

Media Studies 100

Media Technologies from Gutenberg to the Internet

KY 170 Monday and Wednesday, 3:00 – 4:15 PM

Code: 1831 Section E6M3

PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS – SUBJECT TO REVISION

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Building G, Room 208A
Office hours: Mon. 2:00 – 3:00 PM, and Wednesday 4:15 – 5:00 PM
(and by appointment)

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Course summary: Broad historical survey of media technologies and their social implications. The readings and the lectures focus upon technological change within the human systems of communication, a process called *MediaMorphosis*. Each student is expected to develop an understanding of how economic, social and political factors transform communication media and institutions. In addition, students will gain a fundamental knowledge of the emerging communication technologies of the Internet and World Wide Web, and their historical predecessors.

Course prerequisites: Students enrolling in MEDST 101 are required to have an e-mail account and access to the Internet/ WWW.

Textbook: Roger Fidler (1997). *MediaMorphosis: Understanding New Media*. Pine Forge Press/Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Weekly reading assignments posted to the class home page.

See: <http://forbin.qc.edu/mediastudies/lenert.htm>

Assignments: 40% four research/writing assignments
30% midterm (on lectures and readings)
30% final examination (on lectures and readings)

More detail on these assignments will be provided during class.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE *SUBJECT TO REVISION*

Week 1 (September 6)

September 4 is Labor Day, No Class Scheduled.

Introduction to the class.

Readings

Internet Reading 1

Week 2 (September 11 and 13)

Principles of mediamorphosis

- Assignment #1: Diffusion of innovation assignment (assigned 9/13 and due 9/27)

Readings

Fidler, Ch. 1

Internet Reading 2

Week 3 (September 18 and 20)

Diffusion of innovation: lessons from failure

Readings

Fidler, Ch. 6

Internet Reading 3

Week 4 (September 27)

(No Class on September 25. Professor out of town at Telecommunication Policy Research Conference, Washington, D.C.)

Domains of communication media

Readings

Fidler, Ch. 2

Internet Reading 4

Week 5 (October 2 and 4)

The role of language and printing

Readings

Fidler, Ch. 3

Internet Reading 5

**Week 6 (Tuesday, October 10 and Wednesday, October 11)
[Monday classes meet on Tuesday!]**

Technologies of control and surveillance

- Assignment #2: Technologies of control and surveillance (assigned 10/11 and due 10/25)

Readings

Fidler, Ch. 4
Internet Reading 6

Week 7 (October 16 and 18)

The cultural context of media

Readings

Fidler, Ch. 5
Internet Reading 7

Week 8 (October 23 and 25)

The document domain

Readings

Fidler, Ch. 9
Internet Reading 10

Week 9 (October 30 and November 1)

Summary and review

- Midterm Examination on November 1.

Readings

Internet Reading 9

Week 10 (November 6 and 8)

The interpersonal domain

- Assignment #3: Virtual communities (assigned on 11/6 and due on 11/20)

Readings

Fidler, Ch. 7
Internet Reading 8

Week 11 (November 13 and 15)

The broadcast domain

Readings

Fidler, Ch. 8

Internet Reading 11

Week 12 (November 20 and 22)

The emergence of computers and the Internet

Readings

Internet Reading 12

Thursday, November 23 is Thanksgiving

Week 13 (November 27 and 29)

The machine that changed the world

- Assignment #4: Humans and computers (Assigned 11/27 and due 12/11).

Readings

Internet Reading 13

Week 14 (December 4 and 6)

Computers and humans

Readings

Internet Reading 14

Week 15 (December 11 and 13)

Summary and review

Readings

Fidler, Ch. 10

Internet Reading 15

December 18 - 22 Final Examination Period
(Final examination time and date TBA)

Assignment # 1: Rogers' Model of Diffusion of Innovation

Background: The principle objective of this assignment is to apply the Rogers model of diffusion of innovation to a specific product or technology. (See page 12 in your textbook.)

Instructions: Select a specific technological innovation related to media. Example: DVD, satellite TV, MP3 players. It will be best if you select a product that you are personally interested in and would like to learn more about.

1. Research and describe the major features of the product/technology you selected. For example: What does it do? How does it look? **[2 pts.]**
2. For each of the five factors below, grade your selected product/technology on a scale of A to F (with A being excellent and F being failure). Briefly explain why you assigned each grade. **[5 pts.]**
 - 1) relative advantage
 - 2) compatibility
 - 3) complexity
 - 4) trialability
 - 5) observability
3. Based on the grades you assigned in Step 2, answer the question: Is your selection likely to reach the “takeoff point” and become mainstream, or is it not? Explain your answer. Your answer to this particular question should be no more than 250 words long (one page typed double-spaced). **[3 pts.]**

Format Requirements: Make sure you answer all of the questions above. Remember that the presentation of your work counts – please proofread your work before you submit it. Provide reference to your sources of research.

Assignment # 2: Technologies of Control and Surveillance

Background: In class and in the readings we have discussed how communication technologies are used for the purposes of control and surveillance. The example in the text describes how telegraph technology was used to solve the problem of coordinating train movement. As a consequence a national system of railroads became possible and enabled conducting trade in distant parts of the country. (See page 81 in your textbook.)

Instructions: Complete this assignment by restating each of the questions and typing your answer immediately below the question. Write no more than one paragraph per question. Make sure you answer all of the questions. The originality of your selection of a technology will be a factor in your grade. Begin by selecting a communication technology that is/was used for the purpose of control or surveillance.

1. Name the technology you selected and describe its basic elements (What is it made of?), and its generic function (What can it do?) **[2 pts.]**
2. Describe the crisis of control – who were the parties involved and how did this technology affect their relationship? **[2 pts.]**
3. How did the technology address the problem of control or surveillance? **[2 pts.]**
4. What were the most important consequences of using this technology? **[4 pts.]**

Format Requirements: Make sure you answer all of the questions above. Remember that the presentation of your work counts – please proofread your answers before you submit them. Provide reference to your sources of research.

Assignment #3: Virtual Communities

Background: In the last five years virtual communities have become increasingly popular. On-line chat rooms, ICQ, instant messaging, listservs are all an important part of everyday life for many people.

Instructions: Select an on-line community and observe it for at least 15 minutes a day for five days. Keep a daily journal or log of your observations. Your journal is the material "evidence" of your study. Write down communication behaviours that seem important or typical of the community.

Use the notes in your journal to answer the questions below. Begin by restating each question and typing your answer immediately below it. Write no more than one paragraph per question. Make sure you answer all of the questions. The originality of your selection of an on-line community will be a factor in your grade.

1. What community did you choose and how can the instructor find it on-line? (Give URL and other relevant information.) How does one join or leave the community? **[2 pts.]**
2. Describe the community. What are some key characteristics of its participants? What are their interests? Is there a "group identity" or "social glue" holding together the participants? **[2 pts.]**
3. In the context of the community, how does one express individuality? **[2 pts.]**
4. In what ways is this community similar to or different from traditional communities? **[4 pts.]**

Format Requirements: Make sure you answer all of the questions above. Remember that the presentation of your work counts – please proofread your answers before you submit them. Provide reference to your sources of research.

Assignment # 4: Humans and Computers

Background: Technology has always been an important part of how we imagine the future. Information society. Digital culture. Virtual Reality. These are all terms in which we have come to define parts of our present circumstances.

Instructions: In this assignment, use your imagination to describe how the relationship of human beings and computers will change in the course of your lifetime, say in the next 20 to 30 years. Use the following questions to guide your thoughts:

- Will computers replace humans in every aspect of human activity or not?
- Will human nature be changed by the advances of technology and how?
- Will human life improve or become worse by increased use of technology?

Use the video presentations shown in class and the assigned readings as starting points for your thoughts. Write a 500-word essay (two typed double-spaced pages), presenting your thoughts and explaining your vision. Support your opinions with examples from films, books or personal observations. Make sure you list your sources of reference.

Conclude your essay by writing your opinion on the following fundamental question: **Do improvements in communication technology always result in human progress? Why or why not?**

Important information for students

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.

2. Papers and assignments are due at the beginning of classes on the assigned due date. Do not miss class because your assignment is not finished. Call or email the instructor to make arrangements to turn your paper in after class. Late assignments up to 48 hours late will be subject to a -20% penalty. Assignments more than 48 hours late will be subject to a -40% penalty.

3. 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 grade of "incomplete" will be awarded absent documented compelling circumstances and prior consent of the instructor.

4. A student must take the midterm and final examination 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. 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.*

⇒ PLEASE READ THIS PAGE CAREFULLY! ⇐

Important guidelines for papers and other written assignments

The presentation of your ideas in written form (papers and take-home examinations) must conform to the following guidelines. Each paper that you turn in for the instructor's evaluation needs to meet university-level production standards. In any assignment, an evaluation of your writing and form of written presentation is part of your grade. A penalty will be assessed for failure to observe these requirements. Please also refer to the instructor's criteria for grading written assignments and examinations found in the course syllabus.

- your name should be on the first page (and all subsequent pages).
- a descriptive and original title (12 pt. type is large enough for the title).
- double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides.
- page numbers.
- stapled in upper left (please, no folders or covers).

Please make sure that your paper also includes (where appropriate):

- a concise introduction that states the subject matter of the paper and the goals of the analysis and commentary.
- a plan of organization which includes the use of subject headings.
- citation or references to the assigned readings for the class.
- quantitative data to illustrate and support your discussion.
- a conclusion that explains how the thesis of your paper is supported by analysis, discussion and examples.
- discussion of more than one point of view (especially as it concerns your conclusion or interpretation of your point of view).
- a listing of works cited/ references at the end of the paper.
- observance of page limits by omitting unnecessary material.

Where you refer to other authors or works, use a citation form that includes the author, date and the page in the text according to APA format (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 4th ed.).

Examples:

(in text) Stewart Brand (1984, p. 36) says that

(in ref. list) Brand, S. (1984). The Media Lab: Inventing the Future at MIT. New York: Penguin Books.

Please note: Not all of these guidelines are applicable to all assignments! Check with the instructor if you are unsure.