

ENGC 210B
HISTORY OF COMMUNICATIONS: ELECTRONIC AGE
WINTER 2005

Lecture: MW 11:30-12:30, McConnell Engineering 204 + 1 weekly tutorial
(You are also required to register for your tutorial. Check Minerva for your options.)

This course provides students with a thematic and conceptual introduction to the history of communication technology. Our main goal is to teach the practices of historical and critical thought about communication technology. In the process of achieving that goal, we will expose students to a wide range of facts and issues in the history of communications technology. There is no prerequisite for this course.

Professor Jonathan Sterne

Office & Mailbox: W270 Arts Building

Office Phone: 398-5852 (I check voicemail at least once a day MW)

Mailbox: On My Door

E-Mail: jonathan.sterne@mcgill.ca (list "EngC 210" or "HistComm" as the subject of your message)

Office Hours: MW 1-2 and by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Ingrid Bejerman (ingridbejerman@yahoo.ca).

Teaching Assistant: Julian Awwad (julian.awwad@mail.mcgill.ca)

Check the course website for TA office hours, location, and further contact information.

Please allow at least 24 hours for a response to your email – longer on weekends. Per McGill policy and to insure your privacy, you must use your McGill email address to contact us.

Availability: Office hours are set aside for you – feel free to stop by office hours without an appointment. The rest of our time is set aside for meetings, class prep, writing, reading, etc. If you wish to see us outside our regular office hours, please make an appointment. Office hours may occasionally be cancelled or rescheduled; this will be announced on the course website. We are also happy to answer simple questions over email or after class. Your professor loves to see students during office hours, but email is the best way to reach him outside office hours and between class meetings.

Other Contacts:

(Name)	(Phone)	(E-Mail)
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(Name)	(Phone)	(E-Mail)
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REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Response Papers: [40%] Over the course of the semester, you will write two short response papers that discuss and apply concepts from lectures and readings. Papers are graded according to a standard grid (we will hand it out with the assignment). Because of the volume of papers, we cannot provide lengthy written comments on your finished product. However, we will be happy to meet with you during office hours to talk about your paper. We will also provide you with time off from tutorials to meet with us before the paper is due.

Quizzes: [45%] Instead of one or two midterms, quizzes on the lectures and readings will be administered approximately every other week during tutorial. The total number of quizzes will be no less than five and the last quiz will be administered during lecture time on the 13th of April. They will be closed book, closed note. Our goal is to reward you for keeping up with lectures and readings and asking questions when you don't understand something. Since your teachers are nice people, we will drop your lowest quiz score for the semester.

Tutorial Participation and Assignments: [5%] This grade will represent your performance on short assignments for or during tutorial, and your performance in tutorial class discussions. An adequate performance will yield an average participation grade.

Lecture Writing: [5%] Over the course of the semester, a few pop quizzes and other assignments will occur during lecture. Pop quizzes may cover a reading due on the day of the quiz, any item from the previous two lectures, or other relevant materials. Although they will be closed book and closed note, pop quizzes are designed to be easy, to reward you for coming prepared to lecture. Students who require special exam accommodations should notify the professor during the first week of class. Missed pop quizzes cannot be made up and are not "excused." Assignments will require thoughtful feedback from students on a matter discussed in class that day.

Lecture / Online Participation: [5%] You will have opportunities to participate in every lecture. You will also have an opportunity to contribute to the course through the online discussion forum. The professor will note contributions over the course of the semester. PLEASE NOTE that this is a cumulative grade – you can only earn a small portion of it each week. An adequate performance will yield an average participation grade.

There is no final examination for this course. The professor reserves the right to adjust students' semester grades based on his evaluation of their overall performance.

RESOURCES:

I. Yourself: "There are those who think that the speaker has a function to perform, and the hearer none. They think it only right that the speaker shall come with his lecture carefully thought out and prepared, while they, without consideration or thought of their obligations, rush in and take their seats exactly as if they had come to dinner, to have a good time while others work hard. Those people bite." – Plutarch, Greek Philosopher

Although this is a large lecture course, your participation is essential. Listen carefully. Take lots of notes on lectures and readings. Take advantage of opportunities to participate. Ask questions in lecture or over email. Use our office hours.

II. Your prof and TA: See page 1.

III. Required Readings:

1. A course website has been set up on WebCT. Log in at via your McGill account at [<http://www.mcgill.ca/webct/>]. You should visit it at least twice a week to check for announcements, reading assignments and questions, lecture questions, new material, schedule changes, etc. The website also provides links to the online readings not in the coursepack, a chatroom and a messageboard.

2. A coursepack is available from the McGill Bookstore. It is also on reserve at McLennan-Redpath Library.

IV. Additional University Resources:

The University has some additional resources to help you out. These are not remedial programs, and often the best and most advanced students use them:

The Writing Centre offers individual consultation on all aspects of writing. Appointments are required. They can be found at rm. 244 Education Bldg., 398-6960 [<http://www.mcgill.ca/writing/>].

The Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) provides a broad range of support and services to assist students, faculty, and staff with disabilities. They are located in the 3100 Brown Student Services Bldg., 398-6009 (voice), 398-8198 (TDD), [<http://www.mcgill.ca/osd/>].

The Counseling Service provides personal, academic, and career counseling to undergraduate and graduate students. They also offer workshops on study skills, multiple choice exams, text anxiety/stress management. They can be found at suite 4200 Brown Student Services Bldg, 398-3601 [<http://www.mcgill.ca/counselling/>]. An additional list of workshops can be found at [<http://www.mcgill.ca/student-services/workshops/>].

POLICIES, EXPECTATIONS, RULES

Failure to follow the letter and the spirit of class or university regulations can result in a reduction of your final grade, failure of the course, and/or other penalties as set by University policy.

1. **Attendance and Performance**

This course is designed for courteous, motivated students who attend all lectures and recitations, do all the reading, and ask questions when they don't understand something. If there is something you don't understand, it is your responsibility to ask your prof or TA a question. If you miss class, you are responsible to get materials we covered from a classmate and make sure you understand them. Should you fail to meet these basic and reasonable expectations, you should expect that your performance on quizzes and assignments will suffer.

2. **Late Arrivals and Early Departures**

Your professor finds people entering and leaving the classroom during lecture to be very unpleasant and distracting. If you know that you must leave early on a given day, please let him know before class. Please make your visits to the bathroom and drinking fountain before and after class. If you arrive late or leave early (or if your excretory system presents you with an emergency in the middle of class) enter or leave the classroom quietly. If you are more than 10 minutes late, don't come to class. Repeat offenders will find their semester grades reduced.

3. **The Classroom: Seating, Questions, and Comments**

Please sit toward the front and center, so that you can hear the lecture and be heard when you ask questions. Although this is a large class, we like discussion. **You are encouraged to raise your hand during lecture and ask questions, add comments, or ask for something you didn't understand to be repeated or clarified.** When you do, please speak up. The room acoustics can be funny: even if you can hear the prof perfectly, your classmates may not hear you as well.

Cell phones, beepers, and other appliances that make noise are not welcome in the HistComm classroom. If you must bring them with you, turn them off. The professor reserves the right to take action against offending devices or their owners.

4. **Assignments and Extensions**

Assignments (except for in-class writing and pop quizzes) will be announced well in advance of due dates. If you know in advance that you can't make a due date for an assignment, please discuss it with us beforehand. Requests for extensions after a due date has passed will only be granted in exceptional and unavoidable circumstances and must include (a) one typed, double-spaced page explaining the reason for missing the deadline, and (b) relevant documentation such as an official doctor's note. The written request for an extension must be in the professor's hands within one week after the scheduled due date. Your professor is under no obligation to accept late assignments; assignments that are accepted may suffer a significant grade penalty.

5. **Missed Quizzes**

Missed quizzes cannot be made up. Your first missed quiz will be dropped from your final grade as your lowest scoring quiz. After that, quizzes can only be excused in exceptional circumstances for which you provide appropriate documentation in a timely manner (see #4 for details). Pop quizzes cannot be made up and students who arrive late will not be allowed to take the quiz.

6. **Grades**

Grades are final. We grade assignments and quizzes on performance, not effort. Effort will be recognized in your participation grade for the course. We do not give out grades over email or the telephone. We cannot even disclose that you are enrolled in the course to third parties, including your parents.

We are eager to help you do well on quizzes and assignments before they are due. Please visit us during office hours to ask us questions when you are working on an assignment or reviewing material.

Here are the circumstances under which we would change a grade: (a) if we have made an error, or (b) if we have failed to hold you to the same standard as everyone else. In the event that you feel they received an undeserved grade, you should make your case in writing to your instructor within two weeks of receiving the grade. Under no circumstance will the professor award a grade of "incomplete" for the course.

7. **Language**

The language of instruction at McGill University is English. You are allowed to submit written work in French. However, please know that your professor does not yet read French.

8. **Accommodations**

If you require special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, please notify both the professor and Office for Students with Disabilities by the end of the first week in which you are enrolled in the course. They are located in the 3100 Brown Student Services Bldg., 398-6009 (voice), 398-8198 (TDD), [<http://www.mcgill.ca/osd/>].

9. **Nondiscrimination Statement**

Your teachers value equality of opportunity, and human dignity and diversity. Be assured that we will promote a safe and conducive environment for learning. In accordance with University policy, we will not tolerate discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, ethnic or national origin, civil status, religion, creed, political convictions, language, sex, sexual orientation, social condition, age, personal handicap or the use of any means to palliate such a handicap. Among other things, this means that you do not have to agree with your teacher or the assigned readings in order to do well in this course. You are, however, obligated to demonstrate an understanding of the course material *whether or not you agree with it*. If there is something we can do to make the class more hospitable, please let us know.

10. Cheating and Plagiarism

McGILL UNIVERSITY VALUES ACADEMIC INTEGRITY. THEREFORE ALL STUDENTS MUST UNDERSTAND THE MEANING AND CONSEQUENCES OF CHEATING, PLAGIARISM AND OTHER ACADEMIC OFFENCES UNDER THE CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/integrity).

UNOFFICIAL COURSE SCHEDULE (AND BIBLIOGRAPHY):

This is a guideline only. The official schedule is online and will likely change.

Changes will be announced in class and on the website.

I. Basic Concepts

4 Jan: Apologia

5 Jan: Technology and Causality

Winston, Brian. 1995. "How Are Media Born and Developed?"

<http://online.sfsu.edu/~eyal/winston.html>

10 Jan: Progress

Faulkner, Tony. 1993. "FM: Frequency Modulation or Fallen Man?" in *Radiotext(e)*, edited by N. Strauss. New York: Semiotext(e), pp 61-65.

Negativland, n.d. "Shiny, Aluminum, Plastic, and Digital," <http://www.negativland.com/minidis.html>

12 Jan: Communications of History

Spigel, Lynn. 1995. "From the Dark Ages to the Golden Age: Women's Memories and Television Reruns." *Screen* 36 (1): 16-33.

II. Infrastructures

17 Jan: Communications Revolution #9

Czitrom, Daniel. 1982. "Lightning Lines," in *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, pp. 3-29 (notes pp. 197-201).

19 Jan: Distributing Power

Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. 1995. "Electrical Apotheosis," in *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 50-78.

24 Jan: The Electromagnetic Spectrum: Resource and Regulation

Raboy, Marc. 1990. "Introduction," in *Missed Opportunities: The Story of Canada's Broadcasting Policy*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, pp. 5-15 (notes pp. 359-62).

26 Jan: Articulation: How It All Comes Together

Marvin, Carolyn. 1999. "Early Uses of the Telephone," in *Communication in History: Technology, Culture, Society*, eds. David Crowley and Paul Heyer (3rd edition). New York: Addison Wesley Longman, pp. 155-162.

Peters, John Durham. 1999. "Radio: Broadcasting as Dissemination (and Dialogue)," in *Speaking Into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 206-211.

III. Home and Away

31 Jan: Mobile Privatization

Cowan, Ruth Schwartz. 1983. "Twentieth Century Changes in Household Technology," in *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*. New York: Basic Books, pp. 69-101 (notes pp. 225-227).

2 Feb: Standardization: Would You Like Fries With That?

Schlosser, Eric. 2002. "Why the Fries Taste Good," in *Fast Food Nation*. New York: HarperCollins, 111-131 (notes pp. 314-317).

7 Feb: Media Virtuosity and Feats of Transmission

Parks, Lisa. 2001. "As the World Spins: NBC's Wide Wide World and Live Global Television in the 1950s." *Screen* 42 (4): 332-349.

9 Feb: Catch-up day (we'll need it!)

IV. Sites of Perception and Reception

14 Feb: Bodies: Making Media Lifelike

Gunning, Tom. 2001. "Doing for the Eye What the Phonograph Does for the Ear," in *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, eds. Richard Abel and Rick Altman. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 13-31.

16 Feb: Families: Magazines Teach Consumption

Ohmann, Richard. 1996. "The Experience," in *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets and Class at the Turn of the Century*. New York: Verso, pp. 1-10 (notes p. 365).

21 Feb: **Study Break 2005!**

23 Feb: **Study Break 2005!**

28 Feb: Arcades: Public Amusements

Nasaw, David. 1993. "Talking and Singing Machines, Parlors and Peepshows," in *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements*. New York: Basic, pp. 120-134 (notes pp. 279-281).

2 March: Theaters: Movies, Audiences and Legitimacy

Hansen, Miriam. 1991. "Early Audiences: Myths and Models: Introduction," in *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 60-68 (notes pp. 310-314).

7 March: Bodies and Spaces

Thompson, Emily. 2002. "Acoustical Materials and Modern Architecture, 1900-33: Introduction," in *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America 1900-1930*. Cambridge: MIT Press, pp. 169-173 (notes pp. 377-78).

V. Imagining and Managing Users, Audiences and Populations

9 March: The Audience is not the Audience. . .

Meehan, Eileen. 1990. "Why We Don't Count: The Commodity Audience," in *Logics of Television*, edited by P. Mellencamp. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 117-37.

14 March: . . .but it Might be the Country

Hilmes, Michelle. 1997. "Radiating Culture" in *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting 1922-1952*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 1-33 (notes pp. 292-296).

16 March: Selling Selling

McLaren, Carrie and Inger Stole. 2001. "Selling Advertising," <http://www.stayfreemagazine.org/archives/18/inger.html>

21 March: Culture as Property

McLeod, Kembrew. 2001. "Happy Birthday, Screw You" and "ASCAP vs. Summer Camps," in *Owning Culture: Authorship, Ownership and Intellectual Property Law*. New York, Peter Lang, pp. 50-56 (notes pp. 65-69).

23 March: The Magic of Commodities

Waksman, Steve. 1999. "Introduction: Going Electric," in *Instruments of Desire: The Electric Guitar and the Shaping of Musical Experience*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 1-13.

28 March: **Easter Break 2005.**

30 March: Surveillance from Punch Cards to Cookies

Elmer, Greg. 2004. "Consumption in the Network Age: Solicitation, Automation and Networking," in *Profiling Machines: Mapping the Personal Information Economy*. Cambridge: MIT Press, pp. 52-71.

VI. How New Are "New Media"?

4 April: A (Recent) History of the Future

Ceruzzi, Paul. 1986. "An Unforseen Revolution: Computers and Expectations, 1935-1985," in *Imagining Tomorrow: History, Technology, and the American Future*, ed. Joseph J. Corn (Cambridge: MIT Press), pp. 188-201.

6 April: Interactivity

Lipartito, Kenneth. 2003. Picturephone and the Information Age: The Social Meaning of Failure. *Technology and Culture* 44 (1): 50-81.

11 April: Yes, Virginia, Even Computerized Pets Have a History

Turkle, Sherry. 1999. "What Are We Thinking about When We Are Thinking About Computers?" in *The Science Studies Reader*, ed. Mario Biagoli. New York: Routledge, pp. 543-552.

13 April: Last Quiz