

Comm 339
Communication Technology and Culture
Section 20435

Fall Semester 2009

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Office: School of Cinematic Arts new building, #217
Office Hours: Wednesdays Noon – 1:30 pm

Course Location
Annenberg School of Communication 204
Wednesday, 2:00 – 4:50 pm

Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to the theoretical foundations for the study of communication technologies as cultural phenomena. The course is framed by a cultural studies approach to the study of technology. We will discuss basic concepts that inform the development of insightful cultural analyses. The course begins with an overview of the history of communication technologies, with special emphasis on the development of reading and writing technologies. By end of the course, students will be expected to create new analyses of emergent technologies using the critical frameworks discussed in the course. The broad aim of this course is to provide students with a foundation for thinking about the intertwined nature of culture and technology.

Academic Integrity

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's Academic Integrity code as detailed in the Campus Guide. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violation or pattern of violations of the Academic Integrity Code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication major or minor. See section 11 of Scampus.

Students with Disabilities and Academic Accommodations

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to Professor Balsamo as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776. For additional information, see the Web page of the Disabilities Services Program in SCAMPUS.

Required Textbooks:

Slack, Jennifer Daryl and J. Macgregor Wise. *Culture and Technology* (New York: Peter Lang publishers, 2005).

DuGay, Paul, Stuart Hall, Linda Janes, Hugh Mackay, and Keith Negus. *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman* (London: Sage Publications, 1997).

Required Film:

Bladerunner (Ridley Scott, 1985)

General Course Requirements and Expectations:

While I am an avid multi-tasker myself, I expect your attention to focus on class discussion. Each session, one student will be designated the Google Jockey for the day. If you bring a laptop to class, you may be asked to serve as the web archeologist for that day.

I expect assignments to be turned in on the due date. I will respond to email questions, but I cannot guarantee how long it will take. So if you have questions about assignments, ask them early...this means you must pay attention to your assignments well before the due date. Do not wait until the last minute, because I will not be able to respond to your questions at the last minute.

Grade Requirements:

Class assignments	10%
Midterm Exam	30%
Group Project:	30%
Presentation: 10%	
Research Paper: 20%	
Final Exam	30%

Group Project Topics

You will be assigned to a group to work on a collaborative project. The project will require library research and original research. You will work collaboratively on creating and authoring both a research paper and an oral presentation. Expect that you will have to read additional material not originally assigned as course material.

- TOPICS TO BE DETERMINED

Dates	Course Outline
Week 1 08.26.09	Course Introduction
	Section 1: Theories/History of Media
Week 2 09.02.09	Theories of Media: Old, New and Otherwise History of Communication Technologies
Week 3 09.09.09	Marshall McLuhan's Framework of Analysis
	<u>Readings:</u> McLuhan, <i>Understanding Media</i> (selections) McLuhan, <i>Mechanical Bride</i> (selections)
	<u>ASSIGNMENT:</u> Prepare an image and a 1 page analysis of the communication technology you are assigned in class
Week 4 09.16.09	Reading and Writing Culture <i>Experiments in the Future of Reading</i>
	<u>ASSIGNMENT:</u> Blog Posts
	Section 2: Introduction to Cultural Studies of Technology
Week 5 09.23.09	Key Concepts of a Framework of Analysis Topics: Communication as Culture Levels of Discourse Theories of Interpretation: Meanings and Practices Issues of Representation: Signifying practices
	<u>Readings:</u> Slack and Wise, <i>Culture and Technology</i> : Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 8
Week 6 09.30.09	Key Concepts, Continued <i>Decoding, Recoding: TechnoMyth making in contemporary advertising</i> Topics: Advertisements and Technological Myth Making
	<u>Readings:</u> Slack and Wise, <i>Culture and Technology</i> : Chapters 3, 4, 9
Week 7	A Cultural Studies Approach to Technological Culture

10.07.09 Topics:
Academic frameworks and disciplinary research questions
The relationship between theory and research
Theories of Technology
Technological Formations

Readings:
Slack and Wise, *Culture and Technology*: Chapters 10, 11

Week 8
10.14.09 **MID TERM EXAM**

Week 9
10.21.09 **Doing Cultural Studies of Technology**
Topics:
Methods of Analysis

Readings:
DuGay, et. al. *Doing Cultural Studies*: Introduction, Sections 1, 2, 3, 4

Week 10
10.28.09 **The Dance between Consumption and Regulation**
Topics:
Contextualizing Technology
Reading Technology Critically
Identity
Globalization

Readings:
DuGay, et. al. *Doing Cultural Studies*: Sections 5 and 6
Slack and Wise, *Culture and Technology*: Chapters 12, 13, 15, 16

Week 11
11.04.09 **GUEST LECTURE: Contemporary Sound Culture**

Section 3: Original Research in Technocultural Studies

Week 12
11.11.09 **Group Presentations**

Week 13
11.18.09 **Group Presentations**

Week 14
12.03.09 **Group Presentations**

FINAL EXAM FRIDAY, December 11, 2009 2:00 – 4:00 pm

