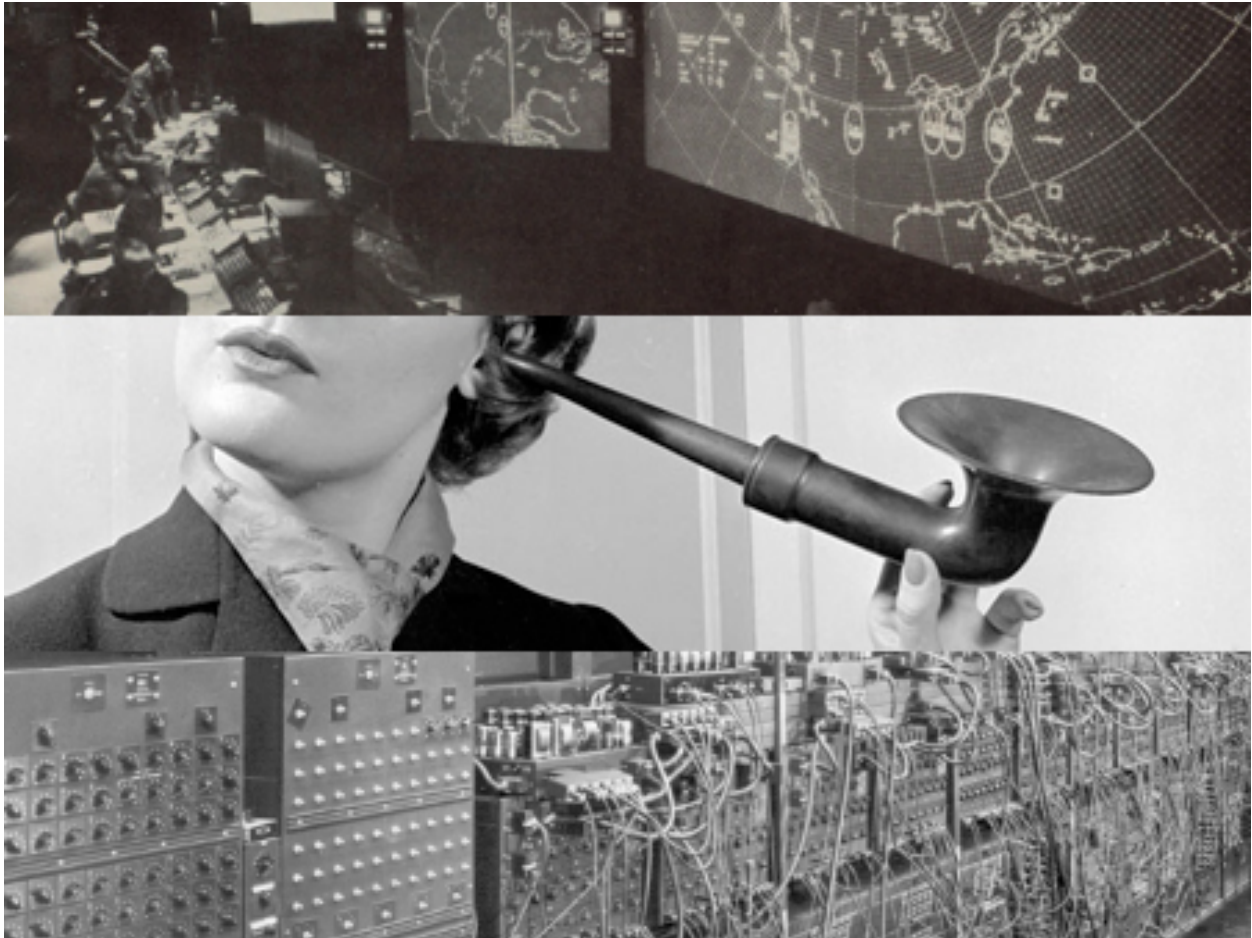


CULT 860 | HIST 615:

Media, Culture, & Society

Mondays, 7:20pm–10:00pm, Robinson Hall B218



CONTACT INFORMATION

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Media and communications technologies have increasingly been recognized as central sites and components of contemporary political struggles, social aggregation, and cultural production. Understanding this centrality requires engaging the very notion of *mediation* and beginning to question what constitutes a medium, how that medium inflects its messages, how that medium reorganizes spatial topographies and/or temporal durations and rhythms, and what the consequences of these changes might be.

In this course we will focus on mediation defined broadly and examine accounts of it in heterogeneous contexts and technological instantiations. We will try to trace the contours of mediation in particular by employing cultural studies methods for conjunctural analysis, or more simply, by constituting a heterogeneous archive of key texts for understanding mediation and media. Throughout the semester students will construct a research agenda that is centered on a particular definition of mediation and a specific instance or set of instances of its material instantiations. The end goal will be for each student to compose a paper at the intersection of media studies and cultural studies that examines a specific object of their choosing. Alternately, students will be offered the opportunity to instead work on theoretical and/or methodological papers that examine a particular approach to research at the intersection of media and culture.

Finally, this course will be oriented towards practicality and professional development, and will stress the production of critical notes for future research and writing, research proposals, research presentations, and networking. The final goal is not only to learn, but to advance your career.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

With any luck, by the end of this course students will have gained the following experiences, skills, knowledge, and practice:

- Students will be able to outline canonical theories of mediation as suited to their own research agendas, and situate those theories within the broader discourse of cultural studies and its related disciplines.
- Students will be able to critically and comparatively analyze these various theories of mediation and media. In doing so, they will be able to articulate the affordances and constraints of each for explaining our situation, and produce the discursive space for intervention into and/or mobilization of these theories.
- Students will collectively work to develop strong note-taking skills and practice methods for caching as much information from these texts as possible for easy access/retrieval during future research projects.

- Students will gain experience pitching and honing a conference or article-length paper.
- Students will put on a mock conference during which we will leverage professionalization strategies to hone our skills at extemporaneous presentation, utilizing visual aids, critical listening, posing evocative questions, and post-presentation socializing/schmoozing.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Below you will find the list of texts that must be purchased/located for this course. As we are going to collectively produce notes for these texts, it is essential that everyone have *these exact editions*. I've provided ISBN numbers for all course texts so that you can ensure you have the appropriate editions if you need to buy the texts used.

Andrejevic, M. (2013). *Infoglut: How Too Much Information is Changing the Way We Think and Know*. New York, NY: Routledge. ISBN: 978-0415659086 Price: \$41.43

Bogost, I. (2011). *How To Do Things With Videogames*. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press. ISBN: 978-0816676477 Price: \$13.02

Dyer-Witheford, N. (2015). *Cyber-Proletariat: Global Labour in the Digital Vortex*. Toronto, Canada: Pluto Press. ISBN: 978-0745334035 Price: \$27.00

Hayles, N. K. (2005). *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 978-0226321486 Price: \$20.09

Kittler, F. (1999). *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (G. Winthrop-Young and M. Wutz, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. ISBN: 978-0804732338 Price: \$21.34

Parks, L. (2005). *Cultures in Orbit: Satellites and the Televisual*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. ISBN: 978-0822334972 Price: \$23.95

Peters, J. D. (2015). *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 978-0226421353 Price: \$18.81

Sterne, J. (2003). *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproductions*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. ISBN: 978-0822330134 Price: \$26.54

Stiegler, B. (1998) *Time and Technics 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (R. Beardsworth and G. Collins, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. ISBN: 978-0804730419 Price: \$28.95

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Critical Note-Taking – 20%

We will be explicitly discussing notetaking strategies throughout this course and will be working to collectively document the ideas we encounter throughout the course. The goal here is for you to not only establish some knowledge of canonical texts at the juncture of culture, media, and technology, but also to have ready and continued access to that knowledge as you advance your scholarship. As such, we will be working to produce notes that you can reference during future research and writing, specifically so that you can quickly jog your memory about the core points and narrative of any given text and also so that you can drag and drop quotations and references with exact citations. We will collectively determine in class the best way to accomplish this, what exactly you will be responsible for, and how your grade will be calculated.

Research Proposal – 10%

You will be responsible for developing a researched, 500-word proposal for your final research paper. I expect that these ought to begin as much longer documents that you hone down, fighting to get every last word out until you've reached the maximum word count. In response to that labor, I will provide detailed feedback and offer time for individual conferences to help guide you as you develop your research agendas.

Research Paper – 40%

The final paper for the course can be either a conference-length (i.e., 4,000–5,000-word) or an article-length (i.e., 7,000–8,000-word) paper. You will write on a topic of your choice. Some options might be

- (1) a media studies analysis of a particular medium or a specific component or technology that enables a particular medium to be captured, processed, stored, and/or transmitted (e.g., an analysis of shoebox tape recorders, Fitbits and wearables/biometrics, EKG machines, drones, CRISPR, GPS and Google Maps, thermometers and kitchen appliances, ad inf.),
- (2) a cultural studies or conjunctural analysis that makes use of media studies to better understand cultural interactions with mediation and media (e.g., a conjunctural analysis of binge-watching in televisual media and culture),
- (3) a critical analysis of a particular theoretical approach to the juncture of media, culture, and society (e.g., a critical analysis of French philosophy of technology or an exemplification of the utility of phenomenology for the study of VR in general),
- (4) a critical analysis of one of the authors we investigate during the course (e.g., a critical analysis of Friedrich Kittler),

You may use the citation format of your choosing. You are welcome to include graphics and multimedia content (for more bizarre DH-type projects we can also rework the assignment guidelines).

The end goal is for you to have a product of some practical utility to you as a scholar. My highest hope would be that we might work together to turn your product into a publication that you can leverage on the job market, or alternately a conference presentation at a national or international conference. You might consider scouring for CFPs for special issues or conferences and tailoring your research agenda to meet a CFP of your choice.

Research Presentation – 20%

At the end of the semester you will present your work in a mock conference that we will collectively host for the course. This will be a good opportunity for us to see the results of one another's research and provide critical insights that might help shape the future trajectory of that research. We will also be doing some professional development work by explicitly discussing presentation techniques and styles, and practicing extemporization, listening skills (maybe yours are better than mine, but I feel in need of perpetual practice myself), posing useful questions and making useful comments, and after-hours networking/socializing.

Participation – 10%

Class participation means more than how much you say in class; it's your effort to be present—both in mind and in body—in our discussions. Your grade will reflect your attendance, preparation, and the quality of your contributions to our class work. Accordingly, participation grades will be awarded as follows:

In order to earn an average participation grade (in the C range), you must fulfill four basic requirements: arrive on time; be ready to discuss readings when called on; be prepared with the book or reading in class; listen respectfully.

To earn a B, you must consistently fulfill the above requirements and: volunteer questions or points of interest from readings to generate discussion; willingly offer ideas in class; make sure your contributions are topical and thoughtful.

To earn an A, you must consistently fulfill the above criteria and: show leadership in class discussion (i.e. respond to open-ended questions, challenge received opinion, ask difficult questions); respond to other students' ideas (not just mine) by asking questions or building on their points.

You will receive a failing participation grade if you are excessively and/or frequently: tardy; unprepared for class; disruptive during class; and/or occupied with activities other than those related our class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One (01/23) – Canadian Media Theory

Innis, H. (2008). The Bias of Communication. In Innis, H. *The Bias of Communication (2nd Edition)* (33–61). Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Innis, H. (2007). *Empire and Communications*. Toronto, Canada: Dundurn Press. (Chapters 1, 2, & 3, pp. 21–75)

Carey, J. (2008). Space, Time, and Communications: A Tribute to Harold Innis. In Carey, J. *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society (Revised Edition)* (109–133). New York NY: Routledge.

Week Two (01/30) – German Media Science

Kittler, F. (1999). *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (G. Winthrop-Young and M. Wutz, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. (Up to Typewriter Chapter)

Week Three (02/06) – German Media Science, Cont.

Kittler, F. (1999). *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (G. Winthrop-Young and M. Wutz, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. (Typewriter Chapter and Conclusion)

Ernst, W. (2012). Let There Be Irony: Cultural History and Media Archaeology in Parallel Lines. In Ernst, W. *Digital Memory and the Archive* (J. Parikka, Ed.) (pp. 37–55). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Ernst, W. (2011). Media Archaeography: Method and Machine versus History and Narrative of Media. In J. Parikka & E. Huhtamo (Eds.). *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications* (pp. 239-256). Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Suggested:

Monea, A. & Packer, J. (2016). Media Genealogy and the Politics of Archaeology. *International Journal of Communication*, 10, 3141–3159.

Week Four (02/13) – The Mediation of Evolution

Stiegler, B. (1998) *Time and Technics 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (R. Beardsworth and G. Collins, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. (First Half)

Week Five (02/20) – The Mediation of Evolution

Stiegler, B. (1998) *Time and Technics 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (R. Beardsworth and G. Collins, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. (Second Half)

Hansen, M. B. N. (2013). Technics Beyond the Temporal Object. *New Formations* 77: 44-62.

Week Six (02/27) – Ontological Mediation

Latour, B. (1996). Do Scientific Objects Have a History? Pasteur and Whitehead in a Bath of Lactic Acid. *Common Knowledge*, 5(1), 76-91.

Latour, B. (1994). On Technical Mediation — Philosophy, Sociology, Genealogy. *Common Knowledge*, 3(2), 29-64.

Barad, K. (1999). Agential Realism: Feminist Interventions in Understanding Scientific Practices. In Biagioli, M. (Ed.). *The Science Studies Reader* (pp. 1–11). New York, NY: Routledge.

Barad, K. (1998). Getting Real: Technoscientific Practices and the Materialization of Reality. *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 10(2), 87–128.

Week Seven (03/06) – The Mediation of Attention

Andrejevic, M. (2013). *Infoglut: How Too Much Information is Changing the Way We Think and Know*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Pariser, E. (2011). *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You*. New York, NY: Penguin. (Introduction)

Recommended:

Hayles, N. K. (2007). Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes. *Profession*, 187–199.

Week Eight (03/13) – No Class (Spring Break)

Week Nine (03/20) – Acoustic Media

Sterne, J. (2003). *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproductions*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Week Ten (03/27) – Televisual Mediation

Parks, L. (2005). *Cultures in Orbit: Satellites and the Televisual*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Week Eleven (04/03) – The Mediation of Games and Play

Bogost, I. (2011). *How To Do Things With Videogames*. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press.

Week Twelve (04/10) – Labor and Technology

Dyer-Witheford, N. (2015). *Cyber-Proletariat: Global Labour in the Digital Vortex*. Toronto, Canada: Pluto Press.

Cheney-Lippold, J. (2011). A New Algorithmic Identity: Soft Biopolitics and the Modulation of Control. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 28(6), 164–181.

Week Thirteen (04/17) – Computational Mediation

Hayles, N. K. (2005). *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Recommended:

Hayles, N. K. (2004). Print is Flat, Code is Deep: The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis. *Poetics Today*, 25(1), 67-90.

Week Fourteen (04/24) – A New Theory of Mediation

Peters, J. D. (2015). *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. (First Half)

Week Fifteen (05/01) – A New Theory of Mediation, Cont.

Peters, J. D. (2015). *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. (Second Half)

Hansen, M. B. N. (2006). Media Theory. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23(2–3), 297–306.

Exam Week (TBD) – Final Project Presentations

COURSE POLICIES ---

Non-Discrimination Policy

Discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status, pregnancy status or genetic information is a violation of state and federal law, as well as George Mason University's Non-Discrimination Policy, and *will not be tolerated*. Harassment of any person (either in the form of quid pro quo or creation of a hostile environment) similarly *will not be tolerated*. Retaliation against any person who complains about discrimination is prohibited.

Academic Integrity

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

Disability Accommodations

If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Disability Services (<http://ods.gmu.edu>, SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Attendance and Tardiness Policy

As per GMU Academic Policies: "Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the class as a whole." Attendance is particularly crucial in a discussion-based course.

Unexcused absences will be negatively factored into participation grades. Any student with more than three unexcused absences will receive a failing participation grade.

Students may arrange for excused absences which will not be factored into participation grades as per GMU Academic Policies on Registration, Attendance and Grading. In these instances, it will

be the responsibility of the student to provide as early advance notice as possible and to arrange to make up any missed work.

If you are more than 10 minutes late, you will be counted absent. If you are tardy, it is your responsible to catch up with the rest of the class. I will not repeat the instructions delivered at the beginning of classes for the benefit of tardy students. Furthermore, students leaving class early will also be counted as tardy.

Late Work Policy

All assignments must be submitted to me by the provided deadlines. I reserve the right to refuse to accept, grade, and comment on any assignments submitted late. That being said, if you contact me in advance about any problems you are having getting a particular assignment in on time *before the deadline*, I can usually work out an extension for you. I do, however, reserve the right to refuse any given request for an extension, and also reserve the right to determine the length of any given extension on a case by case basis.

Email Policy

Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. I will not respond to messages sent from or send messages to a non-Mason email address.

University Policies

The University Catalog (<http://catalog.gmu.edu>) is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs.