

History of New Media

Winter 2016 Mondays and Wednesdays 11:30-1:20, Mary Gates Hall 058

Professor Stephen Groening <groening@uw.edu> Office: Padelford B 515 Hours: Thursdays 9-10am and by appointment

Overview

New media has become more or less synonymous with the digital. However, the path of this course is based on the straightforward, if neglected, observation that old media once were new. Therefore, this course focuses on moments of media transition, when old technologies encounter new ones. Some questions which animate this course include: How is the concept of “new” imagined and represented? How do older forms and expressions accommodate or respond to the threat of the new? What new aesthetics are opened up by innovation in media technology? How is the “shock of the new” managed by the promoters of innovation? How are “wild” media “tamed” and domesticated?

For the purposes of this course, we can understand history as the relationship between the present and the past. In this sense, we can only access the past through the mediation of historical records – which require interpretation, analysis, and narration; in short, historiography. Much of what we will read are historical accounts, not primary sources (the historical record). Therefore, we will also be engaged in the question of how to write new media history. What methods are available? What are the metrics against which accuracy, precision, and fidelity to the historical record can be measured? Even more fundamentally, what counts as “evidence” for the writing of history?

Requirements

Much of the work we will study requires open and inquisitive attitudes. Some of the theoretical readings are difficult, even counterintuitive, but this is neither reason to dismiss them or to give up on your own ability to acquire knowledge and understanding. I cannot overemphasize the importance of hard work for this course. The more time, energy and thought you put into the course, the more you will get out of it. I take media history very seriously and expect you to do the same.

I expect each student to do all the reading, which amounts to 30-50 pages per class session, and I hold students accountable to the reading. This is what I call a **reading intensive** course and there are many ideas, concepts, methodologies and theories introduced in these readings. Pay close attention to them.

We are meeting in a newly redesigned classroom. This means that we will occasionally have visitors to observe the learning process, the functionality of the classroom, etc. Additionally, it means students will be asked to change the furniture arrangement, desk configuration, and project their own work onto the screens. A short introduction to the classrooms capabilities will occur on the first day.

Policies

Canvas: This course takes advantage of Canvas, University of Washington's learning management system. Students are responsible for making sure they can access Canvas. Readings can be found online in the course website, as well as additional materials such as the syllabus, written assignment style guide, course announcements, and so on. Grades are posted on the Canvas site. Assignments must be submitted through the Canvas website.

Email: Students must use their UW email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class.

Technology: If you have one, feel free to bring your laptop or tablet for note-taking and in-class exercises. Cell phones must be put away during class time.

Plagiarism: I have implemented the TurnItIn service for this course, see: <http://www.turnitin.com>. Plagiarism is a serious offense. It undermines the fundamental mission of the university and sanctions are therefore severe. For information about the definition of plagiarism and the mandated UW penalties, please see the following website: <https://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/plag.html>

Disability-Related Needs: The University of Washington is committed to providing access, and reasonable accommodation in its services, programs, activities, education and employment for individuals with disabilities. For information or to request disability accommodation contact: Disabled Student Services at (206) 543-8924/V, (206) 543-8925/TTY, (206) 616-8379 (FAX), or e-mail at uwdss@u.washington.edu.

Required text: *The Story of the Walkman* 2nd edition, other readings can be found on the Canvas website.

Evaluation

Late assignments are not accepted.

Papers: 50 points

All papers must conform to the **Written Assignment Style Guide**, see below. These are formal academic papers, not reflection papers, journals, or blog entries.

Students must turn in three papers: Historiography, Digital Futures, and **either** Cinema and its contexts **or** Consumption and domesticity (see below).

Historiography: 900-1000 words. Due January 24, 10 points.

Engaging and relying on the readings, students must produce their own original argument (thesis) that explains why a particular issue/problematic raised in the first four readings of the course is significant.

Cinema and its contexts: 1100-1200 words. Due February 7, 20 points.

Engaging and relying on the readings, students must produce their own original argument (thesis) that explains the importance (and/or difficulty) of placing cinema in the context of other media technologies and forms to media history.

Consumption and domesticity: 1100-1200 words. Due February 28, 20 points.

Engaging and relying on the readings, students must produce their own original argument (thesis) that stresses the importance of studying media as consumer goods and objects of everyday life to media history.

Digital Futures: 1400-1500 words. Due March 15, 20 points.

Engaging and relying on the readings, students must produce their own original argument (thesis) that brings a historiographical issue from the first eight weeks of the course into conversation with issues in new digital media raised by the readings from the final two weeks.

Participation: 10 points

Your contributions in class are an integral part of the learning process. The more you engage the material, the more you will benefit. Come prepared to contribute in class; this will greatly aid your own learning process and the education of those around you. Take notes on lecture and discussion and the screenings. **Bring the readings to class.** If I feel that discussion is lagging or that students have not completed the readings, I may administer pop quizzes, which count towards this portion of the grade. There are many ways to contribute in class, but I expect prepared engagement of the material. You must be able to articulate an author's argument before you may praise its merits or analyze its shortcomings. Simply to pronounce that you do or do not like a reading is not a demonstration of prepared engagement with the materials.

In-class exercises: 20 points

Reading Discussion Questions: 20 points

Readings with double asterix (***) next to them in the schedule (see below) have corresponding questions in the "Discussion" area of the Canvas coursesite. Students' answers are due by 11:59pm the night before the class meeting.

Grade Scale

Points	Letter Grade	University of Washington 4.0 Scale
100	A+	4.0
98-99	A+	3.9
95-97	A	3.8
92-94	A-	3.7
90-91	A-	3.6
87-89	B+	3.5
83-86	B	3.4
81-82	B-	3.3
79-80	B-	3.2
76-78	C+	3.1
74-75	C	3.0
71-73	C-	2.9
70	C-	2.8

Written Assignment Style Guide

All written work must be no longer than the assigned number of words in twelve-point Times font. Your assignment must have your name, date, course number and the assignment title in the upper right hand corner (this does not count toward the word limit). Any assignment not following these guidelines will be returned ungraded and uncredited.

Written assignments are a chance for you to explore and express your ideas. Therefore, your assignments will be evaluated for clarity of expression, organization and insight. Grammar and syntax are an integral part of communicating your thoughts clearly. I have found grammar checking computer software to be inadequate. *You must proofread and revise your assignments before turning them in.* Ultimately you are responsible for your grammar and spelling, not your computer.

I am not particular which citation style you use (MLA, APA, or Chicago). But you must be consistent throughout.

Writing Tips:

- Read aloud what you have written; this will help you achieve clarity.
- Proofread with the intent to revise your paper.
- Do not use emotional appeals.
- Do not ask a series of questions.
- Always specify where and whom.
- Avoid generalizing statements.
- Do not resort to vague descriptors such as “weird” or “interesting.”
- *Italicize* television program titles (specific episode titles must be in quotation marks).
- *Italicize* book titles (chapter titles must be in quotation marks).
- *Italicize* journal titles (article titles must be in quotation marks).
- *Italicize* film titles.
- Do not repeat the same word in a sentence.
- Avoid contractions.
- Avoid awkward and unclear word choices.
- Watch out for sentence fragments; revise them into sentences.
- Beware of run-on sentences; revise them into shorter sentences.
- Properly identify the title of the reading, be careful not to confuse the title of the book with the title of the chapter, or the name of the journal with the title of the article
- Properly identify the author of the reading (there may be more than one author). The first time you identify the author(s), use first and last name; after that last name only.
- Make sure you know and understand the philosophical underpinnings of the argument, assumed and/ or accepted hierarchies, as well as methods of interpretation and argument.
- Think comparatively: compare and contrast the ideas, concepts, methodologies, and arguments of different authors and articles throughout the semester.
- I do not subscribe to the conventional wisdom that everything is a matter of interpretation. Too often this position is an alibi for intellectual laziness. Back up your assertions with evidence and logical argumentation.
- Evaluations of articles should not take the form of “bad,” “good,” “stupid,” “weird,” or “cool.” Its relevance to your personal life is not a concern for these assignments.

Papers that have clearly not taken these tips under advisement will be subject to a grading penalty.

Schedule of Class Meetings

January 4: Introduction

January 6:

- Winston, Brian "How are Media Born?"** from *Media Studies: A Reader*

January 11:

- Mumford, Lewis "Cultural Preparations"*** from *Technics and Civilization*

January 13:

- Marvin, Carolyn "Introduction"*** and "Annihilating Space, Time, and Difference"*** from *When Old Technologies Were New*

January 20:

- Williams, Raymond "The Technology and the Society"*** from *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*

January 25:

- Young, Paul "Introduction"*** from *Cinema Dreams its Rivals*

January 27:

- Young, Paul "A Cinema Without Wires"*** from *Cinema Dreams its Rivals*

February 1:

- Benjamin, Walter "The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproducibility"

February 3:

- Benjamin, Walter "The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproducibility" continued

February 8:

- Friedberg, Anne "The End of Cinema?"*** from *Reinventing Film Studies*

February 10:

- Murphy, Sheila "Introduction"*** from *How Television Invented New Media*

February 12: (cinema paper due)

February 17:

- Boddy, William, "The Amateur, The Housewife, and The Salesroom Floor"*** from *New Media and the Popular Imagination*
- Wang, Jennifer Hyland "The Case of the Radio-active Housewife"*** from *The Radio Reader*

February 22:

- DuGay, Paul, Stuart Hall, et. al. *The Story of the Walkman* chapters 1, 2, 3

February 24:

- DuGay, Paul, Stuart Hall, et. al. *The Story of the Walkman* chapters 4, 5, 6

February 29:

- Livingstone, Sonia "The Changing Nature of Media Audiences"*** from *A Companion to Media Studies*
- Hirsch, Eric "New Technologies and Domestic Consumption"*** from *The Television Studies Book*

March 2:

- Bolter, Jay David and Richard Grusin, "Introduction"*** and "Immediacy, Hypermediacy, and Remediation"*** from *Remediation: Understanding New Media*

March 4: (domestic consumption paper due)

March 7:

- Littau, Karin, "Media, mythology and morphogenesis"***
- Sotamaa, Olli. "Let me take you to *The Movies*"***

March 9:

- Gabrys, Jennifer, "Introduction"*** *A Natural History of Electronics*
- LeBel, Sabine, "Wasting the Future"***

March 15: (digital futures paper due)