Proposal for Department of Media & Cultural Studies

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Introduction

In the late 1950s, C. Wright Mills wrote of communications as part of the powerful “cultural apparatus,” by means of which knowledge of the world is “organized and compared, maintained and revised, lost and found, celebrated and debunked” (1959, 175). Two decades later, Stuart Hall described the central role of media in constructing social knowledge and producing consensus through the process of “actively ruling in and ruling out certain realities” (1979, 341). Today, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, people worldwide are creating, circulating and consuming media signals and artifacts on a scale Mills could have scarcely imagined a half century ago. This extraordinary media saturation of contemporary existence is precisely what makes the study of media, culture and communications so central to understanding and navigating an increasingly globally connected world and our places in it.

We are proposing the creation of a new Department of Media and Cultural Studies at CU-Boulder that would be dedicated to examining ways of thinking about and conducting research into the intersection of media, communication and cultural practices in historical and contemporary perspective. Encompassing humanistic, social scientific, and artistic approaches to the study of media and culture and interdisciplinary in its theoretical and methodological approaches, the department would span traditional boundaries between theory and practice. It would foster media “literacy” in the broadest sense by providing students with the critical skills to analyze contemporary media and culture, along with technical, aesthetic and intellectual principles that facilitate strong media practices.

We envision the department being lodged within a new College or School dedicated to the advancement of critical inquiry and creative practice across the areas of communication, media, journalism, advertising and design, digital art/textuality, information science and their related technologies. The new College/School would be characterized by porous boundaries—among its own units, with units in other colleges and schools on the Boulder campus, with publics in Colorado, nationally, and transnationally, and among colleges and universities nationally and globally. It would foster collaboration and interdisciplinarity across participating faculty, departments, programs and fields, yet also value their distinct theoretical, methodological and pedagogical traditions.

Historical and critical in its orientation, the Department of Media and Cultural Studies would emphasize creative analysis and research into traditional and emerging forms of media, with a strong related interest in facilitating informed media practice and production. Research and curriculum would focus on the forms, practices, institutions, economics, politics and social implications of media (i.e., radio, film, television, photography, print, digital and electronic),
both domestic and global, with particular emphasis on media of the modern and contemporary period.

We recognize that the campus administration is still deliberating and has yet to announce decisions about plans for a new College, but a series of increasingly focused decisions and activities have taken place thus far that lead us to assume that a new School/College dealing with media, communication, and cultural and socio-technical dimensions of information technology is highly likely. Among the key developments that inform our impression of the sustained commitment that the campus administration has made to create such a new School/College (hereafter called a College) have been the discontinuance of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, a decision which Chancellor DiStefano placed in the context of his public statements announcing the likely creation of a new School/College that is focused on media, communication and information; the commissioning of the ICT Exploratory Committee and the ICJMT Steering Committee; and the upcoming campus visits by prominent scholars from a range of disciplines that may be represented, all or in part, inside the new College.

In what we propose below, we borrow especially from the ICJMT Steering Committee’s report, which in turn was inspired to a significant degree by the report of the ICT Exploratory Committee. In doing so, we do not advocate necessarily for the structural configuration of a new College that the ICJMT report proposes, but we embrace a number of ideas found in that report. Specifically, our proposal is inspired by the “Educational Aims” emphasized in the ICJMT report, including the focus on a liberal arts core curriculum, media fluency/literacy, and collaborative, project-centered learning.

The “Vision Statement” of the ICJMT report emphasizes a new College that builds and maintains strong connections between theory and practice through the design, production and study of various forms of human communication and expression (artistic, journalistic, social, political) which are objectives that we believe should be embraced across all units in whatever new College is created, and certainly it would animate the sort of Media and Cultural Studies (MCS) department that we propose. At the same time, we believe that the proposed MCS department would contribute a significant portion of the theoretical capacity of the College.

**Key areas of research and pedagogy in Media and Cultural Studies**

Contemporary media are rich tools of creative expression that are situated within a complex range of technological, cultural, political and economic forces and social relations. Media institutions and digital media technologies are the primary means by which much of the news, entertainment, and artistic creation consumed throughout the world are produced, and they serve as central means for maintaining increasingly dense webs of social networks.

