democracy itself.

We do not live in a post-truth world and never have. On the contrary, we live in a pre-truth world where the truth has yet to arrive. As one of the primary currencies of politics, lies have a long history in the United States. For instance, state sponsored lies played a crucial ideological role in pushing the US into wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, legitimated the use of Torture under the Bush administration, and covered up the crimes of the financial elite in producing the economic crisis of 2008. Moreover, we have been living the lie of neoliberalism and systemic racism for over forty years and because of the refusal to face up to such lies, the United States has slipped into the abyss of an updated American version of fascism of which Trump is a both symptom and endpoint.

Under Trump, lying has become a rhetorical gimmick in which everything that matters politically is denied, reason loses its power for informed judgments, and language serves to infantilize and depoliticize as it offers no room for individuals to translate private troubles into broader systemic considerations. Truth is now mobile making it easier to deny even a modicum of rational judgment while reinventing a fascist politics that echoes the past and allows the "intrusion of criminality into politics." Post-truth is a pedagogical tool of deflection that as the novelist Toni Morrison points out functions "like a coma on the population" imposing misery and traumas so deep and cruel that they kill the moral imagination and "purge democracy of all of its ideals.

As the politics of lying moves from the margins to the center of power, Trump's fake news industry wields enormous political and pedagogical power while at the same time accelerating and normalizing and endless stream of fake news and misrepresentations, wrapped in a kind of dystopian legitimacy. Trump's attack on the truth wages a war against the ethical imagination, privatizes experiences, and resonates with a larger culture of speed, instant gratification, and consumerism. Coupled with a society that worships celebrity culture, the spectacularization of power and the masculinization of the public sphere make it easier for Trump and his associates to rehabilitate fascist ideas, principles, and a fascist political culture.

At a time of growing fascist movements across the globe, power, culture, politics, finance, and everyday life now merge in ways that are unprecedented and pose a threat to democracies all over the world. As cultural apparatuses are concentrated in the hands of the ultra-rich, the educative force of culture has taken on a powerful anti-democratic turn. This can be seen in the rise of new digitally driven systems of



production and consumption that produce, shape, and sustain ideas, desires, and social relations that contribute to the disintegration of democratic social bonds and promote a form of social Darwinism. Under such circumstances, misfortune is seen as a weakness and the Hobbesian rule of a 'war of all against all' replaces any vestige of shared responsibility and compassion for others.

The entrepreneurs of hate are no longer confined to the dustbin of history, specifically the proto fascist era of 1930s and 1940s. They are with us once again producing dystopian fantasies out of the decaying communities and landscapes produced by forty years of a savage capitalism. White male rage has emerged out of the destruction of social bonds and the **gutting of the** welfare state and intensified with the neoliberal unleashing of destructive energies of "deracination, displacement, and disintegration." Angry white male loners looking for a cause, a place to put their agency into play, are fodder for cult leaders. They have found one in Trump for whom the relationship

between the language of fascism and its toxic worldview of "blood and soil" and the "fear of inferior blood" has moved to the center of power in the United States.

Fascism first begins with language and then gains momentum as an organizing force for shaping a culture that legitimates indiscriminate violence against entire groups -- Black people, immigrants, Jews, Muslims and others considered "disposable." In this vein, Trump portrays his critics as "villains," describes immigrants as "losers" and "criminals," and has become a national mouthpiece for violent nationalists and a myriad of extremists who trade in hate and violence. One recent example can be found in the Trump-like language used in the manifesto posted by the El Paso shooter. Using a rhetoric of revulsion as a performance strategy and media show to whip up his base, Trump employs endless rhetorical tropes of bigotry and demonization that set the tone for real violence.

There are historical precedents for this collapse of language into a form of coded militarism and racism -- the anti-Semitism couched in critiques of globalization and the call for racial and social cleansing aligned with the discourse of borders and walls. Echoes of history resonate in this assault on minority groups, **the use of** racist taunts, and twisted references that code a belief in racial purity, and legitimate attacks on and possible criminal action against those who do not mirror the twisted notions of white supremacy.

In an age when civic literacy and efforts to hold the powerful accountable for their actions are dismissed as "fake news," ignorance is no longer innocent. That is, a manufactured ignorance becomes the breeding ground not just for hate, but for a culture that represses historical memory, shreds any understanding of the importance of shared values, refuses to make tolerance a non-negotiable element of civic dialogue and allows the powerful to weaponize everyday discourse. While Trump has been portrayed as a serial liar, it would be a mistake to view this pathology as a matter of character. Lying for Trump is a tool of power

used to discredit any attempt to hold him accountable for his actions while destroying those public spheres and institutional foundations necessary for the possibility of a democratic politics. At the heart of Trump's world of lies, fake news, and alternative facts is a political regime that trades in corruption, the accumulation of capital, and promotes lawlessness, all of which provides the foundation for a neoliberalism on steroids that now merges with an unabashed celebration of white nationalism. The post-truth era constitutes both a crisis of politics and a crisis of history, memory, agency, and education. It is worth reiterating that this new era of barbarism cannot be understood or addressed without *a reminder* that fascism has once again crystalized into new forms and has become a model for the present and future. Trump's language and policies are best understood as a contemporary remnant of the fascist imagination.

Fantasies of absolute control, racial cleansing, unchecked militarism, and class warfare are at the heart of an American imagination that has turned lethal. This is a dystopian imagination marked by hollow words, an imagination pillaged of any substantive meaning, cleansed of compassion, and used to legitimate the notion that alternative worlds are impossible to entertain. What we are witnessing is a shrinking of the political and moral horizons and a full-scale attack on justice, thoughtful reasoning, and collective resistance. Such anti-democratic tendencies create new and urgent challenges for journalists, educators, and other to speak out about important social issues with a deep sense of commitment and courage.

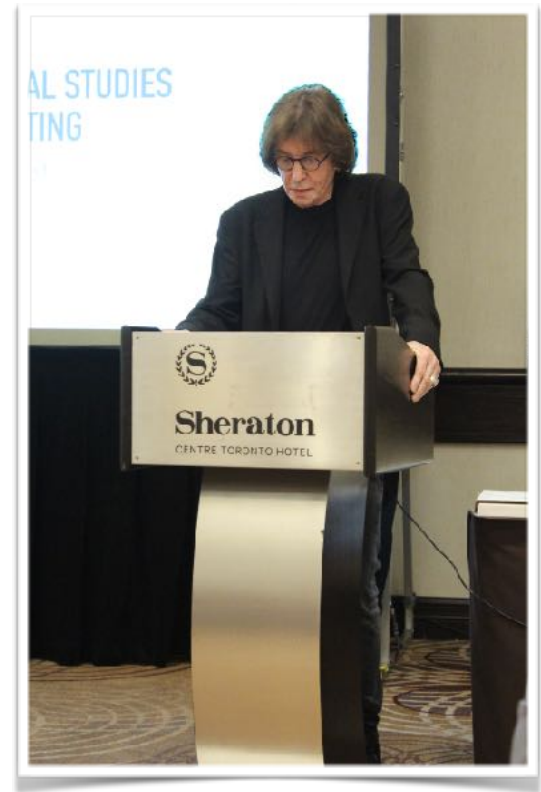
Under the current reign of neoliberal fascism, politics extends beyond the attack on any vestige of truth, informed judgments, and constructive means of communication. There is more at work here than the need to decode and analyze Trump's language as a tool for misrepresenting reality and shielding corrupt practices and policies that benefit major corporations, the military, and the ultra-rich. There is also a worldview, a mode of hegemony, which comes out of a fascist playbook, and translates into dangerous policies and potentially violent acts. This is evident in Trump's attacks on dissent and his support for the use of violence against journalists and politicians who are critical of his views. One such example can be found in his critique of members of the Democratic Party whom he labeled as the radical left. Not only did he hurl a McCarthyite slur at them, he also implied in one instance that one response to their opposition might be violence. In addition, he has attacked with racist rhetoric black athletes and Congresswomen of color, as well as black newscasters, suggesting they have low intelligence and in the case of Ilhan Omar stating she was both an Al Qaida supporter and had married her brother. There is more at work here than infantilizing schoolyard threats. We have seen too many instances where Trump's followers have beaten critics, attacked journalists, and shouted down any form of critique aimed at Trump's policies — to say nothing of the army of trolls unleashed on intellectuals and journalist critical of the administration.

