CMNS 545/MCS 520: Communication and Technology

Winter Quarter 2014
Daley 1130
Thursday 5:45-9:00pm

I usually answer emails within 24 hours (weekday). If you do not hear from me within two days, you can assume that I did not get your email. Please make sure that you send email to the correct email address (pbooth@depaul.edu). Be forewarned: email accounts with Yahoo tend to get sent to DePaul’s spam filter, and I tend not to get them. You can also Tweet me at @pbooth81.

Course Description:
It is arguably impossible to separate the ideas of communication, technology and society in today’s digital media environment. Nevertheless, this course attempts to unravel some of the mysteries surrounding new media technology and its impact on contemporary communication. Using readings and examples from real life, students will come to understand the intricate and exciting relationship between new media technology, the way people use that technology to communicate today, and the society in which our communication occurs.

Course Rationale:
Today’s media environment is a complex and demanding system. But it did not arrive fully formed into our culture. Rather, every new media technology can trace its lineage back to other media technologies, which can, in turn, be traced back further and further in time. It is our job as cultural historians and communication scholars to look back and see the technological and cultural antecedents for today’s media technology. But it is not enough just to examine the technologies of communication. Communication is affected not only by technology, but also by societal factors like politics, the legal system, education, and art. We must understand all the different factors that make up communication in a digital world.

This course utilizes both a historical analysis of technology and a critical examination of the cultural factors that make up our contemporary society in order to understand digital technology as communication systems. As media become more complex, they also become more integrated into our lives. This fact makes media and technology studies crucial fields in contemporary society. It is important not just to understand how technology affects culture, but also to see at the level of the individual how technology is consumed. By posing questions, many of which will not have answers, we shall explore the complex relationship between communication, technology and society.

Course Goals:
This course has three main goals. The first is to gain a better understanding of key concepts in communication and technology (specifically focusing on digital technology). The second is to gain the ability to analyze and critique the twinned roles of technology and of society in the development of human communication. The third is to be able to use digital technology in a meaningful way.

Course Objectives:
At the end of this course, students will be able to:
1) Identify the historical development of communication technology;
2) Apply theoretical knowledge of technology studies to contemporary situations;
3) Differentiate between deterministic and constructivist arguments through written work
4) Criticize their own online media use
5) Create a website on a specific topic

Class Readings
All readings will be available via D2L,

**Lectures**  
For this class, some course lectures will be posted (in 10 minute segments for easy viewing) to our D2L website the Monday before class. You will be expected to have watched these course lectures before coming to class on Thursday. Please come to class prepared to discuss the material in the readings and in the lectures, and prepare at least two questions on the material for class discussion (questions should be open-ended and thought-provoking).

**Grading and Assignments:**  
Your grade is based on 600 points.  
Class Facilitation – 100 points  
Web Project – 100 points  
Video Project – 100 points  
Technology Project – 100 points  
Final Paper/Project – 100 points  
Participation – 100 points

**Assignments**  
In this class you will work on an ongoing project. The ultimate goal of the project is to use different components of a converged media environment to present a particular view of communication, technology, society, politics, culture, or the self. You should find a “client” for whom you will make this project—this client can be non-profit company, a group, a person, etc. There are no limitations on who the client is. The topic of your project is up to you. Some possible topics could be: an interactive, online resume or CV, a research project that spans transmediated outlets, a journalistic piece that uses converged media, an analysis of a particular type of advertising across digital media, a fiction story that demonstrates the inherent properties of different technologies, etc. Do not feel limited to these topics. Whatever project you embark upon, it will integrate at least three of the technologies we will examine this quarter, and analyze your use of them.

You will be required to create a website for this class, although it doesn’t matter through which service.

**Projects**  
Three projects are required throughout the quarter:

1. First, you will be asked to write up an initial topic proposal and methodology. You should do this online, either on a webhost of your choice. Please use images, hyperlinks and text to fully illustrate the extent of your project. You will be expected to integrate research from in-class and out-of-class sources for your first project. This is due Jan 23.

2. Your second project will be to make one or more web-based videos that comment on, critique, contribute to, or complicate your project. You may use other people in your videos, but each person will turn in their own set of videos. As in the first project, you must connect the videos with the larger structure of your project, and use your website to comment on the video’s contribution to your overall project. This is due Feb 13.

3. Your third project will be to create and integrate at least two of the following technologies into your website: a blog, a twitter feed, a wiki, memetics, mobile apps, or two or more social networking sites (Facebook, Pinterest, MySpace, e.g.). The use and extent of the integration will depend on your individual project, but you must articulate within your website what the advantage of using each technology is for your overall project. You may substitute a different technology for any one of the four. This is due Mar 06.
4. Your final project will be the culmination of the class. Using all the elements that you’ve prepared, you will finalize your website to articulate the purpose and historical background of your project. There will also be a longer written analysis of your project due; this will also be electronic and posted to your website. The final project should not only be a culmination of the quarter so far, but should also comment on and integrate in-class and out-of-class readings to discuss the ethical and social issues it raises in regards to digital technology. This is due Mar 20.

If you need to check out equipment from DePaul to work on these projects, you may do so from the The Digital Cinema Equipment Cage. Please reserve asap at
The Digital Cinema Equipment Cage
Suite 930 CTI
243 S. Wabash Ave.
312-362-5733

Class Facilitation
Each student will sign up for a class topic that is of interest to them. Each class will have at least two people signed up. You may work together as a group or you may work separately. If together, the group will be in charge of leading class for an hour to an hour and a half on a topic of the group’s choice, related to the course topic of the day. If separate, each person will be required to lead the class for 30-45 minutes. Note that this is not (necessarily) a presentation of an article, but rather your chance to teach the class something that is of interest to you, or something that you are an expert on. Options for this facilitation include (but are not limited to): A discussion of an ethical issue related to the topic for the day; the presentation of an article/piece of media that engages with the material for the day; a “how-to” do something for the web project; a class activity; etc. YOU SHOULD NOT BE LECTURING IN THIS CLASS, but using this time to lead the class in an active and powerful learning activity. On the Tuesday before the class you help facilitate, you should turn in a 1200-1500 word lesson plan. Each person will turn in one lesson plan. Your plan should detail everything you’re planning on doing in class, your rationale for why you’re doing it (please use resources/citations to support this rationale), any materials you may need in this facilitation, and any activities you plan to lead the class in. Further, the Monday after your facilitation, you will write a 1000 word reflection paper on what you think worked, what you think didn’t work, and how you would improve your teaching the next time. Each person will turn in one reflection paper. Both papers are due to D2L by 5:40 pm on the days assigned to you.

Webpages:
In general, you will be evaluated according to how well you engage with class material and how well you articulate your ideas and apply methods. NOTE: I WILL NOT BE GRADING YOU ON YOUR WEB DESIGN SKILLS. Webpages will demonstrate three key elements--relevance, coherence, and writing proficiency. Webpage should have clear theses, coherent organization and development, focused topics, and sentence-level competency. However, they should not be simply remediated print essays, but should use the inherent properties of the web to its full advantage. Please archive all your work electronically for your own records. No late work will be accepted. Under special circumstances extensions may be granted (e.g., illness or family emergency); contact the professor as soon as you know (this is not retroactive).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 01</th>
<th>Jan 09</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Introduction; Communication and Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>No facilitations</td>
<td>Shirky: “Gin, Television, and Social Surplus” (2008)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Class 02</th>
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<tr>
<td>Topic: Determinism vs. Constructivism in New Media</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitations</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McLuhan: “The Medium is the Message” (1964)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Williams: “The Technology and the Society” (1972)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Baym: “Making New Media Make Sense” (2008)</td>
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<th>Class 03</th>
<th>Jan 23</th>
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<tr>
<td>Topic: Remediation and Convergence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitations</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>For Web Design Help (not required)</td>
<td>Krug, chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 (2000)</td>
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<td>Project Part 1 Due</td>
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<th>Class 04</th>
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<tr>
<td>Topic: Orality and Literacy and Blogs, oh my!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitations</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Innis: Intro to <em>Empire and Communication</em> (1950)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ong: “Some Psychodynamics of Orality” (to page 57) (1982)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Retberg: “From Bards to Blogs” (2013)</td>
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<th>Class 05</th>
<th>Feb 06</th>
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<td>Topic: Mass Culture to Participatory Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitations</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rosen: “The People Formerly Known as the Audience” (2006)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Burgess and Green: “YouTube’s Popular Culture” (2009)</td>
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<th>Class 06</th>
<th>Feb 13</th>
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<td>Topic: Language and Message</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitations</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Carey: “Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph” (1992)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Murthy: “Theorizing Twitter” (2012)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Standage: “Codes, Hackers, and Cheats” (1998)</td>
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<td>Project Part 2 Due</td>
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| Class 07  
| Feb 20  
| Topic: Memetics and Memory  
| Facilitations | Readings  
| Davison: “The Language of Internet Memes” (2012)  
| Ekdale and Tully: “Makmende Amerudi” (2013)  
| Havelock: “The Greek Legacy” (1963)  
| Guest lecture: Dr. Brian Ekdale and/or Dr. Melissa Tully  
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| Class 08  
| Feb 27  
| Topic: Socialitity and Everyday Life  
| Facilitations | Theory  
| Spigel: Introduction to Make Room for TV (to top of page 11) (1992)  
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| Class 09  
| Mar 06  
| Topic: Encyclopedias and Knowledge  
| Facilitations | Theory  
| Ascher and Ascher: “Civilization with Writing - The Incas and the Quipu” (1980)  
| Cohen: “When Knowledge Isn’t Written, Does It Still Count?” (2011)  
| Halavais: “Knowledge and Democracy” (2009)  
| Logan: “Writing and the Alphabet Effect” (1986)  
| Project Part 3 Due  
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| Class 10  
| Mar 13  
| Topic: Mobile and Virtual Communication  
| Facilitations | Readings  
| Ling and Donner: “Mobile Communication in Everyday Life: New Choices, New Challenges” (skim section 1, read section 2) (2009)  
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| Final Exam  
| Mar 20  
| Project Part 4 Due  
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Bibliography