The Department of Media and Cultural Studies (MCS) that we propose would encompass humanistic, social scientific, and artistic approaches to the study of mediated communication, with an emphasis on its political, economic and cultural relevance. Communications media constitute some of the most ubiquitous and powerful social formations of the modern world. It is of world-historical significance that, in this historical moment, there are many ways in which the capabilities of media practitioners, both professional and amateur, are able to shape and
influence the values and behaviors of national and global populations far beyond the scope of even the most powerful governments. These new capabilities warrant sustained and focused study, and that is why most of the leading universities in the world have been making significant investments in Media Studies. Just as the discipline of Political Science grew to a large extent out of a felt need to understand, explain, predict and control the behavior of government institutions, we can see a similar collective consciousness and gradual disciplinary and interdisciplinary formation that has emerged in response to the growth and power of media institutions. When an inconvenient image that exposes the brutality of a government against its citizens goes viral on a global scale, there is little that officials can do but endure the shame and loss of legitimacy, and, under the best of circumstances, respond by making positive changes. The cultural footprint, so to speak, of media institutions, practices, policies and audiences bows to no national flag, and indeed because of this media and cultural studies are central to research about global culture and politics. The power and reach of media, and of citizens who use them in pursuit of their interests, is without question, and these facts alone are warrant for the sort of disciplinary and interdisciplinary support that we are advocating at CU-Boulder.

 Appropriately, the new department would emphasize the transnational and global nature and impact of media, film, communication and information technologies and institutions, both at the level of production (transnational co-production of film, TV, games, net/art, literature or forms of textuality) and consumption and reception practices, and how increasingly dense networks of mediated communication are essential to vital social processes of social mobilization (e.g., online organizing is thought to have been fundamental to the recent overthrow of the Tunisian presidency), the development of various communities of interest, the maintenance of ethnic and religious identities, and much else. The college would also encompass multiple “architectonic” conceptual pathways for exploring such phenomena—e.g., from the perspectives of communication, information, organization, design, and performance.

What follows is a list of what are key areas of media and cultural studies, worldwide, some of which are the object of study by media studies faculty in CU’s JMC program and about which they teach, some of which represent areas of expertise among faculty in other units on campus, and some of which are areas we advocate developing through new hiring.

**Media & cultural representations**

- The production and circulation of meaning and values through the media
- Media and the construction of social and cultural identities
- Aesthetics and forms of media
- Visual media & culture

**Media & audiences**

- Survey research on media users/creators
- Ethnographic approaches to studying media use in everyday life
- Social impact of media on public opinion and culture

**Political economy of media & information**

- History of media and communication technologies
Changing industry structures
Media as means of public participation and deliberation
Impact of emerging technologies on culture & economy
Technological convergence and digital multimedia innovation

Policy studies
Media law and regulation
Commerce and regulation of media in the public sphere
Telecommunications policy
Media and cultural policy
Information policy

Global media & culture
Media globalization & global media flows
Media and national development
Media and cultural diaspora

The proposed MCS department would focus on research and pedagogy about the cultural industries, media texts (television, film, radio, web-based, traditional print, and converged platforms), media audiences, and media policies. It is true that many, if not all, of the media studies faculty have research interests that are deeply concerned with questions about how technologies are shaped and how technologies affect communication and culture, but questions of technology are not identical to questions about “media” and “mediation” in the broader sense of a set of institutional formations, practices, and forms of representation. Rather, media technologies, both traditional and emerging, are but one piece of a larger puzzle about the processes and cultural significance of mediated communication.

Media literacy and storytelling

Two of the most basic pedagogical features of the department we propose are a focus on storytelling, both as a creative process that is fundamental to human interaction and an object of scholarly inquiry, and on media literacy, ranging from an understanding of basic principles of mediated forms of expression to explanations of broad political, economic and cultural forces and relations that contribute to the increasing worldwide saturation of human experience with mediated sound, image and text.

The world’s six billion inhabitants now live in a networked environment of unprecedented flows of words, images, and sounds, providing us with vast access to knowledge and information. Our social experience today is dominated by an increasing convergence of media and technology through smart cell phones, social media, blogs, interactive newspapers, magazines, TiVo, video games, and billboards. These media do not function simply as carriers of information or mere sources of mindless entertainment; they are powerful tools of education, socialization, and indoctrination. A proper literacy in the 21st century is therefore charged with helping students not only to navigate and critically evaluate the value of messages in this web of information, but
also to effectively participate in the media as an exercise in responsible citizenship in a democratic society.

