How do we make sense of the theories, histories, politics, ideologies, tactics and aesthetics underlying various types of media activism? The growing sub-field of media activism studies has gained wide attention in recent years, but little consensus exists regarding its central questions and concerns. Discussion often focuses on large events or processes related to mobilization. This conference will take a more expansive view to explore varieties of activism mediated through communication technologies, activists’ strategies for changing the structures of media systems as well as government efforts to regulate or police media activism. From memes to zines, hactivism to artivism, we will consider activist practices involving both older kinds of media and newer digital, social and network-based forms. The conference welcomes studies of activists using media to make political interventions in different historical periods and at the local, national and global levels.

Co-directed by Victor Pickard and Guobin Yang
Hosted by Barbie Zelizer, Director of the Scholars Program in Culture and Communication
LANCE BENNETT  
University of Washington  
CAROLYN M. BYERLY  
Howard University  
ANDREW CALABRESE  
University of Colorado-Boulder  
SASHA COSTANZA-CHOCK  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
CHRISTINA DUNBAR-HESTER  
Rutgers University  
AISHA DURHAM  
University of South Florida  
DES FREEDMAN  
Goldsmiths University of London  
PAOLO GERBAUDO  
King’s College London  
LAURA GRINDSTAFF  
University of California, Davis  
MARK LLOYD  
USC, Annenberg  
SASCHA MEINRATH  
X-Lab  
ŚEFANIA MILAN  
Tilburg University  
LESLIE REGAN SHADE  
University of Toronto  
CLEMENCIA RODRÍGUEZ  
University of Oklahoma  
ROSEMARY CLARK  
TIM LIBERT  
SANDRA RISTOVSKA

**SPEAKERS**

**PROGRAM**

8:00 A.M. - 8:45 A.M.  COFFEE AND BREAKFAST

8:45 A.M. - 9:00 A.M.  WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS  
Michael X. Delli Carpini, Walter H. Annenberg Dean  
Barbie Zelizer, Director of the Scholars Program  
Victor Pickard, Assistant Professor of Communication

9:00 A.M. - 10:15 A.M.  COMMUNICATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE  
Sascha Meinrath  
Sasha Costanza-Chock  
Clemencia Rodriguez  
DOCTORAL STUDENT MODERATOR: Sandra Ristovska

10:15 A.M. - 10:30 A.M.  REFRESHMENTS

10:30 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.  POLICY INTERVENTIONS  
Mark Lloyd  
Andrew Calabrese  
Carolyn Byerly  
Des Freedman  
DOCTORAL STUDENT MODERATOR: Tim Libert

12:00 P.M. - 1:00 P.M.  LUNCH

1:00 P.M. - 2:15 P.M.  NEW POLITICAL GENRES  
Paolo Gerbaudo  
Stefania Milan  
Leslie Regan Shade  
DOCTORAL STUDENT MODERATOR: Jonathan Pace

2:15 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.  REFRESHMENTS

2:30 P.M. - 3:45 P.M.  FEMINISM’S DIGITAL WAVE  
Christina Dunbar-Hester  
Aisha Durham  
Laura Grindstaff  
DOCTORAL STUDENT MODERATOR: Rosemary Clark

3:45 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.  REFRESHMENTS

4:00 P.M. - 5:00 P.M.  KEYNOTE SPEECH  
The Logic of Connective Action: Protest in the Digital Age  
Lance Bennett

5:00 P.M. - 5:15 P.M.  CONCLUSION  
Guobin Yang, Associate Professor of Communication and Sociology

5:15 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.  RECEPTION

**THE SCHOLARS PROGRAM IN CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION** showcases the critical role culture and communication play in shaping public life. The program promotes dialogue among academics with interests that range from human rights to the geography of public places. Researchers from throughout the world visit Annenberg to give public lectures. Two scholars-in-residence visit Annenberg in the fall and spring terms offering lectures, colloquia and classes. Summer immersion programs overseas allow students to grapple with important scholarly questions through fascinating case studies. Such forums give students and faculty the chance to examine the critical and social issues that lie at the intersection of culture and communication in a collaborative environment not readily available at most institutions.

