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HIST 345-102: Communication Through the Ages

Matthew Friedman

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HIST 345-001 – Communication Through the Ages

Lecturer: Matthew Friedman
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Time: Thursday 6:00-8:50pm
Office Hours: TBD by appointment

Course Description:

The media theorist Marshall wrote that information and communications media and technologies, the “extensions of man” (using the gendered language of the 1960s) should be an object of study, as much as the content that they carry because *how* we communicate, shapes *what* we communicate. In effect, he wrote, “the medium is the message,”

This course will examine those communication media throughout human history, from the written and printed word to TikTok and Snapchat, and discover how they have each altered the messages they carried and transformed the human experience, as they have drawn us together in an increasingly shrinking world. We discuss how communication technologies and practices have shaped social and economic interactions and the experience of high and popular culture, politics, and power.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Recognize the ways in which technologies have shaped our history and framed human interactions and, conversely, how political economy has created demand for technological innovation.
- Demonstrate that you can recognize, articulate, and analyze the impact of communication technologies on society throughout history
- Identify, analyze, and deploy primary sources in conversation with secondary sources to make historical arguments.
- Produce a research project with a clear argument and effective argumentation.

Required Books:

1. Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, second edition, ISBN: 978-1-107-63275-2
2. Martin Campbell Kelly, *Computer: A History of the Information Machine* (The Sloan Technology Series) 3rd Edition, ISBN-10: 0813345901

All other readings are available online through the NJIY library, or will be posted on Canvas.

Grading :

You must complete all assignments to pass the course. Failure to do so will result in an automatic F.

1. **Research Project: 25%** You will produce a short video about a communication technology or system and post it to the discussion board on the Canvas site by April 22, after completing research into its significance and historical context. The project will consist of the following components.

- i. **Proposal:** A 300-word description of the communication technology or system, explaining your choice, and what you believe to be its historical significance. Due February 18. **(Out of 5)**
 - ii. **Annotated Bibliography:**(An annotated bibliography of five sources; at least two must be primary sources, and two must be secondary sources. Due April 1. **(Out of 5)**
 - iii. **Video:** A 5-minute video presentation on the significance and historical context of your communication technology or system. Due April 22. **(Out of 10)**
 - iv. **Peer Review:** You will review each other’s videos in small groups. You may revise your video before grading to address any criticism raised in the peer review. Due April 29. **(Out of 5)**
2. **Participation: 20%** You are expected to actively participate in lecture videoconferences and on the course discussion board. You will be expected to respond to discussion prompts every week, and comment on your classmates’ posts.
 3. **Surprise Quizzes: 15%** You will take between four and five surprise quizzes scheduled randomly through the term.
 4. **Midterm exam: 15%** The midterm exam will be online, and consist of open-ended questions and identifications of key terms.
 5. **Final Exam: 25%** The midterm exam will be online, and consist of open-ended questions and identification quwstions.

To get the most out of this course, you must maintain an upper college level reading, writing and participation level.

Assignment Submission Guidelines:

Late Assignments: Assignments will lose 1/3 of a grade for every day late (A to A-; A- to B+; etc.). Assignments will not be accepted more than 1 week late.

Grading Scale (for assignments only, course grades will not include: A+, A-, B-, C-, D+):

100	A+	76-78	C+
93-99	A	73-75	C
89-92	A-	69-72	C-
86-88	B+	66-68	D+
83-85	B	60-65	D
79-82	B-	0-60	F

Academic Integrity: An essential part of NJIT’s policy of academic integrity is that students demonstrate honesty and integrity in their courses. It is also a policy that will serve you in good stead in the rest of your personal and professional life. Turning in a paper that includes plagiarism, was written by someone else and passed off as your own work, or cheating on an examination will result in a 0 for that assignment. All cases of suspected plagiarism/cheating will be reported to the office of the Dean of Students for investigation. If you’re unclear on what constitutes an honor code violation, please see the university policy on academic integrity at:

<https://www.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>

Students with Disabilities or Special Needs:

Students who have disabilities or special needs should contact NJIT's Student Disability Services to help procure accommodations in completing coursework. The center can be found at <http://www.njit.edu/counseling/services/disabilities.php>.

Other Resources:

There are several writing assignments both big and small for this course, and if you need them, the [Writing Center](#) can provide you with help on every part of the writing process. Also, please don't hesitate to drop by my office hours or send me an email if you're having difficulties.

We all need a support network. If you need them, the [Center for Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (C-CAPS) in Campbell Hall, Room 205, is available to listen and to help.

Class Schedule and Readings:

Class 1: January 21 - Introduction and The Invention of Writing

Class 2: January 28 - The Printing Revolution

- Read: Eisenstein, Chapter 1-2.

Class 3: February 4 - Print Culture

- Read: Eisenstein, Chapter 3.

Class 4: February 11 - The Reading Public

- Read: Eisenstein, Chapters 4-5.

Class 5: February 18 - Books and Their Discontents

- Read: Eisenstein, Chapters 6-7.
- **PROPOSAL DUE**

Class 6: February 25 - The Visual Revolution

- Read: Daniel J. Czitrom, "American Motion Pictures and the New Popular Culture," *Media and the American Mind*, pp. 30-59 (**Book available online at NJIT library**)
- Look at: the photographs in "[Faking it. Manipulated Photography Before Photoshop.](#)" Metropolitan Museum of Art,
- Watch: one video in the Library of Congress's "[Inventing Entertainment: The Early Motion Pictures and Sound Recordings of the Edison Companies](#)" collection. Be prepared to discuss your video in class**
- Write: A one-paragraph description of your video, due as a printed copy in class.

Class 7: March 4 - Telegraphy

- Read: Tom Standage, "The Mother of All Networks" , "Strange, Fierce Fire," and "Wiring The World," in *The Victorian Internet*, pp. 1-40, 74-91. (**PDF files on Canvas site**)
- Read: David Hochfelder, "Why the Telegraph was Revolutionary,"; "The Promise of Telegraphy", in *The Telegraph in America*. pp. 1-5; pp. 176-

180. (*Book available online at NJIT library*)

Class 8: March 11 - **The Telephone**

- Read: Hochfelder, “The Telegraph, The Telephone, and the Logic of Industrial Succession,” in in *The Telegraph in America*. pp. 138-175. (*Book available online at NJIT library*)
- Robert MacDougall, “Visions of Telephony” in *The People's Network: The Political Economy of the Telephone in the Gilded Age*, pp. 61-91 (*Book available online at NJIT library*)

MIDTERM BREAK - March 18

Class 9: March 25 - **Wireless**

- Read: Daniel J. Czitrom, “The Ethereal Hearth: American Radio from Wireless through Broadcasting, 1892-1940,” *Media and the American Mind*, pp. 60-88. (*Book available online at NJIT library*)
- Read: Clive Thompson, “[The Debate Over Net Neutrality Has Its Roots in the Fight Over Radio Freedom](#),” *Smithsonian Magazine*, October 2014
- Listen: The Mercury Theatre on Air, “[The War of the Worlds](#)” 1938 59 minutes.
- MIDTERM EXAM DURING THIS WEEK OF CLASSES**

Class 10: April 1 - **Television**

- Read: Susan Murray, “And Now—Color: Early Color Systems,” in *Bright Signals: A History of Color Television*, pp. 11-33 . (*PDF files on Canvas site*)
- Second reading TBA
- Watch: [The first television broadcast](#), 1936.
- ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

Class 11: April 8 - **Analog Computers**

- Read: Campbell-Kelly, Chapter 1-3
 - Optional: Solve some mathematical problems using The [Slide Rule Museum’s virtual slide rule](#).

Class 12: April 15 - **Digital Computers**

- ** Assignment 5 due: Introductory paragraph(s) with clear thesis statement****
 - Read: Campbell-Kelly, Chapter 4-7.

Class 13: April 22 - **Personal Computing**

- Read: Campbell-Kelly, Chapter 9-11.
- Play: [Spacewar!](#), a 1962 computer game, on a PDP-1 emulator.
- VIDEO DUE**

Class 14: April 29 - **Networking and Social Media**

- Read: Campbell-Kelly: Chapter 12.
- Other readings TBA.

I have read, understood, and will abide by the course policies for HIS 345

Name:

Date:

Signature: