History of Media and Communication  
E59.0003  
Fall 2010  

Prof. Max Liboiron  
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Section 01: Mon/Wed 11:00am - 12:15pm- East Building, 239 Greene Street, Rm 420  
Section 02: Mon/Wed 2:00pm - 03:15pm- Waverly Building, 24 Waverly Place, Rm 366  
Office Hours: By Appointment  

Course Description  
A survey of the four great revolutions in human communication: orality (speech), literacy (writing & reading), typography (print & mass literacy), & the electronic media (telegraph, telephone, photography, & film, radio & television, computers, & communication satellites. Different forms of communication have emerged within and against different social, economic, perceptual, and semiotic conditions that were themselves specific to different historical moments. Only by thinking carefully about transitions and interactions among media and culture in the past can we hope to understand the pace, direction, and character of changes today. In addition, we examine how latter forms of communication deeply affect the former through combination and overlap.  

Outcomes  
Students who have successfully completed this course will have a facility with key technological innovations as they pertain to mediated communications, an ability to critically engage historical ‘facts’, a more complex understanding of the ways in which technology and culture are co-constituted at different historical intersections.  

Required Texts  
Other readings posted to Blackboard throughout the semester.  

Class Format  
Each week, we will undertake a specific theme that interrogates the ways in which communication technologies and other mediations both shape and are shaped by history. We will engage the themes through class lectures (typically Mondays) followed by a full class session dedicated to discussion of the readings, lectures and/or film screenings (typically Wednesdays). Class discussions will be student-led.  

Class Requirements  

Weekly Discussion: All students are expected to come to class prepared. It is assumed that you will have completed all readings. As in all of your courses, good faith, respect and trust are crucial to enabling class discussion. The ideas and concepts we’ll be discussing may challenge or conflict with our commonly held beliefs and perspectives. Such challenges should not be construed as value judgments nor should anything discussed in class be construed as a personal offense. Our goal (and that of the university more generally) is to get us thinking critically about the things we often take for granted and to enable us to support our beliefs intelligently and thoughtfully. If you experience any discomfort with material
discussed in class, please talk with me directly, and we'll work together to resolve the situation effectively.

Attendance:
Your attendance is required at all sessions. There will be a policy of 2 excused absences over the term. A 3rd absence will result in an extra assignment to be determined by me (updating, correcting, or nuancing a Wikipedia entry relevant to the class). More than 3 absences will negatively affect your final grade for the course. Three lates equal one absence. Should you require a long absence, be sure to notify me in advance. Arrangements can be made with prior notice, but do not expect consideration after the fact (unless, of course, in the case of extreme emergencies). You are responsible for obtaining any missed notes or material.

Assignments: There will be two assignments due on dates specified. More details on attached sheet (and black board).

Exams: 1 Midterm and 1 Final Exam, both take-homes, on dates specified.

Assignments & Grading
Midterm Exam 20%
Assignment #1 20%
Assignment #2 20%
Final Exam 20%
Participation* 20%
*includes pop quizzes, in-class exercises, quality of discussion, asking questions, reading/class notes & attendance

Evaluation Rubric

A= Excellent
This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.

B=Good
This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.

C=Average
This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.

D= Unsatisfactory
This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared and off topic.
F=Failed
This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignments

Any discussions of grades will be entertained 24 hours after they have been received. Remember that grades are earned, not negotiated.

Late Assignments
All work is due on the dates indicated in the Course Syllabus (unless other arrangements have been made in advance). Late assignments are subject to a penalty equivalent to five (5) percent for each day after the due date. Generally, this means that a one-day late assignment awarded an A will be given an A-, and so on. Work more than 4 days late will not be accepted, and will result in zero points - no partial credit.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism
"Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do.... You violate the principle when you: cheat on an exam; submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors; receive help on a take-home that calls for independent work; or plagiarize. Plagiarism, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following: copy verbatim from a book, article, or other media; download documents from the Internet; purchase documents; paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis, and/or conclusions; copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you. " (See School of Education Bulletin, 2009)

Students with Disabilities:
Please do not wear any scented products such as perfumes, colognes, scented sprays, or use heavily scented soaps before or during class. Thank you for your consideration in this matter. Any student wearing such products will be asked to leave class, shower, and return. This will count as a late. Any student who needs an accommodation due to a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility and/or learning disability or is Deaf or Hard of Hearing should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980, www.nyu.edu/csd. They will ensure accommodations are provided.
**Schedule of Classes** (subject to change)

**Week 1**
Wednesday 09/08: Introductions, Course Outline, the Uses of History (Lecture and Discussion)
No readings required

**Week 2: Introductions**
Monday 09/13: The Uses of History (Discussion)
Readings:
Briggs & Burke – Introduction
Definition: Communication & Media

Wednesday 09/15: Visual Culture and Cave Paintings (Discussion)
Readings:
Pfeiffer, J. (1983). “Was Europe's Cave Art the Start of the Information Age?” *Smithsonian*.

**Week 3: Orality**
Monday 09/20: Orality (Lecture)
In-class exercise
Wednesday 09/22: Orality (Discussion)
Readings:

**Week 4: Alphabets and Inscription**
Monday 09/27: Alphabets and Inscription (Lecture)
Wednesday 09/29: Alphabets and Inscription (Discussion)
Readings:

**Week 5: Plato & Aristotle Lay it Down**
Monday 10/04 Communication in the Ancient World (Lecture)
Wednesday10/06 Plato’s *Phaedrus*, Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* (Discussion)

**DUE: Assignment #1**
Readings:
Plato. (360 BCE). *Phaedrus*. 
Aristotle (350 BCE). *Rhetoric* Book I Parts 1-7
Midterm exam questions given

**Week 6**
Monday 10/11 **NO CLASSES**. School holiday.
Wednesday 10/13: Midterm exam- no class.
Take home exam. DUE Saturday, 10/16 at NOON.

**Week 7: Middle (St)ages -- Looking Back to the Future**
Monday 10/18: Overview of Early-Middle-High Middle Ages (Lecture)
Wednesday 10/20: Middle Ages and Communication (Discussion)
Readings:

**Week 8: Gutenberg Galaxy**
Monday 10/25: The Social Impact of the Printing Press (Lecture)
Wednesday 10/27: The Public Sphere (Discussion)
Readings:
Briggs & Burke -- Chapters 2, 3
Definition: Public

**Week 9: 19th Century Technology: Revolutions in Time and Space**
Monday 11/1: Role of Technology & The Industrial Revolution (Lecture)
Wednesday 11/3: Time-Space-Sensory Revolutions (Discussion)
Readings:
Briggs & Burke -- pages 121 to 141

**Week 10: 19th Century Technology: New Networks and Electrical Communication**
Monday 11/8: Electrical Communication: Telegraphy & Telephones (Lecture)
Wednesday 11/10: Electrical Communication (Discussion)
Readings:
Briggs & Burke. Pages TBA

**Week 11: Fidelity and Sound**
Monday 11/15: The Phonograph, the telephone, and Radio (Lecture)
Readings:
James Lastra, “Fidelity Versus Intelligibility"

**Week 12: Photographic Literacy**
Monday 11/22: The Invention of Photography (Lecture)
Wednesday 11/24: Photography (Discussion)
Readings:

**Week 13: Mass Stirrings – Radio and Television**
Monday 11/29: History of Radio and Television Technologies - From the Military to the Home (Lecture)
Wednesday 12/1: Mass Stirrings (Discussion)
Readings:
Briggs & Burke -- Chapter 5 (from p 124-132) & 6

**Week 14: A Consuming Culture**
Monday 12/6: Motion Pictures and Comic Books (Lecture)
**DUE: Assignment#2**
Wednesday 12/8: Cinematic Visions, Spectacular Narratives (Discussion)
Readings:
Briggs & Burke -- Chapter 5, PAGES 132 - 145
Definition: Consumption
Definition: Mass
Definition: Popular

**Week 15: Convergence & Fragmentation**
Monday 12/13 Computers, Webs, Networks and Hybrid Forms (Lecture)
Wednesday 12/15: The (Not So) Radical Potential of the Digital? (Discussion)
Readings:
Briggs & Burke -- Chapters 7, 8

Final Exam Questions given. Due date TBA.