Media education has become essential to a contemporary liberal arts education. It is defined by a multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach to media literacy that integrates theory and practice. Rather than view media from a narrowly technological point of view, media studies approaches media and media literacy as extensions of literacy education in the broadest sense. Innovations in digital information, storage and retrieval have contributed to dramatic political, economic and cultural changes, with profound impacts on the ways in which humans now are able to express themselves and how they are able to understand one another. Concepts such as “visual literacy” and “digital literacy” are used widely, often within the discourse about media literacy. Such concepts are highly relevant to extending the liberal arts traditions of cultivating within students the capacities both for expression and the evaluation of expression. Whether or not students majoring in media studies wish to pursue careers working for media institutions, an undergraduate media studies education equips them to be competent citizens and prepares them for a broad choice of careers. Graduate-level media studies prepares students to develop greater depth as practitioners who do creative work, or as researchers who contribute to understanding a wide range of technological, industrial, and political practices involved in media production and consumption.

These are subjects that cross many disciplinary lines, but we now possess and can further develop a faculty with competencies that connect with a critical mass of research, creative work and curriculum in media and cultural studies that is represented in a variety of academic associations, a broad range of book series and journal publications, and interdisciplinary research, creative work and curricula at a number of leading universities in the United States and elsewhere.

**Connections to cinema studies**

There are some valuable reasons for drawing a close connection between cinema studies and the proposed MCS department, if not merging elements of CU’s Film Studies Program with the proposed new department. Media studies and cinema studies have an especially strong affinity. Today, a number of leading universities in the United States and other countries have integrated cinema and media studies programs, including Northwestern, the University of Chicago, and UC Santa Barbara, to name a few peer institutions. All have cutting-edge, interdisciplinary cinema and media studies programs that bring together research/theory and creative work/practice from the arts, journalism, humanities and social sciences to study a wide range of related subjects, from established traditions in film and television studies (e.g. textual and audience analyses); to innovative cultural studies of “screen culture,” focusing on how screens, large and small (smartphones, large-screen TVs, multi-function tablets and e-readers, and gaming devices) are ubiquitous in the everyday lives of consumers and citizens in many countries; to “mobility studies” that focus on how mobile communication devices are being used to shape and re-shape

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1 The concept of a “liberal arts” education is distinguished as a means of imparting general knowledge, in contrast with education aimed primarily at delivering professional, vocational or technical knowledge.
the nature of storytelling in everyday life, and to re-negotiate spatial relations across great distances; to gaming; and to virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life). In addition, the exponential growth of transnational cinema studies clearly demonstrates that cinema is integral to the evolution of the globalization of cultures, film practices and the hybridization of identities that often occur at the locus of reception. Therefore, the transnationalism of film has a natural affinity to the global circulation of media images through the institutions of international film festivals, cable and satellite television transmission, which also speaks to the intricate ways in which cinema production (international co-production agreements), film distribution and reception practices are closely aligned to the strategic alliances of transnational media conglomerates and production companies worldwide.

At CU, in addition to the significantly overlapping equipment and facilities needs of the existing JMC and Film Studies programs, including digital cameras, editing facilities, and studio space, the two programs have similar technical training needs at basic/introductory levels, and courses could be developed to serve students in both programs, whatever their career aspirations. More pertinent for media and cultural studies, however, is that the two programs have overlapping interests in “critical studies.” While CU’s Film Studies program distinguishes production and critical studies, the JMC program distinguishes professional education and media studies, the latter of which is related more closely to critical film studies. Currently, CU’s Film Studies program lacks graduate degree programs in “critical studies,” whereas the media and cultural studies graduate program that currently exists inside JMC, and which is likely to carry over into a new College, would present the current Film Studies faculty with an opportunity to train doctoral students, as is the case at leading cinema studies programs around the country. As well, much of cinema studies focuses on a popular art and industry that does not exist apart from television or other popular media that continually are challenged by, and seek a balance between, the tensions between art and commerce. JMC’s media studies faculty are well-aware of, and study, these tensions, which is one of many interests they share with CU’s Film Studies faculty. It makes good sense to maximize the benefits of the pooled resources of media and cinema studies on the Boulder campus, as so many other leading universities have done.