Professor Barbie Zelizer holds the Raymond Williams Chair of Communication and is the Director of the Annenberg Scholars Program in Culture and Communication. Emily Plowman is the Program Coordinator for the Scholars Program. Please direct questions or comments regarding the program to eplowman@uscannenberg.edu.
CAROLYN M. BYERLY  
FEMINIST ACTIVISM AND U.S. COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

While the civil rights movement for racial justice had placed U.S. communications policy on its agenda by the mid-1960s by challenging racist content in radio and subsequently the lack of Black radio ownership, the feminist movement for women’s rights has been both slower and more fragmented in addressing discrimination in the form of media content, media employment and media ownership. This paper draws on secondary and primary sources to look critically at modern feminism and communications policy in the United States in order to define key problems, to describe whether and how feminists have tried to address those problems and to consider the unique challenges that women face in confronting barriers to policy engagement.

ANDREW CALABRESE  
CONNECTING NEEDS AND RIGHTS IN POLICY DISCOURSE

This paper extends reasoning about social policy as a response to the basic human need to the treatment of communication policy. The idea of communication as a basic human need is of vital importance in a contemporary world in which so much social interaction of a private and public nature occurs through technological mediation. Through an examination of arguments in social and political theory about human needs, this paper will emphasize how “needs talk” is related to “rights talk,” with particular attention given to how assumptions about communication needs (what they are, how they can or should be satisfied, and the politics of need recognition) are or can be used to justify particular kinds of communication rights claims.

SASHA COSTANZA-CHOCK  
OUT FOR CHANGE: TRANFORMATIVE MEDIA ORGANIZING IN THE LGBTQ & TWO-SPIRIT MOVEMENT

We are at a crucial moment in LGBTQ history, with major transformations at the levels of culture, norms, law and policy. How do organizers and activists in the trenches of the movement use media in their work to shift culture, raise consciousness and win political and economic victories? In 2013-2014, I partnered with a group of community based organizations and the Research Action Design (RAD) collective to explore these questions. We developed strengths and needs assessment of media capacity in LGBTQ and Two-Spirit advocacy organizations across the United States. The Out for Change: Transformative Media Organizing Project (transformativemedia.cc), funded by the Ford Foundation’s Advancing LGBT Rights Initiative, conducted a nationwide survey of LGBTQ & Two-Spirit organizations, interviewed key movement actors and developed a series of hands-on media making workshops and skillshares. This paper presents key findings from our research.

CHRISTINA DUNBAR-HESTER  
FEMINISTS, GEEKS AND GEEK FEMINISTS: UNDERSTANDING GENDER AND POWER IN TECHNOLOGICAL ACTIVISM

This paper addresses technology and technical practice as a site of purposive political action. It presents two cases drawn from ethnographic research on low-power radio activism and advocacy around “diversity” in software and hackerspace communities. It argues that activist engagement with media technologies may challenge elite cultures of expertise that often accompany technology, thus offering a route to egalitarian participation; communication technologies are not only complex but
flexible. At the same time, presenting technical practice as a main plank in attaining gender equality carries risks, including mistaking “technological inclusion” for social power.

**AISHA DURHAM**

**ANALOG GIRL IN A DIGITAL WORLD: HIP HOP FEMINISM AND MEDIA ACTIVISM**

Challenging controlling images or power-laden stereotypes is a hallmark of movement feminism, and black women maintain media misrepresentations justify our continued sexual exploitation from the colonial era to today. The 1997 Philadelphia Million Woman March highlighted a hip hop invested, politically engaged, tech-savvy cadre of young women who adapted the communicative and community organizing strategies from elder black feminists for a new medium to raise awareness about issues germane to homegirls, to produce cultural criticism crafted from intersectional analyses and to mobilize culturally diverse groups for direct collective action. I map the emergence of hip hop feminism by marking important flashpoints of media activism that has propelled black feminism into the national spotlight and galvanized a new generation of academics, artists and activists informed by the gender-based post-civil rights movement.

