

**SPECIAL ISSUE - CALL FOR PAPERS**

# Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies

A Journal of the National Communication Association

## Cultural Studies of Rights: Critical Articulations

**Special Issue Editor: John Nguyet Erni**



**In this special issue, we hope to explore a central question: in the (re)turn to both distributive and recognition justice, how will cultural studies and critical communication studies critically articulate with human rights as a global professional, interdisciplinary, and humanitarian practice?**

There are two conjunctural developments that help us to ascertain the significance of a necessary encounter between cultural studies and human rights. First, the new and persistent atrocities linked to state and inter-state violence, including prison torture, poverty, epidemics, (war on) terrorism, genocide, and various forms of exploitation in global capitalism, have precipitated new social movements that act in concert with international human rights law.

To these movements, cultural studies has had limited institutional, dialogic, or procedural connection/collaboration. Second, from a communication perspective, the legal field of human rights has been engaging in a critical response to judicial and extra-judicial reform issues at the national and international levels through deconstructive tactics. Some have explicitly or implicitly referenced the theories and practices associated with cultural studies and communication, and thus offered a critical reassessment of theories of power, governmentality, subject formation, and institutions. In turn, however, cultural studies and communication have advanced with only a marginal (if often skeptical) concern with the theory of "rights" within cultural struggles. In this special issue, we hope to consider the conditions of possibility, theoretically as well as strategically, for overcoming the apparent non-correspondence between culture/communication and rights, or between culture/communication and law.

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We seek essays that consider any of the following possibilities:

- engaging with a range of international debates about, and critiques of, human rights from a critical cultural studies perspective
- considering the advantages, limitations, and paradoxes brought about by the theoretical and strategic possibilities of inserting human rights legal discourse into cultural studies and communication studies
- developing a critical assessment of selected areas of scholarship relevant to the human rights study of speech, visibility, gender, sexuality, ethnic nationalism, intersectionality, and so on
- considering how rights can be promoted, and violations monitored and challenged, through an analysis of the institutional arrangements and procedures that give rise to various forms of political identities, actors, events, and outcomes
- theorizing the notion of “normative power” and its associated benchmarkable standards of justice, which might be put to pragmatic use for the benefit of the injured
- remapping the various institutional sites of power that influence rights, and therefore expanding our scope of analysis to include the police, the courts, constitutions, and comparative law
- considering how we can work with those sites of power to open up a space for a counter-hegemonic challenge, for building up capillary power in Foucault’s sense
- envisaging critical work that orients more toward the advancement of cases rather than projects. In other words, how can we bring cases of injustice to somewhere relevant? Can cultural studies find its way into institutional spaces where cases can be heard, and not merely critiqued and deconstructed?

**In sum, we hope that this special issue will be an opportunity for us to ask: how can cultural critique as a political exercise move us to an intellectual condition for an advancement of actionable justice, backed by institutional analysis and participation? Or, how can we move from projects of “resistance to” into cases of “resistance for”?**

Essays will be no more than 9,000 words, written with Chicago style. Authors are requested to send **ONLY** an abstract of 500-1000 words to the special issue editor via email (johnerni@ln.edu.hk) by **May 31, 2009**. The special issue editor will sort out all submissions and then invite those suitable for the special issue to submit full-length papers. Send all inquiries and submissions to Special Issue Editor:

John Nguyet Erni, Professor  
Department of Cultural Studies,  
Lingnan University,  
Tun Muen, N.T.,  
Hong Kong,  
Email: [johnerni@ln.edu.hk](mailto:johnerni@ln.edu.hk)