**Porous relationships with other academic units**

The study of media and culture is not the purview of a single discipline or method, but instead is a reflection of a wide range of humanities and social scientific orientations. Media and cultural studies has intellectual affinities with a number of disciplines and fields of practice, including history, political science, sociology, communication, anthropology, international affairs, computer science, journalism, and film studies. In keeping with the ICJMT report’s call for the development of a new College that has highly porous curricular relationships within the College, and with other Schools and Colleges on the CU-Boulder campus, the Department of Media & Cultural Studies could be developed to fruitfully serve the needs and aims of both the proposed new College and those of students and colleagues from a wider range of disciplines across the entire campus through degrees, minors, and certificates at undergraduate and graduate levels.

In light of this breadth of orientation, but also taking into consideration the fact that the field of media and cultural studies represents a significant and growing level of institutional gravitas (reflected by departments, schools and colleges, academic associations and journals, international conferences, book series, distinguished scholars), we think that CU’s wisest
investment in this field is to build a high-profile department that is distinguished because it draws and strengthens the following interdisciplinary linkages.

By the very nature of the objects of study, this program would be highly interdisciplinary, and a department of Media and Cultural Studies would offer many new and exciting opportunities for delivering an interdisciplinary curriculum through alliances forged with departments both inside and outside the new College. Such alliances would offer the opportunity for a significant culture shift in media education on this campus, moving from a primarily professionalized and vocational approach that characterized the former School of Journalism and Mass Communication to one that identifies itself with a broader liberal arts mission.

The program would introduce students to the range of tools for creative expression that rely on traditional and emerging technologies, and to a wide range of media practices and networks of mediated communication that depart from the traditional conceptions of “the media” or so-called “legacy media.” Within such a framework, we believe we can deliver a valuable curriculum, including one or more certificate programs that introduce media studies majors, and majors from other disciplines, to the study of some of the most powerful institutions and practices shaping culture and politics in the contemporary world.

**Relationships beyond CU**

As the ICJMT Steering Committee’s proposal for a new College emphasizes, the goal of porosity should not be limited to building strong relations between and among Schools and Colleges on the campus. Equally important will be the porosity, and the resulting strength, of relationships built between the new College, including MCS, and the world beyond the University. To cite but one important example, the Department could play a vital role not only in its relation to the various campus-based disciplines that are concerned with the natural and built environments (e.g., in environmental science, urban and regional planning environmental law and policy studies), but it also could, along with the rest of the College, make invaluable contributions to the governmental, corporate and non-governmental institutions that are the focus of these disciplines.

The proposed program would emphasize the transnational and global nature and impact of media innovations, both at the level of production (e.g., transnational co-production of film, TV, music, games) and consumption, and how increasingly dense networks of mediated communication are essential to vital processes of social mobilization and activism (e.g., online organizing was fundamental to the recent revolt in Tunisia), the development of various communities of interest, the maintenance of ethnic and religious identities, and much else.

**Curriculum: Degrees, certificates and minors**

The group strongly agreed that the Department of Media & Cultural Studies must ultimately offer undergraduate, masters, and doctoral degrees. However, we also recognize differentials in resource demands across these levels, with an undergraduate degree perhaps being the most demanding. For this reason, the group proposes a phased process along the following lines:
• **Graduate Certificate, and Masters and Doctoral Degrees:** Graduate degrees should be offered immediately upon the establishment of the Department, based on a small set of core requirements, offered by a constitutive faculty, and supplemented by a cafeteria of course offerings (including cross-listed courses), based on agreements with affiliated departments inside and outside the College. There already is a doctoral degree in media studies that is offered under a joint Ph.D. agreement with the Communication Department. This degree could be carried forward, or administratively separated from the one shared with Communication. Within a relatively short period of time, the masters and doctoral curriculum could be expanded, not only to serve degree-seeking students in the department, but also students in other Schools and Colleges through graduate course, minor, and certificate offerings.

• **Undergraduate Certificate and Bachelors Degree:** With an established undergraduate media studies curriculum already in place, a media and cultural studies undergraduate degree that has close ties to other units inside and outside the new College would be easy to establish. Likewise, through cooperative relationships with these same units, viable and popular certificates and minors could be offered.

**Strategic faculty development and hiring recommendations**

We envision that faculty who contribute to undergraduate and graduate curricula in media and cultural studies would come from three campus locations:

- **MCS Faculty:** These would be faculty members for whom the MCS department would be their tenure home. Although decisions about the placement of personnel inside the new College have yet to be made, we anticipate that there would be in the vicinity of 8 faculty members from the current JMC who would naturally fit inside the proposed department. And we anticipate the possibility of a small number of faculty moving into the department from other campus units (departments and programs).

