



## Call for Papers: Special issue of *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*

### Interrogating Internships

Edited by Nicole S. Cohen (University of Toronto Mississauga), Greig de Peuter (Wilfrid Laurier University), Enda Brophy (Simon Fraser University)

When publisher Condé Nast cancelled its internship program in October 2013, the response was mixed: many cheered the end of a program that asked debt-laden youth to labour for free, while others lamented the closure of one of the only routes into media work. When depicted in the mainstream media, internships are surrounded by an aura of glamour: rapper Kanye West did a stint at luxury designer Fendi, Lady Gaga arranged one at designer Philip Treacy, and Hollywood portrayed the phenomenon in the movie *The Internship*. The gloss is fading, however: digital electronics manufacturer Foxconn was caught employing student interns on dubious terms on its assembly lines; former interns launched a successful class-action suit against Fox Searchlight Pictures; and Ross Perlin's *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy* (Verso, 2011) was vital in pushing internships into a critical spotlight internationally. Within just a few years, internships have become a high-profile subject, garnering media attention, catalyzing activism, provoking government action, and sparking lawsuits against massive corporations.

Although internships are prevalent in communication, cultural, media, and entertainment industries, scholarly literature on internships from communication and cultural studies remains limited. This special issue of *tripleC* seeks to situate internships within the labour turn in research in communication studies and beyond. The issue will interrogate some of the multiple articulations between and among internships, capitalism, communication, and culture. Employers in the media and cultural sectors are regularly singled out as playing a key role in perpetuating the normalization and intensification of unpaid or low paid intern labour, illuminating the interplay of glamorous occupations, the reserve army of labour, and discount wages. For many young people, internships provide an initial encounter with and formative experience of the capitalist labour market, yet the relationship between internships and the category of exploitation is not necessarily straightforward. And many youth are shut out of internships altogether, highlighting the way class divisions structure entry into communication and cultural industries. Internships are also an emerging trope in popular media culture, with television shows ranging from *Girls* to *Gallery Girls* pointing to the gendered dimension of internships. And, if internships are in the international spotlight today, it is thanks to growing intern labour activism and the way interns and their allies have turned their communicative capacities to alternative ends, raising awareness through DIY video-making, engaging in creative online protest and campaigns, and effectively naming-and-shaming intern employers via social media.

Internships are an entry point for interrogating contested conditions of life and labour in communicative capitalism at a time when precarity is an overarching structure of feeling. So, we invite articles, reports, interviews, and pieces that develop key concepts from academics, activists, and interns (current and former) on issues including but not limited to:

- the political-economic context of the spread of (unpaid) internships;



- the relationship of internships to student debt and youth unemployment;
- social exclusion based on class, race, and gender and intersectional analysis of the social relations of internships;
- the production of meaning, e.g., discourse analysis of media coverage of intern issues, everyday talk of internships ('paying your dues,' 'getting a foot in the door');
- representations of internships in popular media culture;
- government regulation, policy proposals, legal issues, and class-action law suits;
- 'passionate labour,' governmentality, self-exploitation, working for exposure, network sociality, and reputational economies;
- case studies of internships within and/or across particular sectors of the arts, media, and cultural industries (e.g., journalism, fashion, film);
- historical perspectives on internships in the communication and cultural industries;
- intern activism within and beyond the union movement; strategies, tactics, and organizing models;
- critical and contextualized biographical accounts of internship experiences;
- the role of education institutions in the intern economy;
- genealogy of the term 'intern';
- elite internships and access;
- theoretical key concepts for interrogating internships, such as exploitation, youth, and intersectionality, etc.

#### **Length:**

- Peer-reviewed academic articles: 5,000-8,000 words not including references
- Interviews, reports from organizations, non-academic articles: 1,000-2,500 words not including references
- Key concept entries: 1,000-2,000 words not including references

#### **Publishing Schedule:**

Jan. 15, 2014: deadline for proposals (300-500 word abstract)

Feb. 1, 2014: notification of acceptance (scholarly articles still subject to peer review)

June 1, 2014: deadline for first drafts

Aug. 1, 2014: editorial feedback provided

Oct. 1, 2014: final drafts submitted

Nov. 1, 2014: publication of special issue

**Please send queries and abstract proposals (including title, abstract of 300-500 words, affiliation, contact information, and brief biographical note) via email to the co-editors:**

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**About the journal:**

*tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* is a non-profit open access journal focusing on the study of media, digital media, information and communication in contemporary capitalist societies. For this task, articles should employ critical theories and/or empirical research inspired by critical theories and/or philosophy and ethics guided by critical thinking as well as relate the analysis to power structures and inequalities of capitalism, especially forms of stratification such as class, racist and other ideologies and capitalist patriarchy. The journal is especially interested in how analyses relate to normative, political and critical dimensions and how they help illuminate conditions that foster or hinder the advancement of an inclusive, just and participatory information society. It publishes both theoretical and empirical contributions as well as reflections and book reviews.

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