The History of Media

University of Oklahoma / History of Science Department
HSCI 3493 / Sections 001 & 002 / Fall 2012
Class Meeting Time/Place: MWF 9:30-10:20am, Adams Hall 0315
Assistant Professor Peter Soppelsa, peter.soppelsa@ou.edu
Office Hours: MW 10:30am–12:30pm, PHSC 611 (or by appointment via email)
Graduate Teaching Assistant: Blair Stein, blair.stein@ou.edu
Office Hours: MWF 10:30–11:30am, PHSC 531 (or by appt.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES
The course introduces the history of communications and information media, from ancient times to the present day, with emphasis on the rise of electronic and digital media since 1800. As we narrate episodes in media history, we will explore cultural, economic, geographical, institutional, and technological perspectives on media. We will seek to explain not only how the media work, but also their broader ethical, political, and human significance, as we pay particular attention to the ways that media shape, and are shaped by, the societies they emerge from. Finally, the course aims to help students sharpen general academic reading, writing, research, and critical thinking skills.

Required Textbooks

EXPECTATIONS, POLICIES, ASSIGNMENTS
Syllabus Notes
[1] Please keep this paper copy of this syllabus. You will need to refer to it often and may want to mark it up with notes. An electronic copy with live weblinks will be available on D2L.
[2] This syllabus is a working document, designed to be flexible as needed. I reserve the right to make changes to assignments, due dates, schedule, readings and so on, but I will give fair warning in advance of any changes.

Attendance/Participation
We take attendance every class. Please complete the readings before class and be prepared to discuss them. Learning is an active, group process; the more we actively participate—by both speaking and listening—the more we enrich our collective learning environment. Your participation grade will reflect both quantity (how often you speak) and quality (how well you speak). Occasionally we will discuss sensitive or controversial topics; please be respectful,
courteous and civil with your fellow students and with me; be attentive and sensitive to what we
have to say; and above all use common sense.

**Technology Policy**
You may use laptops in class to take notes, but please do not browse the web (email, facebook,
etc.). If you pay attention to your laptop instead of class, it is your loss. Please turn off or silence
all cell phones and handheld devices; if your phone rings during class, this is not your loss,
because it disrupts class for everyone else.

**Individual Circumstances or Needs**
If you need to miss class for religious observance, let us know in advance and your absence
and it will not affect your participation grade. If you have a learning disability, physical disability
or other special needs, please let us know in the first week of class, provide documentation if
necessary, and we will do everything we can to help meet your needs.

**Assignments and Grading**

*This course is graded on a 1,000-point scale:* A = 1,000–900 pts; B = 899–800 pts; C = 799–
700 pts; D = 699–600 pts; F = 599–500 pts.

**Participation Grade (250 pts):** We will count attendance at 40 meetings this semester, each
worth 3 points for a total of 120 pts just for showing up. The other 130 pts evaluate your
participation.

**Written Assignments:**

1. **1-page Weekly Response Papers (10 x 40 pts = 400 pts; due each Friday in Weeks 2-7 and 9-12).** One-page responses that cover the readings assigned in the week they are due. Please try to answer the following questions: (1) **Reading Comprehension:** What are the main topics covered, and what main points or arguments do the authors make about these topics? (2) **Reading Analysis:** What makes the media covered in the readings distinctive? How are they shaped by technological, cultural, and institutional factors? How do these media compare with other media we've discussed in class, or with media you use or experience in your own life?

2. **2-page Research Paper Proposal (100 pts) – details TBA on handout, due Nov. 16**
3. **10-12-page Research Paper (250 pts) – details TBA on handout, due Dec. 10**
   This paper should be in 11-12 point font, and be double-spaced, with 1-1.5 inch margins
top, bottom, and sides, and a works-cited page.

**Written Work**
Please proofread carefully for grammar and spelling. Someone besides you—a classmate,
friend, parent, or someone at the OU Writing Center—will make a better proofreader because
others always notice mistakes in your work more readily than you. All written work is governed
the University of Oklahoma's Integrity Policy. Please print, date, and sign the Integrity Pledge for
each assignment: [http://integrity.ou.edu/faq.html](http://integrity.ou.edu/faq.html). Academic misconduct, especially plagiarism,
may result in the professor (a) asking you to resubmit an assignment for a new grade, (b) giving
you a formal warning and/or a zero on the assignment, or (c) filing an official complaint of
academic misconduct with the Provost's office. For more on academic integrity and misconduct,
Course Schedule

UNIT 1 (WEEKS 1-4): SPEAKING, WRITING, AND PRINTING: PREHISTORY TO 1800

WEEK 1: Course Introductions / The Ancient World

Mon Aug 20: Introduction: What is history? What are media? How do we put them together?
Lecture/Discussion

Homework:
Johns, Piracy, Ch. 1, pp. 1-15
Mark Federman, McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology, “What is the Meaning of The Medium is the Message?” (PDF on D2L)

