

Call for Papers

Communication in Crisis

Conference hosted by the Graduate Program in Communication

University of Massachusetts at Amherst

March 31-April 1, 2006

Keynote Speaker: Mark Crispin Miller, New York University

The new millennium thus far has been characterized by political, cultural, social, and environmental crises. Divisions and hostilities, born of transnational, domestic, and intercultural crises, have engendered contemporary scenes of communication that range from the repressive to the cathartic. This conference proposes to critically examine the notion of "crisis" as it shapes the study and practices of communication, and as it can be shaped by and through communication. We seek to explore the strategies of engagement with crisis employed outside of the discipline of Communication, as well as the ruptures that crises potentially engender within the discipline.

In times of crisis, we must ask: How are barriers imposed on the practices and outlets of human communication, and does crisis itself contain the potential for expanding, rather than limiting, the free flow of expression? How can lessons learned through the study of communication be applicable to moments of crisis, past and present, in political, economic, racial, ethnic, and sexual contexts? On what basis does one determine moral and/or ethical crisis in the first place? Is the scholarly tradition of disinterested investigation and reflection viable, or desirable, in the face of widespread crisis? Once crisis is identified, what forms of social action are effective, if any? In the context of crisis, are the theories and methods of Communication flexible, or are they in need of reconceptualization?

We invite submissions that interrogate the notion of "communication in crisis" from a variety of perspectives and areas of study: film, media, and cultural studies; critical theory and philosophy; social interaction; race, gender and sexuality; cultural policy and political economy; intercultural communication; rhetorical studies; critical pedagogy. Through critical interrogation of the notion of "crisis" we hope to generate productive responses to questions of theory and method, politics and culture facing communication scholars today.

Possible topics for investigation include, but are not limited to:

- crisis of representation and of recognition
- crisis in understanding across cultural boundaries
- crisis in the presence or absence of memory
- identity crisis (individual, institutional, cultural, ideological, national)
- crisis in academic freedom and purpose
- representations of crisis
- crisis in community (regional, national, imagined)
- crisis of progressives in the face of moral discourse
- crisis in the formation/deformation of public spheres
- crisis and its rhetorical frames

- commodification of crisis
- crisis of faith in institutions (political, religious, pedagogical, legal)
- crisis of cultural studies in addressing both the mainstream and the margins

Please submit abstracts of up to 250 words by January 6, 2006. Inquiries and abstracts should be sent to: conference@comm.umass.edu

Conference Organizing Committee
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