- **College Faculty:** Faculty who are tenured in other departments and programs inside the new College also could have courtesy appointments in the MCS department, or they may simply offer courses that are cross-listed with the department.

- **Faculty Across CU-Boulder:** Likewise, similar arrangements could be made with faculty who are tenured in departments and programs outside the College.

We propose hiring new faculty in the MCS department and are also open to possible joint-hires with other departments. Potential areas of research and teaching of new faculty hires are identified below, but this is tentative and decisions would ultimately depend on wide-ranging discussion among faculty in participating units.

- history of communication and media technologies, institutions and social relations
- digital and new media; social media
- television and screen studies
- gender and media; feminist theory and feminist media studies
- race and media; politics of race and media
Appendix 1: Media Studies Outside CU

In addition to taking stock of existing campus expertise and resources, we have also drawn ideas from programs at peer institutions that demonstrate the range of ways other research universities have taken on the challenge of addressing this important, emerging area of research and scholarship. A handful that we find particularly intellectually and pedagogically inspiring include:


- **New York University, Department of Media, Culture and Communication,** **Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development:** emphasizes the study of global media and culture, digital media and new technologies, media history, visual culture, sound studies, network studies, media institutions and industries, and political communication. [http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/mcc/about/welcome](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/mcc/about/welcome)

- **UC Riverside, Department of Film & Visual Culture:** provides an interdisciplinary examination of film, video, television, multimedia, and visual culture with a primary emphasis on history and theory and a secondary focus on production. Consists of three curricular tracks in which students may concentrate: 1) Film and Visual Media; 2) Film, Literature, and Culture; 3) Ethnography, Documentary, and Visual Culture. [http://mediaandculturalstudies.ucr.edu/](http://mediaandculturalstudies.ucr.edu/)

- **University of Virginia, Department of Media Studies:** is critically engaged with the creative analysis, production, and research into traditional and emerging forms of media. The program has a significant emphasis on digital media through approaches to its history, theory, and technology and their impact upon contemporary life. [http://mediastudies.virginia.edu/](http://mediastudies.virginia.edu/)

- **UC Santa Cruz:** Film & Digital Media Program (undergrad & PhD): offers integrated curriculum; students study cultural impact of movies, TV, video & Internet and producing creative work in video and interactive digital media. [http://film.ucsc.edu/programhttp://film.ucsc.edu/phd_program/home](http://film.ucsc.edu/programhttp://film.ucsc.edu/phd_program/home), Digital Arts & New Media (MFA) program: interdisciplinary artistic and scholarly research and production in digital arts and culture [http://danm.ucsc.edu/programs](http://danm.ucsc.edu/programs). Social Documentation (MA) program: crossdisciplinary program, merges creative & scholarly approaches, students develop expertise in understanding/producing social documentaries in multiple media [http://film.ucsc.edu/socdoc/](http://film.ucsc.edu/socdoc/).

- **UC Santa Barbara** includes two units that, if combined, would point toward some of the directions that we are recommending: (1) Film and Media Studies focuses on film, television and new media around the world; cultivates critical and analytical skills through the study of media objects and practices; students and faculty involved in
collaborative research and creative projects http://www.filmandmedia.ucsb.edu/; (2) The Department of Communication is a leading national department that examines communication across mediated, organizational, and oral contexts: http://www.comm.ucsb.edu/

- **USC Annenberg West**: Result of 1994 merger of School of Communication and School of Journalism. Multidisciplinary and international, focuses on study and practical applications of communication, media and journalism. Their seven research areas, while different than what CU-Boulder would focus on, are suggestive in the ways they encompass multiple media and modes of communication from a range of cross-disciplinary perspectives. http://annenberg.usc.edu/AboutUs/Overview.aspx

- **Harvard University, Secondary PhD Field in Critical Media Practice, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences**. Students interested in making original interpretive projects in image, sound, and/or emerging hypermedia technologies in conjunction with their written scholarship may wish to pursue the CMP Secondary Field. It offers training in production and postproduction in different media formats and genres, including documentary and ethnographic film and video; hypermedia, internet, and database projects; approaches to working with audio, including phonography, exhibition, and music composition; video and multimedia installation; and cognate genres. http://www.gsas.harvard.edu/programs_of_study/critical_media_practice.php

We selected these programs not as blueprints for a new Department of Media and Cultural Studies, and supporting College or School at CU, but because they exemplify, in different ways, the idea of bringing together theory/research and practice/creative work from the arts, humanities and social sciences.

While we do believe it is vital to take advantage of resources already here, we do not want the new department, or the College/School in which it would be housed, to be bound or limited by what has gone before. What we propose clearly transcends business as usual. The idea of building something entirely novel may on the surface be attractive, but it may also overlook or underestimate the challenges of doing so. Aspiring to ground the “new” with the “received” is more complex and perhaps more challenging, precisely because it must respect existing disciplinary roots and resources. We understand the important—even epochal—transition in thinking that is called for. We also believe that to make that transition effectively, we should take advantage of the capacities and resources that exist on the research university campus.

In addition to those described above, below is a more extensive list of programs we have reviewed in conceptualizing a new Media and Cultural Studies Department at CU.

**Film & Digital Media, Arts Division, University of California Santa Cruz**

UG: Film & Digital Media major & minor: http://film.ucsc.edu/program/major_requirements
MA in Social Documentation: [http://film.ucsc.edu/socdoc/](http://film.ucsc.edu/socdoc/)

PhD in Film & Digital Media: [http://film.ucsc.edu/phd_program/home](http://film.ucsc.edu/phd_program/home)

Department of Media and Cultural Studies, University of California Riverside  
[http://mediaandculturalstudies.ucr.edu/](http://mediaandculturalstudies.ucr.edu/)

Department of Media, Culture and Communication, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development, New York University  
[http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/mcc/](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/mcc/)

Department of Media Studies, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA  
[http://mediastudies.virginia.edu/](http://mediastudies.virginia.edu/)

Department of Film & Media Studies, University of California Santa Barbara  
[http://www.filmandmedia.ucsb.edu/](http://www.filmandmedia.ucsb.edu/)

Comparative Media Studies, MIT  

Ph.D in Communication, Rhetoric & Digital Media, North Carolina State U  
[http://crdm.chass.ncsu.edu/](http://crdm.chass.ncsu.edu/)

Secondary PhD Field in Critical Media Practice, Harvard University  

School of Communication, Art & Technology, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, BC, Canada  
[http://www.cmns.sfu.ca/](http://www.cmns.sfu.ca/)

Communication Studies Program, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario Canada  
[http://www1.carleton.ca/communication/](http://www1.carleton.ca/communication/)

MA in Cultural Analysis and Social Theory, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada  

Communication and Media Research Institute, Faculty of Media, Arts & Design, University of Westminster, UK  
[http://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/a-z/camri](http://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/a-z/camri)

Centre for Research and Education in Arts and Media, Faculty of Media, Arts & Design, University of Westminster, UK  
[http://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/a-z/cream](http://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/a-z/cream)

Arts, Media, and Culture (AMC) Major, Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, University of Washington, Tacoma  
[http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/interdisciplinary-arts-sciences/courses/arts-media-culture](http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/interdisciplinary-arts-sciences/courses/arts-media-culture)

Department of Culture and Communication, Indiana University, Bloomington  
[http://www.indiana.edu/~cmcl/](http://www.indiana.edu/~cmcl/)

Journalism, Culture, and Communication Research Group, Stanford University  
Department of Film and Media Culture, Middlebury University, Middlebury, VT
http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/fmmc

School of Literature, Media, and Communications, Georgia Tech University
http://lmc.gatech.edu/school/history.php

The Creative Media and Digital Culture Program, Washington State University, Vancouver, WA http://cas.vancouver.wsu.edu/cmde

The Departments of Art, Computer and Information Science, Film, Television and Radio, Theater, and the Conservatory of Music, offer an outstanding array of courses, programs, and concentrations in the electronic and digital media. Close cooperation between all six departments fosters cross-disciplinary collaboration among students and faculty, and enables the creation of interdisciplinary programs, such as the advanced certificate program in Performance and Interactive Media Arts. Cooperation, excellent facilities, and world-class faculty combine to create unusually rich disciplinary and inter-disciplinary opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students.
http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/home.php

Department of Media Culture, College of Staten Island
http://scholar.library.csi.cuny.edu/mediaculture/
Appendix 2: Media Studies Inside CU

I. Place Within the New College/School: Relations Among Internal Units

We envision the following as possible and viable participants, as departments or programs, within a new College or School, the exact configuration of which remains to be decided:

- Media & Cultural Studies
- Communication
- Journalism
- Film Studies
- Advertising & Design
- Information Studies
- Experimental Media Arts

Among these units, we can imagine a core curriculum that encompasses both media/cultural studies/theory and production/practices. With a commitment to literacy as a foundation, there could be a core curriculum that is rigorous, innovative, and attendant to theory, interpretation, and practice at every level. For example, there might be a required, year-long pair of interrelated undergraduate courses. The first, “Studies,” would introduce students to ideas and ways of thinking about and inquiring into communication, information, media, and technology in historical and contemporary perspective—focusing on “literacy” in the broadest sense—developing understandings and competencies in reading, decoding, investigating, and discussing. It could be a signature, team-taught course led by teacher-scholars working with a team of graduate recitation leaders. The second year-long course, “Practices,” would introduce students to speaking, writing, and digital technologies as arts of expression, exposition, argument, performance, and narrative. The “Practices” course would teach skills and also coordinate assignments with material covered in the “Studies” course (e.g. speeches, debates, papers, visual productions, technologically rich group projects, digital portfolios). All undergraduate students would take these classes, and then go on to pursue different tracks or pathways, which could range from a department-based to an inter-departmental to individualized programs of study. The curriculum might be capped with both a specialized senior seminar and perhaps a large, common lecture with discussion recitations devoted to exploring contemporary public problems ways that communication, media, information, and technology might help address them.

The marriage of theory and practice reflected in undergraduate education would also characterize graduate studies and faculty research/creative work. The key is to cross-pollinate “production” and “studies” at multiple levels and organizational units in the college—i.e. so that it informs graduate education (perhaps with a major/minor structure as well) and cross-disciplinary
collaborations among faculty who may identify primarily with one of the two foci (i.e. as artists/producers or as people who study communication/media). We believe it is imperative to avoid isolating the “practitioners” in one unit and the “studies” groups in another. Again, our strong preference is that a hallmark of the new college—something that would set it apart and help make CU-Boulder known nationally and internationally—is its emphasis on the integration of critical inquiry and creative practice.

One of the key ways in which this integration can and should be evident at the graduate level would be through the development and implementation of a set of courses (perhaps a certificate) designed to enable graduate-level (masters and doctoral) students to engage in “multimedia scholarship,” i.e., to develop forms and means of scholarly expression that extend beyond the traditions of the book and the academic journal article. Such training would include the development of skills in the uses of capturing sound, image and text from a variety of sources (archive and field alike), to edit such materials to reflect cogent analyses, and to archive and curate work in digital formats. These are not skills that should be taken for granted, as they take time to acquire and hone. Far from responding to a passing fad, these courses would address the juncture between theory, method, and technical skill, and they would place our students in strong positions to lead the way in the realm of multimedia scholarship that now is beginning to emerge. We believe that these courses could form the basis of a valuable certificate that would be in demand from other academic units on campus.

II. Place on CU-Boulder Campus: Relations with External Units

We envision productive curricular and research/creative work relationships with the following units in other colleges and schools on campus:

- Anthropology
- Art & Art History
- English
- Ethnic Studies
- Geography
- History
- Linguistics
- Political Science
- Sociology
- Women’s Studies

In addition, we see valuable opportunities for the proposed department to have important research connections to a variety of campus centers and institutes, including the Brakhage Center, the Center for Asian Studies, the Center for Environmental Journalism, the Center for Media, Religion and Culture, the proposed new Interdisciplinary Documentary Media Program (IDMP), the ATLAS Institute, and a number of the various physical-, natural- and social-scientific research institutes on campus that are studying matters as wide-ranging (and often media-focused) as climate change, natural hazards, and crime.
Members of our group have begun to explore some concrete ways that a new Department of Media & Cultural Studies would intersect and interact with CU’s Geography and Anthropology departments. We identified a number of synergies between geography and a department of media & cultural studies. The most obvious connection is perhaps found in the tradition of cultural studies, which has been foundational to the so-called “cultural turn” in Anglo-American cultural geography since the 1980s. Many of the theoretical debates and conceptual approaches in cultural geography are drawn from, as well as inform, work in media studies, particularly in the areas of media & cultural representation, and global media & culture. Thus, graduate students in cultural geography would certainly benefit from the kinds of faculty research and course offerings that a media & cultural studies department would offer. In addition, geography students would benefit greatly from the methodological training that could be offered in a media & cultural studies department. Expertise in audio-visual methods, in particular, is in great demand among human geography graduate students, and this is another area where such a department would help support geography.

One of our group, Professor Tim Oakes, is faculty director of the Center for Asian Studies and sees significant potential to develop connections between the Asian Studies program and the proposed department of media & cultural studies. For example, a “media studies track” in the Asian Studies major could help train students in Asia-specific media issues, such as journalism and democracy, global media and local identities in Asia, and Asia’s significant development focus on culture industries (i.e. ‘Bollywood’ in India, animation in Japan, cultural tourism just about everywhere, and so on). Many of the key issues raised in the proposal for the department of media & cultural studies are, thus, central issues in the Asian Studies curriculum. Both the Geography Department and the Center for Asian Studies would welcome a department of Media & Cultural Studies for its ability to add depth and breadth to those programs. Specifically, a course on “media and democracy in Asia” would attract much interest among students of Asia and beyond.

Anthropologists will also likely find important intellectual compatriots in a Department of Media and Cultural Studies. There are—much as within geography—students and faculty in all three subfields that are increasingly using and analyzing social media as critical elements of contemporary culture. In the past few years in Anthropology, for example, a number of students research projects have been located in the boundaries between units. One student—a few years ago at the start of the Facebook phenomena—wrote a memorable honors thesis on the uses of Facebook in public identity presentations, and began to analyze the shifting nature of public and private information among new generations of users (something we now take for granted). Last year, a group of Masters students analyzed the use of the Internet in the formation of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Bosnia in the years following the civil war, and considered how these Internet-savvy organizations attempted to subvert ethnic identities that were still very much in play.

Within the domain of medical anthropology, the question of how debates among scientists are translated to the public, especially in areas where public health is impacted by toxic technologies (e.g., radioactive waste from nuclear energy and polluted water and
chemicals from fracking), is another area in a Department of Media & Cultural Studies could provide a place for students and faculty to dispense with naïve and under-analyzed notions of the media. Gregory Button’s *Disaster Culture: Knowledge and Uncertainty in the Wake of Human and Environmental Catastrophe* (2010) offers good examples of how science, industry, and the media struggle to gain control over the interpretation of disastrous events.

Anthropology Professor Donna Goldstein, one of our group and CARTSS director for the next three years, is working on launching two new initiatives (Nuclear and Fracking) that will gather diverse intellectual and scientific communities around campus—and beyond—and hopefully forge new research directions. She anticipates that these groups could easily intersect with media scholars.

The Department of Linguistics, as a unit whose faculty members focus on the subject of language in use, will be greatly enhanced by the proposed new Department of Media and Cultural Studies. First, faculty who work in the area of indigenous language documentation and preservation have increasingly seen the need for more engagement with media specialists who work in the area of globalization. Although media sources are in many ways responsible for the spread of global and national languages at the expense of "smaller" languages like Lakota and Arapaho, these same sources are also a crucial site for indigenous language revitalization. Second, the recognition that language change is importantly precipitated by media of various forms has instigated something akin to a paradigm shift in the field of sociocultural linguistics, as researchers have begun to focus on how interactive communication technologies (digital, satellite, or cellular) are changing the contours of social interaction. The pervasiveness of these technologies in everyday life compels us to rethink some of our most basic assumptions regarding social interaction, whether we are analyzing everyday conversation, narrative, political speech, sociolinguistic variation, language and the nation-state, or human sociality more generally. Whereas linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists are now examining the place of digital interactivity in processes of language and globalization (as carried through satellite television, video sharing sites such as YouTube, email, and MMS or SMS text messaging), analysts of conversation are considering how digital mobility provides important challenges to the deictic and organizational norms of face-to-face conversation.

Professor Kira Hall of the Linguistics Department, a member of our group and director of the interdisciplinary program in Culture, Language, and Social Practice (CLASP), which involves faculty members from several humanities and social science departments, as well as the School of Education, believes CLASP would be significantly strengthened by the proposed new department. Finally, the field of computational linguistics, also well represented in the Linguistics department, is not only reliant on new media data bases and search engines for the large-scale analysis of language data, it is intimately involved in their construction. Given the departmental emphasis on these three areas of research (language documentation, sociocultural linguistics, and computational linguistics), the proposed Department of Media and Cultural Studies would offer the potential of rich intellectual exchange, research collaboration, and grant-writing opportunities for our faculty, and Linguistics Department faculty are strongly supportive of its development.