Wed Aug 22: Continuing Introduction: Medium and Message
Lecture/Discussion connects with Johns, Piracy, Ch. 1 and Federman)

Homework:
Plato, "From Phaedrus" and Walter Ong, "Writing is a Technology that Restructures Thought" from Writing Material, ed. Evelyn Tribble and Anne Trubek (Longman, 2003), pp. 316-335, 360-363 (PDF on D2L)

Fri Aug 24: Speech and Writing in the Ancient World
Discuss Plato and Ong readings

WEEK 2: Scribal Culture in The Middle Ages, 500-1500

Mon Aug 27: Lecture – Medieval Media

Homework:

Wed Aug 29: In-class Activity
Reading "The Very Rich Hours of the Duc de Berry" (1412-16/1485-89)

Homework:
Ian McNeely and Lisa Wolverton, Reinventing Knowledge (Norton, 2008) Ch. 3 “The University 1100-1500,” pp. 77-117

Fri Aug 31: Medieval Media and Institutional Analysis *** Response Paper #1 due
Discuss McNeely and Wolverton, Chs. 2-3
WEEK 3: The Print Revolution, 1450-1650

Mon Sept 3: LABOR DAY – NO CLASS

Homework:
Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution*, Ch. 3 (PDF on D2L)

WED SEPT 5: Print Culture
Discuss Eisenstein Ch. 3

Homework:
Johns, *Piracy*, Ch. 2, pp. 17-40

Fri Sept 7: Print and the Origins of Intellectual Property *** Response Paper #2 due
Discuss Johns, *Piracy*, Ch. 2

Homework:
Johns, *Piracy*, Chs. 3-4, pp. 41-82
[Optional Reading: Johns, *Piracy*, Chs. 5-6, pp. 83-144]

WEEK 4: Print Culture, Sociability, The Enlightenment 1650-1800

Mon Sept 10: Lecture – Enlightenment Media
Connects with Johns, *Piracy*, Chs. 3-4

Homework:
Online Reading: Early Eighteenth-Century Newspaper Reports
“A Printer in the Pillory” (1721): http://grubstreet.rictornorton.co.uk/mist.htm
“Epigram on a Bookseller” (1734): http://grubstreet.rictornorton.co.uk/epigram1.htm
“Sedition and Libel” (1702-1744): http://grubstreet.rictornorton.co.uk/sedition.htm

Wed Sept 12: Reading Eighteenth-Century Newspapers
Discuss online newspaper readings

Homework:
Johns, *Piracy*, Chs. 7-8, pp. 145-211

Fri Sept 14: Media Geography: Ireland and the United States
*** Response Paper #3 due
Discuss Johns, *Piracy*, Chs. 7-8

Homework:
Standage, *Victorian Internet*, Chs. 1-2, pp. 1-40
UNIT 2 (WEEKS 5-9): MAKING THE MASS MEDIA: 1800 TO 1945

WEEK 5: Electric and Networked Media: The Telegraph

Mon Sept 17: Lecture – The Telegraph’s Origins
Connects with Standage, Victorian Internet, Chs 1-2

Homework:
Standage, Victorian Internet, Chs. 3-4, pp. 41-73

Wed Sept 19: The Telegraph’s Threats and Thrills
Discuss Standage, Victorian Internet, Chs 3-4

Homework:
Johns, Piracy, Ch. 10, pp. 247-289

Fri Sept 21: Intellectual Property in the Industrial Age *** Response Paper #4 due
Discuss Johns, Piracy, Ch. 10

Homework:
Standage, Victorian Internet, Chs. 5-6, pp. 74-104

WEEK 6: The Telegraph, Part 2: Global Media

Mon Sept 24: Lecture – A Wired World
Connects with Standage, Victorian Internet, Chs. 5-6

Homework:
Johns, Piracy, Ch. 11, pp. 291-326

Wed Sept 26: Rules of the Global Game
Discuss Johns, Piracy, Ch. 11

Homework:
Standage, Victorian Internet, Chs. 7-9, pp. 105-163

Discuss Standage, Victorian Internet, Chs. 7-9

Homework:
Finish Standage, Victorian Internet, Ch. 10–Afterward, pp. 164-217
WEEK 7: An Era of New Media, 1870-1920

Mon Oct 1: After the Telegraph
Discuss Standage, *Victorian Internet* Ch. 10–Afterward

Wed Oct 3: Lecture: Typewriter, Telephone, Gramophone, Film

Homework:
Anton Chekhov, "The Telephone" (1886):
http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/gledger/philosophy/chekhov1.html
Mark Twain on the Typewriter (1905), from Tribble and Trubek, *Writing Material*
278-284 (via Google Books); (PDFs on D2L)

Fri Oct 5: Contemporary Responses to New Media ***Response Paper #6 due***
Discuss Chekhov, Twain, and Sousa

Homework:
[Optional Reading: Johns, *Piracy*, Ch 12]

WEEK 8: Radio

Mon Oct 8: Lecture – Radio c.1900-1930
Connects with Haring and Slotten articles

Homework:
Johns, *Piracy*, Ch. 13, pp. 357-399

Wed Oct 10: Policing the Airwaves
Discuss Johns, *Piracy*, Ch. 13

Fri Oct 12: TEXAS FRIDAY – NO CLASS, NO RESPONSE PAPER

Homework:
[Optional Reading: Johns, *Piracy*, Ch. 14]
WEEK 9: The Interwar Years

Mon Oct 15 & Wed Oct 17 [Professor out of town] TBA, maybe movie

Homework:
Johns, *Piracy*, Ch. 15, pp. 431-462

Fri Oct 19: Domesticating Media *** Response Paper #7 due
Discuss Johns, *Piracy*, Ch. 15 and Richard Popp article

Homework:
Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think," *The Atlantic* July 1945 (PDF on D2L)

UNIT 3 (WEEKS 10-16): THE COMPUTER ERA, 1945 TO PRESENT

WEEK 10: The Early Cold War, 1945-1960

Connects with Bush and Light readings

Homework:

Wed Oct 24: Cybernetics
Discuss Wiener, Licklider, and Engelbart readings

Homework:
Samuel Beckett, "Krapp's Last Tape" (1958),
https://www.msu.edu/~sullivan/BeckettKrapp.html
Two Short Films about Stereo Sound:
"How to Listen to New Dimension in Sound" (1957):
http://archive.org/details/HowtoLis1957

Fri Oct 26: Magnetic Tape and Stereo Sound *** Response Paper #8 due
Discuss Beckett play and stereo films

Homework:
Raymond Williams, *Television*, Chs. 1-2, pp. 1-38

**WEEK 11: Television**

**Mon Oct 29: TV, Technologically and Socially Considered**
Discuss Williams, *Television*, Chs. 1-2

Homework:
Raymond Williams, *Television*, Ch. 3, pp. 39-76
[Optional Reading: Raymond Williams, *Television*, Ch. 4, pp. 77-120]

**Wed Oct 31: The Forms of TV**
Discuss Williams, *Television*, Ch. 3

Homework:
Raymond Williams, *Television*, Chs. 5-6, pp. 121-157

**Fri Nov 2: The Consequences of TV *** Response Paper #9 due**
Discuss Williams, *Television*, Chs. 5-6

Homework:
Start Reading Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*

**WEEK 12: Media, Culture, and Politics in the 1960s**

**Mon Nov 5: Lecture**

Homework:
Finish Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*

**Wed Nov 7: Find the Media in the Pynchon**
Discuss Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*

Homework:

**Fri Nov 9: Counterculture and Cyberculture *** Response Paper #10 due**
Discuss Turner article

Homework:
Johns, *Piracy*, Ch. 16, pp. 463-496
WEEK 13: The 1970s – Into the Information Age

**Mon Nov 12: Lecture**
Connects with Johns, Piracy, Ch. 16

Homework:
Daniel Bell, "Welcome to the post-industrial society" *Physics Today* vol 28 no 2 (Feb 1976): 46-9 (PDF on D2L)

**Wed Nov 14: Information Economy & Information Society**
Discuss Bell and Castells

Homework:

**Fri Nov 16: What is "Information Technology"? *** Final Paper Proposal due**
Discuss Kline article

Homework:
William Gibson, "Johnny Mnemonic" (PDF on D2L)

WEEK 14: The 1980s

**Mon Nov 19: Interfaces: Personal Computing, Cyborgs, Biotechnology**
Discuss "Johnny Mnemonic"

**Wed Nov 21 and Fri Nov 23: THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS, NO HOMEWORK**

WEEK 15: The 1990s – The Internet Era

**Mon Nov 26: Lecture – Remembering the ‘90s Net**

Homework:
Sherry Turkle “Virtuality and its Discontents” from Tribble and Trubek, *Writing Material*
Camille Sweeney, "In a Chat Room You Can Be N E 1," *New York Times* Oct. 17, 1999 (PDFs on D2L)

**Wed Nov 28: Virtual Realities and Personal Identities**
Discuss Turkle and Sweeney
Homework:
Susan Douglas, “Introduction” from Where the Girls Are (1995), 3-20 (PDF on D2L)

Fri Nov 30: Gender and Media
Discuss Douglas reading

Homework:

WEEK 16: The New Millenium

Mon Dec 3: Mobile Media & Social Media
Discuss Turkle and Kahn/Kellner articles

Homework:

Wed Dec 5: Lecture – New Frontiers
Connects with Mavhunga article

Homework:
Johns, Piracy, Ch. 17, pp. 497-518

Fri Dec 7: Future Forecasts [Last day of classes]
Discuss Johns, Piracy, Ch. 17

Scheduled Final Exam Time: Monday Dec. 10, 8–10AM. *** Research Papers Due