**DES FREEDMAN**

**SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY AND MEDIA ACTIVISM**

Social movement theory has an important role to play in both galvanizing and strengthening media activism. With its emphasis on theories of participation, it provides a body of knowledge that highlights the communicative competences, performances and structures that are necessary to publicize and mobilize movements for social justice.

We have a whole host of platforms, technologies and practices in place—from ‘hacktivism’ to citizen journalism and from ‘culture jamming’ to community media—that allow ‘ordinary’ media users to deploy media technologies for activist ends. Yet social movement theory has little to say about how activists should relate to mainstream media and how best to engage in projects that are aimed at reforming and democratizing some of our most popular media outlets. My paper will, therefore, reflect on how we might challenge social movement theory to respond to activists’ commitments to combat media power and to secure media reform.

**PAOLO GERBAUDO**

**THE RHETORICS OF DIGITAL PRODUCTION: SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM AND NEW GENRES OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION**

The adoption of social media as activist tools in the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street protest wave was accompanied by new digital political genres, exemplified by Facebook status messages written in the form of public confessions or calls to arms, sloganereting tweets and satirical internet memes poking fun at power-holders. These forms of expression aim to elicit responses from internet users and facilitate emotional conversations. My paper will argue that these rhetorics differ from the ones of previous technological eras in their forms of interpellation. They reflect the interactive and mass character of the information environment in which they are deployed. Drawing on my longstanding research about social media activism across Egypt, Spain, the US, Brazil and Turkey, the paper analyzes both social media messages and in-depth interviews with practitioners.
LAURA GRINDSTAFF
THE POLITICS OF GENDER AND THE PERFORMANCE OF POLITICS: THE CASE OF RADICAL CHEERLEADERS

“Riot, don’t diet! Get up, get out, and try it!” So goes one of the popular cheers of the Radical Cheerleaders, an international network of young feminist activists who use cheerleading as a form of political protest. “Rediscovered” by the media in the wake of Occupy, radical cheerleading combines elements of cheerleading, protest culture and street theatre to “queer” the macho, male-dominated spaces of social movement activism and in the process create communities of youth invested in multi-issue politics of gender, sexuality, race, class, labor and political economy. This paper uses the case of radical cheerleading to explore the promises and pitfalls of an embodied, performative approach to activism by feminists of the Third Wave. Although the energy, physicality and irreverence of radical cheerleading stages a DIY critique of both mainstream cheerleading and conventional social movement activity, this critique also limits what can be communicated and the types of audiences that can be reached.

MARK LLOYD
A CASE STUDY IN PROGRESSIVE MEDIA ACTIVISM: THE FCC’S CRITICAL INFORMATION NEEDS INVESTIGATION

In 2014, the Federal Communications Commission decided to not move forward on a study to determine whether the critical information needs of the American public were being met. What was the critical information needs investigation at the FCC? Why did it begin? What were the core findings of the review of the literature of the critical information needs of the American public? How did the abandoned study design come about, and what was that design? Why are those findings and the study design that followed relevant to progressive media activists?

SASCHA MEINRATH
MESHING CONNECTIVITY AND DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING PLATFORMS

Civic participation and participatory democracy are increasingly intersecting with the virtual world. However, vast portions of the world’s population in rural and underdeveloped areas are excluded from digital networks by dominant internet service provision business models. This digital disenfranchisement is currently conceptualized as just a lack of meaningful access to online networks - the Digital Divide. Endeavors to bridge the Digital Divide inevitably fail when they offer top-down approaches of connectivity without the tools and platforms for meaningful civic engagement. Within this context, bridging the digital divide requires a solution that provides connectivity with the tools and resources for latecomers to meaningfully organize and engage. Using this framework, we explore the implications of utilizing Commotion Wireless networks (for low-cost Internet connectivity) with the Loomio and DemocracyOS decision-making and voting platforms, as an exemplar collaboration to define the key components necessary for ensuring digital enfranchisement.

