

SOC 332: MEDIA FORMS
Winter term, 2018; Instructor: Dr. P. Cormack

Office: Annex 112A

Office Hours: Tuesday, 9:15-10:30; Wednesday, 11:15-1:15; Friday, 10:15-11:15.

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“The medium is the message.” – Marshall McLuhan

Mass media are often approached from the pre-supposed issue of their effects based on their *content*. This course will draw attention to the various mediums *themselves* as ways of organizing societies and our everyday experience. We will look at Western (and colonial) history around the themes of media practices and technologies - the phonetic alphabet, ancient uses of monuments and papyrus, colonial contact between oral and written cultures, modernity and the printing press, reproductive technologies (e.g. photography from negative), digit media (with no “original”). The course will also examine the nation-state of Canada as a mediated reality.

Evaluation

Midterm exam – 30% (February 13th)

Group Presentation – 10%

Media diary analysis – 20% (March 27th)

Final exam – 40%

Group Presentation

In your group work, you will present the ideas of the McLuhan chapter(s) assigned. You will be given some time in class to work on your presentation piece, but you will also need to meet outside of class time. You will be given 15 minutes for your presentation. (See **moodle for evaluation rubric and instructions.**)

Students who miss classes and/or cannot fully participate in the preparation will be able to write an individual research essay (2500 words) to make up for this grade. Students who wish to write this essay should contact me by March 13th. Otherwise, I will assume you are forfeiting the grade.

Media diary analysis – see moodle for essay assignment.

Required Reading

- McLuhan, M. 1964. Understanding Media.
- SOC 332 (Media Forms) reading kit.

Reading Schedule

1. January 9: Introduction

- McLuhan, Chapters 1 and 2.

2. January 16: McLuhan and Innis

- McLuhan, Chapters 4 and 14.
- Innis, "The Bias of Communication".

(Group presentation #1 - money)

3. January 23: Oral and Early Communications

- McLuhan, Chapters 8 and 10.
- Friesen, "Interpreting Aboriginal Cultures".
- Ong, "Some Psychodynamics of Orality."

(Group presentation #2 - oral culture)

4. January 30: Writing – Phonetic alphabet and literacy

- McLuhan, Chapters 9
- Goody and Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy".

(Group presentation # 3 - phonetic alphabet)

5. February 6: Printing Press and Mass Literacy

- McLuhan, Chapter 18
- Anderson, "The Origins of National Consciousness".

(Video- James Burke – The Day the Universe Changed)

(Group presentation #4- print)

MIDTERM – February 13th

February 27: Photography and Visual Prints

- McLuhan, Chapters 16 and 20
- