

RTF 393C: TELECOMMUNICATION & INFORMATION SYSTEMS
Wednesdays, 9am - noon, Batts 207, Fall Semester, 1997
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SYLLABUS

Contact information

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Required texts

Carey, J. (1989). *Communication as culture*.

Reading packet for RTF 393c, available at Longhorn Printing (on Guadeloupe, across the street from the Communications Bldg.)

Prerequisites

Graduate standing and consent of the instructor. RTF 393C is cross listed as LIS 385T and Com 385T.

***Course Summary -- Telecommunications and information systems:
A critical and cultural perspective***

What are the social consequences of technological change? This course provides an introduction to the ongoing "revolution" in telecommunication and information systems through integrating an up-to-date understanding of emerging technologies such as the Internet, fiber optics, DBS, HDTV and others with a critical and cultural approach. In addition to understanding the technologies themselves, students will be asked to critically examine telecommunications and information systems in terms of their relationship to social, economic, and political power.

Each student will be expected to develop an in-depth understanding of a particular technology-based information system (including its evolution, economics and social impacts) in the context of its relationship to issues of power (broadly defined): Who has access? Who has control? Who receives the benefits and who bears the cost?

Students will write two short analysis papers (5 pages) and one longer research paper (15 pages). Equal emphasis will be given to the technologies of interpersonal, organizational and mass communications, and both domestic and international perspectives will be considered.

Schedule of Assignments

Each student will be expected to become familiar with a broad range of communication technologies in the context of their development and use. In addition, each student will select a particular aspect of a telecommunication and information system and over the course of the semester develop an in-depth understanding of that particular technology in the context of social theory.

Analysis paper No.1 (5 pages), due Wednesday, 10/1/97: 20%

Analysis paper No. 2 (5 pages), due Wednesday, 10/29/97: 20%

Research Paper (15 pages) due Friday, December 12, 1997 at 4:00 PM: 40%

Class participation, as requested: 10%

In class presentation, as scheduled: 10%

More details about each of these assignments will be provided in class.

No final examination, tests, or quizzes

Please note

All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late assignments up to 48 hours late will be subject to 15% penalty. Assignments more than 48 hours late will be subject to a 30% penalty. All assigned work must be completed by the end of the semester to receive a passing grade. No provision is made for early or late examinations. No "incomplete" will be awarded absent documented compelling circumstances and prior consent of the instructor.

Class attendance and participation required.

Attendance and class participation are mandatory. Each student is expected to regularly attend class and actively participate in class discussions. At the discretion of the instructor, a wide range of events may qualify as an excused absence. Please note

that an absence is much more likely to be considered as "excused" if the instructor is notified *in advance*, either in person, by telephone or e-mail.

Grading and Evaluation

The essence of the assigned papers is the quality of the information and its presentation and not quantity. All written work is graded on a subjective scale as indicated below. In general: Written work is assigned a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F (including pluses or minuses). All written work should reflect a satisfactory standard of writing, including use of complete sentences, paragraphs and section headings. The writing should be clear and concise. If the meaning is unclear, you may lose partial credit. Papers and other assignments must be typed and conform to the "style guide" distributed by the instructor.

A grade: The paper is complete, specific, and all aspects of the question are considered. If there are two or more sides to a question or issue, facts supporting all sides are presented and analyzed. The argument or explanation is well-organized and supported by examples. For a grade of "A" to be assigned, the work must be in some way outstanding and evidence originality and depth in its elaboration.

B grade: The paper is complete, correct and well-organized. Compared to an "A grade," the paper may lack detail or be stated in generalities, but is still well supported and makes good use of facts or examples.

C grade: The question addressed by the paper is satisfactorily answered and generally correct. The argument or explanation is on target and comprehensible. Organization is generally satisfactory. Some supporting examples or material may be inapplicable or lacking in detail or originality.

D or F grade: The question addressed by the paper is only partially answered or incorrect. Organization is unsatisfactory, and supporting material is lacking in detail, poorly chosen or irrelevant to the paper.

Office hours

I welcome your visits during office hours. Please feel free to either schedule an appointment or just "drop in" even if just to stop by and say "hello."

Other terms and conditions

1. It is a condition of your continued enrollment in this course that you conform your conduct to the usual norms and practices of university education. It is presumed, for example, that all work submitted is the **original work of the student whose name appears on it**, and was prepared originally for this course. Plagiarism and other acts of dishonesty are subject to academic penalties ranging from loss of credit for the assignment to a failing grade for the course and suspension from the University of Texas.

2. **Papers and assignments are due at the beginning of classes on the assigned due date.**

3. **All assigned work and examinations must be completed in the semester in which it is undertaken.** All assignments must be turned in by the last day of the semester in order to receive a passing grade, and a grade of incomplete will not be awarded absent documented extenuating circumstances.

4. A student **must take the midterm and final examination (if any) as scheduled.** Any exceptions to this rule must be approved in writing by the instructor prior to the examination.

5. **Class attendance is required** because it is an important part of the learning process in this class.

6. **A student must be present at the beginning of class.** A student who arrives after attendance has been taken may be given a written warning. After that warning, a student who is not present at the beginning of class will be recorded as absent for the entire period.

6. The instructor will assume that **each student has completed all the assigned readings that are due prior to the start of class.**

*Your continued enrollment in this class indicates your agreement
and acceptance of these terms.*

RTF 393C: Telecommunication & Information Systems

(tentative schedule)

Note on the readings: The numbered articles are in the RTF 393C reader available at Longhorn Copies. All references to "Carey" are from *Communication as Culture* (1989)

Class DateTopic****

(1.) 8/27 Introduction

Summary and overview of class requirements. Introduction to telecommunication and information systems.

----- PART I -----

Technology and social theory

(2.) 9/3 Social theory and technology I: critical and cultural perspectives

How have social scientists and communication scholars conceptualized the relationship between technology and society?

- 1 Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?"
- 2 Williams, "The Technology and The Society"
- 3 Mesthene, "Preface" Technological Change
Carey, Introduction +Ch 1. "A cultural approach to communication"

(3.) 9/10 Social theory and technology II: contrasting views on "technology" and society

When new communication technologies and information systems are introduced into society, social change often results. What are the leading theories concerning "diffusion of innovation?" What would a critical and cultural approach to diffusion take into account?

- 4 Horner, "The Case of DAT Technology"
- 5 Rogers, "Elements of Diffusion"
- 6 Kahn, "The Behavior of Buying"
- 7 Beniger, "The Information Society"
Carey, Ch.2, "Mass communication and cultural studies"
Carey, Ch.8, "Technology and ideology: The case of the telegraph"

(4.) 9/17 Social theory and technology III: Diffusion / Social Construction of Technology

What is the social construction of technology? How is it related to diffusion of innovation?

- 8 Markoff, "If the Medium is the Message, the Message is the Web"
- 9 Marvin, "Introduction" When Old Technologies Were New"
- 10 Douglas, "Introduction" Inventing American Broadcasting"
1899 - 1922
Carey, Ch. 3, Reconceiving 'mass' and 'media'
Carey, Ch. 4, Overcoming resistance to cultural studies

(5.) 9/24 Social theory and technology IV: "The digital convergence"

What is the digital convergence and what are its implications for telecommunication and information systems? Is there really a "revolution" in telecommunication and information systems?

- 11 Blattburg and Deighton, "Interactive Marketing"
- 12 Negroponte, "The Post-Information Age"
- 13 Tapscott, "Twelve Themes of the New Economy"

----- **PART II** -----

Assessing the relationship between telecommunication & information Systems and specific social formations

(6.) 10/1 The "individual"

► **Paper Assignment Due: What is *critical mass*?**

What is the relationship of "the individual" to the emerging telecommunications and information systems? How is individual identity created and sustained in the context of technological systems?

- 14 Gergen, "The Self Under Siege"
- 15 Turkle, "Introduction" Life on the Screen"

(7.) 10/7 "The family"

Historically, the family has been a key site of social power. How are telecommunication and information systems changing the relationship of "families" to social, economic, and political power?

- 16 Leibman, "Rules and Regulations"
- 17 Morley, "Private Worlds and Gendered Technologies"
- 18 Morley, "Domestic Communication: Technologies and Meanings"
- 19 Morely, "The Gendered Framework of Family Viewing"
- 20 Weinraub, "Fun for the Whole Family"
- 21 Gould, "Family Life 1948 AT (After Television)"

(8.) 10/15 "The press" and other media organizations

In the West, a "free press" is thought to be the foundation of democratic society. How are the new telecommunication and information systems changing the political structures of modern society?

- 22 Warner, "Preface" *The Letters of the Republic*
- 23 Innis, "The English Publishing Trade in the Eighteenth Century"
- 24 Neorne, "Introduction" *Violence Against the Press*"
 Carey, Ch. 8, "Space, time and communications"

(9.) 10/22 Church and "school"

Scholars have long supposed that "printing" disrupted the hold of religion on the Western mind. What evidence supports this belief? Will electronic media have a similar disruptive effect? In addition, how do the social institutions of "church" and "school" influence the development of social mores? What about "Net Nanny" and the "V-Chip?"

- 25 Eisenstein,, "Western Christendom Disrupted"
- 26 Eisenstein,, "An Unacknowledged Revolution"
- 27 Nasaw, "Talking and Singing Machines, Parlors and Peep Shows"
- 28 Kay, "Computers, Networks and Education"

(10.) 10/29 The corporation

- ▶ Paper Assignment Due: How does the *social* shape the *technological*?

A distinctive feature of contemporary society is the prominent role played by corporations. How do the needs and requirements of corporations affect the development of telecommunication and information systems?

- 29 Berle, "The Philosophy of Economic Power"
- 30 Berle, "The Fission of Property - The Legal Evolution"
- 31 Cringely, "Amateur Hour"

(11.) 11/5 The nation state I: Liberalism, nationalism, democratization

What is the role of "the state" in the new environment of telecommunication and information systems? What are the competing models of economic regulation and their consequences?

- 32 Stone, "The Telephone and the Public Service Idea"
- 33 Jansen, "Censorship in Capitalist Societies"
- 34 Pool, "A Shadow Darkens"
- Carey, Ch. 3. Reconceiving "mass" and "media"

(12.) 11/12 The Nation state II: Law and regulation -- privacy, property, etc.

How does the exercise of state power over telecommunication and information systems affect individual rights? How will competing demands be reconciled? By what mechanism? In terms of the democratic potential of the emerging telecommunication and information systems, what is "participatory technology?"

- 35 Students for a Democratic Society, "Participatory Democracy"
- 36 Berger and Luckman, "Society as a 'Human Product'"
- 37 Foucault, "Power as Knowledge"
- Carey, Ch. 7, "The history of the future"

(13.) 11/19 Global systems: Sovereignty and National identity

Does the widespread use of advanced telecommunication and information systems herald a “new world order?” What are some of the characteristics of the emerging regime? What is the future of the nation-state in the face of borderless technologies such as satellite television? Looking on a global basis, will the values associated with “tradition” and “community” be subordinated to “progress” and “individuality?”

- 38 Baudrillard, "Simulations: Disneyland"
- 39 Haraway, "The Cyborg Manifesto and Fractured Identities"
- 40 Havel, "The End of the Modern Era"
- 41 Barber, "Introduction: Jihad vs. McWorld"

----- PART III -----

Student presentation of research

(14.) 11/26 presentations

(15.) 12/3 presentations

► Research paper due

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