

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION  
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
**COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS FOR MIRJAM  
GOLLMITZER**

Supervisory Committee: Catherine Murray and Bob Hackett  
E-mail: murraye@sfu.ca; hackett@sfu.ca

Field Title: **Democracy and Communication**

Written Exam: Questions Delivered **Sunday, November 16, 2008, 12 noon**

**Answers Submitted: Wednesday, November 19, 12 noon**

Note: provide electronic and hard copies to supervisors and gradcmns@sfu ( Attention:  
Denise Vanderwolf)

Directions: Answer any TWO questions below. Each answer should be between 2500 and  
3000 words.

1. Habermas identifies an “ideal speech” scenario for public democratic communication which has been criticized as too Eurocentric and not useful to understanding the structure of power relations between democratic states and political media. Outline the debate, and in particular, set up your understanding of normative ideals in practice in contemporary self-regulation of journalism today.
2. Drawing on Nancy Fraser’s work, develop a critique of concepts of “discourse” and the media’s role in producing discourse in conceptions of deliberative democracy. In particular, develop the epistemological, ontological, and methodological implications of studying “communicative democracy” instead of “deliberative democracy” for students of *actually embedded news production*.
3. Working from your Table 2( adapted from Marx Ferree et al on page 7 of the comprehensive outline) discuss the criteria for good/bad democratic discourse today, especially as it relates to the silent 5<sup>th</sup> column, the role of the citizen, as they are recruited, represented, empowered or as they “perform” their democratic work.
4. Consider three models of democracy from Held and Cunningham’s work--representative, direct/participatory, and deliberative. Consider how each theorizes the relationship between democracy and communication, and particularly, how each theoretically enables critical citizen empowerment.
5. Write a critique of the empirical tradition of the study of the role of media and political engagement. Which shows most promise and why?
6. Design a course about democratic communication which takes into account both structure and agency ( Dervin and Clark, 1993; Habermas, 2006) for a 3<sup>rd</sup> year level. The course is 13 weeks in length and divided into 3 or 4 thematic units with at least 2 assignments. Be sure to include your rationale for designing the course this way, an outline for one of the lectures, and a statement of your pedagogical approach.