

Communications Studies COMS 381 – Lecture 01
Communications History
Winter 2014
Lecture – Monday 12:00 – 1:50
Lab 01 – Thursday 9:00 – 9:50
Lab 02 – Thursday 10:00 – 10:50

Instructor:	Dr. Doug Brent
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Web Page:	www.ucalgary.ca/~dabrent (course-specific information is on Blackboard)
Office Hours:	Wednesday 1:00 – 3:00 or by appointment (I realize that you may not be available during my regular office hours but I will always make time to see you.) Note: it is often easiest to make appointments by e-mail to avoid the after-class scrum. Please place the words COMS 381 in the subject line to avoid getting mixed up with administrivia – I always try to get to student e-mails first.

Course Description

A general survey of how various communication systems and practices developed through history, and of the social contexts within which they emerged, transformed, and adapted through time. Within this framework, the course examines major technological developments in the history of human communication and uses theory to understand their origins and impacts on social organization and everyday life.

Additional Information

Labs: Lab periods are not optional, nor are they intended simply for students who need extra help of some kind. They are integral to the course and afford an opportunity to engage in discussion in a smaller setting than is possible in a large lecture. Your participation grade will be largely determined by brief, ungraded assignments completed and handed in during lab periods. Please respect your teaching assistant and fellow students by coming to labs prepared and having done required readings.

Objectives of the Course

Marshall McLuhan believed that, unless we understand the innate properties of media and how they affect not only our way of living but our way of thinking, we are powerless to resist their influence. This course surveys the history of communication as it evolved from orality through various modes of technologized media, including writing, printing and electronic media, in order to contextualize the relationship between technology and the social world.

Students who successfully complete this course should be able to:

- Understand the media that surround them against a larger context of social and cognitive effects
- Understand some of the more important thinkers on the subject of media effects
- Relate the social trends discussed in this course to their work in other courses and to their lives
- Write accurately and persuasively about their own view of these thinkers and the media context in which they live

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops are permitted for note taking only. Please respect the lecturer, teaching assistants and your fellow students by not using computers for other purposes during classes or tutorials. iPods, cellphones and gaming devices must be off during class. If you are expecting an emergency call, please let me know at the beginning of the class.

Textbooks and Readings:

Crowley, David & Paul Heyer, eds. (2010) *Communication in History*, 6th Edition (If you find a fifth edition floating around, it will likely do the job although you may find the different page numbers inconvenient)

Ong, Walter. (1982) *Orality and Literacy*

Additional readings will be linked from Blackboard

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation and lab work – ongoing throughout the term – 10%

Quiz 1 – Feb 6 (during lab time) - 15 %

Proposal for Term Paper – March 3 – 5%

Quiz 2 – March 13 (during lab time) – 15%

Term paper – March 31 - 35%

Quiz 3 – Registrar Scheduled - 20%

Quizzes will consist of short-essay questions on specific aspects of the readings.

Lab work will consist of brief exercises and responses completed before the lab and handed in at the lab. They will not be graded as such but they are important aids to focussed discussion, and completing them will largely determine your participation grade. Occasional absences with good reason can be forgiven.

The **proposal** will be a brief proposal for your term paper (about 500 words or so). It must include some evidence of preliminary research (including actually having read some of the material), and a sense of your approach to the topic. A reference list is required.

The **term paper** will be a 2000-2500 word research assignment in which you will apply the concepts of the course to any communications technology of your choice, ancient or modern. You will base your paper on relevant books and articles (I will give general suggestions on how to track down useful ones), but you will be encouraged to create a thesis that pulls them together into an argument for the philosophical, cognitive, social, and epistemological effects of the technology (not just its technical or purely historical aspects).

All assignments must normally be completed – pass or fail – in order to receive a passing grade on the entire course.

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Assignments will be submitted electronically via Blackboard. Detailed instructions will be provided.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: Yes

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. If you need an extension for urgent reasons, please discuss this with me *before* the due date.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.** For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading System

All grades will be assigned as letter grades. The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will be converted to a number for calculation purposes using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237,

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Week 1 Jan. 13	Introduction to the Course and to Early Technologies The lecture will cover cave painting and the early development of writing. (Yes, we will have a full lecture that day, but no required reading.)
Week 2 Jan. 20	Theories of Transformative Technologies Innis, "Media in Ancient Civilizations," Crowley and Heyer McLuhan, <i>Understanding Media</i> Chapter 1, "The Medium is the Message" and Chapter 2, "Media Hot and Cold." Posted on Blackboard.
Week 3 Jan. 27	From Orality to Literacy Ong, <i>Orality and Literacy</i> . Chapters 1, 2, 3
Week 4 Feb. 3	From Craft Literacy to the Print Revolution Ong, Chapter 4 Quiz 1 (During Thursday lab)
Week 5 Feb. 10	Print Society Ong, Chapter 5
Feb.17- 21	Reading Week, No Classes

Week 6 Feb. 24	Writing and News Thompson, "The Trade in News," Crowley and Heyer Keller, "Early Photojournalism," Crowley and Heyer Schudson, "The New Journalism," Crowley and Heyer
Week 7 March 3	The Electric Revolution Standage, "Telegraphy – The Victorian Internet," Crowley and Heyer Carey, "Time, Space and the Telegraph," Crowley and Heyer Proposal due Monday March 3
Week 8 March 10	Radio Douglas, "Early Radio," Crowley and Heyer Fornatale and Mills, "Radio in the Television Age," Crowley and Heyer McLuhan, <i>Understanding Media</i> , "Radio" Quiz 2 (During Thursday lab)
Week 9 March 17	Television Boddy, "Television Begins," Crowley and Heyer McLuhan, <i>Understanding Media</i> , "Television."
Week 10 March 24	More Social/Cognitive Effects of Media Neil Postman, <i>Amusing Ourselves to Death</i> (selections posted on Blackboard) Tufte, "The Cognitive Effects of PowerPoint" http://www.edwardtufte.com/bboard/q-and-a-fetch-msg?msg_id=0001yB%20
Week 11 March 31	Industrial Computing: The Control Revolution Beniger, "The Control Revolution," Crowley and Heyer Zuboff, "Automate/Informate: The Two Faces of Intelligent Technology" http://layoftheland.net/archive/web/mis-575/course_docs/topic_5/zuboff.infomate.pdf Research Paper due midnight Monday March 31
Week 12 April 7	The Digital Universe: The Technologies of Everyday Life Bolter, "Remediation and the Desire for Immediacy" http://con.sagepub.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/content/6/1/62.full.pdf+html Soffer, "Silent Orality" 10.1111/j.1468-2885.2010.01368.x (enter the above DOI number into the search box on the Library home page)
Week 13 April 14	Course Evaluation Guest Presentation: Technologies and Disabilities Diana Brent, Program Teacher (Vision), Calgary Board of Education