STEFANIA MILAN
BETWEEN DATAFICATION AND ENCRYPTION: MEDIA ACTIVISM IN TIMES OF BIG DATA

With the diffusion of ‘big data’, citizens become increasingly aware of the critical role of information in contemporary societies. This awareness nurtures new social practices rooted in technology and data, which I term ‘data activism’.
Data activism addresses massive data collection as both a challenge to individual rights and a novel set of opportunities for social change. It represents the new frontier of media activism, as it appropriates technological innovation for political purposes. It emerges from the hacker and the open-source movements, but overcomes their elitist character to involve ordinary users, thus signaling a change in perspective towards massive data collection emerging within civil society. This talk explores data activism in Western societies, proposing a theoretical and empirical approach for its analysis. It places data activism in relation to the global social movement ecology, and examines the evolution of the ‘media activist’ figure and role in relation to technological innovation.

LESLIE REGAN SHADE
THE USE OF THE GEOWEB FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVISM

This paper focuses on how the geoweb (geospatial media), location-based services (LBS) and mobile media are being deployed for social justice activism. It will provide a review of geoweb/mobile media for mapping social justice activism and an overview and critique of a few of the more widely known sites, such as Ushahidi, Harrassmap. The paper explores tensions in the use of the Geoweb, notably access, inclusion and diversity, including gendered divides. Challenges include data and geoweb literacy, the use of corporately owned vs. open source platforms, issues of authenticity and verifiability, and digital policy issues of surveillance and privacy.

CLEMENCIA RODRÍGUEZ
STUDYING MEDIA AT THE MARGINS: LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

Based on ethnographic research on media at the margins, this presentation proposes a shift in perspective at several different levels: 1) instead of focusing on individual technologies, our research should examine how grassroots communicators operating at the margins exist in a media ecology that offers different potentialities in each historical situation; 2) instead of trying to determine if the media technologies used at the margins are old or new, digital or not digital, we need to explore how embedded community communicators detect local information or communication needs and plug available technologies to address such needs; 3) our research on media at the margins should shed light on how grassroots communicators re-invent, hybridize, converge and bridge technologies from one platform to another. In sum, understanding media at the margins is about embracing complexity, maintaining the notion of media ecologies and understanding how grassroots communicators, deeply embedded in local contexts, wedge media technologies in everyday life.
LANCE BENNETT is Professor of Political Science and Ruddick C. Lawrence Professor of Communication at the University of Washington. He is founder and Director of the Center for Communication and Civic Engagement (www.engagedcitizen.org, Department of Communication and Department of Political Science, University of Washington). Bennett has lectured internationally on the importance of media and information systems in civic life. His current research interests include: press-government relations and the quality of public information; communication and the organization of social movements; transnational activism; citizenship and youth civic engagement; digital media and political participation; and the organization of technology enabled crowds. He is author or editor of 12 books, including *The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics* (Cambridge, with Alexandra Segerberg).

CAROLYN M. BYERLY is Professor and Chair of the Department of Communication, Culture & Media Studies at Howard University. She takes a political-economy approach to her research on issues in mass media. She is the editor of *Palgrave International Handbook of Women and Journalism* (2013), and the co-author of *Women and Media: A Critical Introduction* (2006), among other books. Her articles have appeared in the *Howard Journal of Communications, Feminist Media Studies, Journalism: Theory and Practice*, and other journals. She worked in journalism, government public relations and the feminist anti-violence movement prior to her academic career.

ANDREW CALABRESE is a Professor of Media Studies at the University of Colorado-Boulder. His research emphasizes the relevance of critical social and political theory in explaining issues of media and cultural policy at national and transnational levels, and how social movement actors make use of the means of communication to mobilize their constituents and reach wider publics. Published research projects have focused on social mobilizations that have relied on digital communication to advance their causes; questions about the uses of digital media in nonviolent civil disobedience; the role of media in 20th and 21st century concepts of civil society and the public sphere; and the politics and policy activism related to media reform and communication rights in the United States and transnationally. His recent research is about the relationship between media and food politics, and related issues of public knowledge, safety and risk.