Trump aligns himself with a number of ruthless dictators and appears to glow in their presence all the while heaping insults on America's allies such as Canada. Trump's fans include a number of white nationalists and white supremacists, who have been involved in recent killings, the most recent being in El Paso, Texas. Patrick Crusius, the El Paso gunman, published online a white nationalist screed that

echoes numerous racist and xenophobic views aimed at Hispanics. Crusius argues that white people are at risk of genocide and that people of color will replace them. Trump may not be directly responsible for this horrendous crime but he has used his Twitter account to refer to an “invasion” of migrants at the southern border, condemned Mexican immigrants as “rapists,” and Syrian refugees as “snakes.” Moreover, his rhetoric in support of walls and borders is not about security but a symbol of unadulterated nativism. Of course, Trump does not just fan the flames of violence with his rhetoric, he also provides legitimation to a number of white nationalists and right-wing extremists groups who are emboldened by his words and actions and too often ready to translate their hatred into the desecration of synagogues, schools, and other public sites as well as engage in violence against peaceful protesters, and in some cases commit heinous acts of violence.

Trump is the endpoint of a malady that has been growing for decades. What is different about Trump is that he basks in his role and is unapologetic about enacting policies that further enable the looting of the country by the ultra-rich (including him) and by mega-corporations. He embodies with unchecked bravado the sorts of sadistic impulses that could condemn generations of children to a future of misery and in some cases state terrorism. He loves people who believe that politics is undermined by anyone who has a conscience, and he promotes and thrives in a culture of violence and cruelty. Trump is not refiguring the character of democracy, he is destroying it, and in doing so, resurrecting all the elements of a fascist politics that many people thought would never re-emerge again after the horrors and death inflicted on millions by **previous** fascist dictators. Trump represents an emergence of the ghost of the past and we should be terrified of what is happening both in the United States and in other countries such as Brazil, Poland, Turkey, and Hungary. Trump’s ultra-nationalism, racism, policies aimed at social cleansing, and his hatred of democracy echoes a period in history when the unimaginable became possible, when genocide was the endpoint of dehumanizing others, and the mix of nativist and nationalist rhetoric ended in the horrors of the camp. The world is at war once again, it is a war against democracy, and Trump is at the forefront of it.

Trump represents a distinctive and dangerous form of American-bred authoritarianism, but at the same time he is the outcome of a past that needs to be remembered, analyzed, and engaged for the lessons it can teach us about the present. Not only has Trump “normalized the unspeakable” and in some cases the unthinkable, he has also forced us to ask questions we have never asked before about capitalism, power, politics, and, yes, courage itself. In part, this means recovering a language for politics, civic life, the public good, citizenship, and justice that has real substance. One challenge is to confront the horrors of casino capitalism and its transformation into a form of fascist politics under Trump. As Fred Jameson has



suggested such a revolution cannot take place by limiting our choices to a fixation on the “impossible present.” Nor can it take place by limiting ourselves to a language of critique and a narrow focus on individual issues.

What is needed is also a language of militant possibility and a comprehensive politics that draws from history, rethinks the meaning of politics, and imagines a future that does not imitate the present. We need what Gregory Leffel calls a language of “imagined futures,” one that “can snap us out of present-day socio-political malaise so that we can envision alternatives, build the institutions we need to get there and inspire heroic commitment.” Such a language has to create political formations capable of understanding neoliberal fascism as a totality, a single integrated system whose shared roots extend from class and racial injustices under financial capitalism to ecological problems and the increasing expansion of the carceral state and the military-industrial-academic complex. William Faulkner once remarked that we live with the ghosts of the past or to be more precise: “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.” Such a task is all the more urgent given that Trump is living proof that we are once again living with the ghosts of a dark past. However, it is also true that the ghosts of history can be critically engaged and transformed into a radical democratic politics for the future. The Nazi regime was more than a frozen moment in history. It is a warning from the past and a window into the growing threat Trumpism poses to democracy. The ghosts of fascism should terrify us, but most importantly, they should educate us and imbue us with a spirit of civic justice and collective action in the fight for a substantive and inclusive democracy.

The dark shadow of authoritarianism may be spreading, but it can be stopped. In addition, that prospect raises serious questions about what educators, youth, intellectuals, journalists, and other cultural workers are going to do today to make sure that they do not succumb to the authoritarian forces spreading across the globe, waiting for the resistance to stop and for the lights to go out. My friend, the late Howard Zinn rightly insisted that hope is the willingness “to hold out, even in times of pessimism, the possibility of surprise.” To add to this eloquent plea, I would say that his is open and that it is time to think otherwise in order to act otherwise, especially **if as** journalists and educators we want to imagine and fight for alternative futures and horizons of possibility—we need to stoke the civic imagination to make sure that justice never goes dead in us and that no society is ever just enough. Thank you.

Notes on the Remarks:

- Paul Gilroy, *Against Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 139
- Curtis Johnson, “The Momentum of Trumpian Fascism is Building: Stopping it is Up to US,” *Truthout* (July 25, 2018). Online: <https://truthout.org/articles/the-momentum-of-trumpian-fascism-is-building-stopping-it-is-up-to-us/>
- Paul Gilroy, *Against Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 139.
- Paul Gilroy, *Against Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 139.
- Chiara Bottici in Cihan Aksan and Jon Bailes, eds. “One Question Fascism (Part One), “Is Facism making a comeback?” *State of Nature Blog*, [December 3, 2017]. Online: <http://stateofnatureblog.com/one-question-fascism-part-one/>

- Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*, (New York: Integrated Publishing Solutions, 2006), pp. 154-155.
- Toni Morrison, *The Source of Self-Regard: Selected Essays, Speeches, and Meditations* (New York: Knopf, 2019), p.vii
- Wendy Brown and Jo Littler, “Where the fires are: An interview with Wendy Brown,” *Eurozine*, [April 18, 2018.] Online: <https://www.eurozine.com/where-the-fires-are/>
- Glenn Kessler, Salvador Rizzo, and Meg Kelly, “President Trump has made 9,014 false or misleading claims over 773 days,” *The Washington Post* (March 4, 2019). Online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/03/04/president-trump-has-made-false-or-misleading-claims-over-days/?utm_term=.6e791f431791
- Sasha Abramsky, “How Trump Has Normalized the Unspeakable,” *The Nation* (September 2, 2017). Online: <https://www.thenation.com/article/how-trump-has-normalized-the-unspeakable/>
- Gregory Leffel, “Is Catastrophe the only cure for the weakness of radical politics?” *Open Democracy*, [January 21, 2018]. Online: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/gregory-leffel/is-catastrophe-only-cure-for-weakness-of-radical-politics>
- Gregory Leffel, “Is Catastrophe the only cure for the weakness of radical politics?” *Open Democracy* [January 21, 2018]. Online: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/is-catastrophe-only-cure-for-weakness-of-radical-politics/>
- For an analysis of the origins of fascism in American capitalism, see Michael Joseph Roberto, *The Coming of the American Behemoth* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2019).