SASHA COSTANZA-CHOCK is a scholar, activist and mediamaker who works on social movement media, co-design, media justice and communication rights. He is Assistant Professor of Civic Media at MIT’s Department of Comparative Media Studies, Co-Principal Investigator of the MIT Center for Civic Media, and a Faculty Associate at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society. Sasha is a board member of Allied Media Projects (alliedmedia.org) and a cofounder of worker-owned collective Research Action Design (rad.cat). His first book, *Out of the Shadows, Into the Streets: Transmedia Organizing and the Immigrant Rights Movement*, is available from MIT Press. Twitter: @schock
MICHAEL X. Delli Carpini is Professor of Communication and the Walter H. Annenberg Dean of the Annenberg School for Communication. Prior to joining the University of Pennsylvania faculty in July of 2003, Dean Delli Carpini was Director of the Public Policy program of the Pew Charitable Trusts (1999-2003), and member of the Political Science Department at Barnard College and graduate faculty of Columbia University (1987-2002), serving as chair of the Barnard department from 1995 to 1999. Delli Carpini began his academic career as an Assistant Professor in the Political Science Department at Rutgers University (1980-1987). His research explores the role of the citizen in American politics, with particular emphasis on the impact of the mass media on public opinion, political knowledge and political participation.

CHRISTINA DUNBAR-HESTER is an ethnographer who studies the intersection of technical practice and political engagement. She teaches in Journalism & Media Studies at Rutgers University, where she is also an affiliated faculty member in Women’s & Gender Studies. Her book Low Power to the People, a study of activism around low-power FM radio in the U.S., will be published in fall 2014 by MIT Press. Her research has appeared in scholarly journals including Social Studies of Science, Public Culture and New Media & Society, as well as popularly in The Atlantic’s Technology Channel.

AISHA DURHAM is an Assistant Professor of Communication at the University of South Florida. Her research about black popular culture explores the relationship between media representations and everyday life. She examines how controlling images or power-laden stereotypes are produced by media makers and interpreted by media audiences to make sense of blackness in the “post” era. This scholarship contributes to an interdisciplinary field called hip hop feminism. Recent work on black womanhood is featured in her latest book, Home with Hip Hop Feminism: Performances in Communication and Culture.

DES FREEDMAN is a Professor of Communications and Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London. He is the author of The Contradictions of Media Power (2014) and The Politics of Media Policy (2008), co-author (with James Curran and Natalie Fenton) of Misunderstanding the Internet (2012), co-editor (with Daya Thussu) of Media and Terrorism: Global Perspectives (2012) and co-editor (with Michael Bailey) of The Assault on Universities: A Manifesto for Resistance (2012). He is an editor of the journal Global Media and Communication and chair of the Media Reform Coalition in the UK.

PAOLO GERBAUDO is Lecturer in Digital Culture and Society at King’s College London. His research focuses on social movements, social media, protest culture and youth. He is the author of Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism (2012) and Movements of the Squares: the Global Wave of Popular Protest and the Anarchopopulist Moment (2015) and has published articles on a number of media and sociology journals. He has a background as a journalist, a new media artist and an activist and has previously taught at the American University in Cairo.
LAURA GRINDSTAFF is Professor of Sociology at UC Davis. Her research and teaching focus primarily on American popular culture and its role in constructing gender, race, and class inequality. She is the author of *The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows*, co-editor of the Routledge International Handbook of Cultural Sociology, and has published widely in journals and edited volumes on topics ranging from cheerleading to reality television.

MARK LLOYD is a Visiting Professor and Wallis Annenberg Chair of Communication and Journalism at the USC-Annenberg School. From 2009-2012 he was an associate general counsel at the FCC. Previously Lloyd has been a visiting scholar at MIT, the General Counsel of the Benton Foundation, and an attorney at the D.C. law firm Dow, Lohnes & Albertson. An Emmy Award-winning broadcast journalist, including work at NBC and CNN, his book *Prologue to a Farce: Communication and Democracy in America* was published by the University of Illinois Press in 2007. Lloyd graduated from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor and the Georgetown University Law Center.

SASCHA MEINRATH is Director of X-Lab, a future-focused tech-policy initiative. Before this, Sascha founded the Open Technology Institute, where he launched the open-source ‘mesh’ wireless research and development Commotion Wireless Project and helped create the internet-measurement toolset Measurement Lab. He has been an unapologetic advocate for consumers and a counterweight to the major telecom and wireless industry lobbies in DC for nearly a decade. He was named to the “TIME Tech 40” in 2013 as one of the most influential figures in technology, and was also named to the “Top 100” in Newsweek’s Digital Power Index in 2012.

STEFANIA MILAN (stefaniamilan.net) is curious about grassroots empowerment, technology activism and cyberspace governance. She enjoys experimenting with digital and action-oriented research methods, and finding ways to bridge research with policy and action. She holds a Ph.D. in political and social sciences from the European University Institute, Italy, and is the author of *Social Movements and Their Technologies: Wiring Social Change* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), and co-author of *Media/Society* (Sage, 2011). Currently, she is an assistant professor at Tilburg University, the Netherlands, and the founding director of the Data J Lab, dedicated to big data analytics.

VICTOR PICKARD is an Assistant Professor at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. Previously he worked on media policy in Washington, D.C. as a senior research fellow at the media reform organization Free Press and at the public policy think tank the New America Foundation, and as a policy fellow for Congresswoman Diane Watson. He has published over 50 journal articles and book chapters on the history, political economy, and normative foundations of communications policy and media activism. His op-eds have appeared in venues like *The Guardian, The Seattle Times, The Huffington Post,* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer.* He is the editor (with Robert McChesney) of *Will the Last
Leslie Regan Shade is an Associate Professor and Director of Doctoral Studies in the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on the social, policy and ethical aspects of information and communication technologies (ICTs), with particular concerns toward issues of gender, youth and political economy. http://current.ischool.utoronto.ca/faculty/leslie-regan-shade

Clemencia Rodríguez is Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Oklahoma. In her book titled Fissures in the Mediascape: An International Study of Citizens’ Media (2001), Rodríguez developed her “citizens’ media theory,” a ground-breaking approach to understanding the role of community/alternative media in our societies. Currently she continues to explore how people living in the shadow of armed groups use community radio, television, video, digital photography and the Internet, to shield their communities from armed violence’s negative impacts. This has involved fieldwork in regions of Colombia where leftist guerillas, right-wing paramilitary groups, the army and drug traffickers made their presence felt in the lives of unarmed civilians. In her recent book, Citizens’ Media Against Armed Conflict: Disrupting Violence in Colombia (University of Minnesota Press, 2011) she reports many of her findings. She continues to teach in the areas of communication for social change, communication theory, and gender studies.

Guobin Yang is an Associate Professor of Communication and Sociology at the Annenberg School for Communication and Department of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. His books include The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online (Columbia University Press, 2009), Re-Envisioning the Chinese Revolution: The Politics and Poetics of Collective Memories in Reform China (edited with Ching-Kwan Lee, 2007), and Dragon-Carving and the Literary Mind (2 volumes, 2003). Yang serves on the editorial boards of Public Culture, Contemporary Sociology, Social Media & Society, The China Quarterly, and Chinese Journal of Sociology.

Barbie Zelizer is the Raymond Williams Professor of Communication and Director of the Scholars Program in Culture and Communication at the Annenberg School. A former journalist, Professor Zelizer is co-editor/founder of Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism and author/editor of 13 books. She has lectured widely, with her essays appearing in The Nation, Newshour with Jim Lehrer, Newsday and The Huffington Post. Her most recent single-authored book is the award-winning About to Die: How News Images Move the Public (Oxford 2010). A past president of the International Communication Association, Zelizer has been a Guggenheim Fellow, a Fulbright Senior Scholar and a Fellow at Stanford University’s Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, at the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center and at Harvard University’s Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy.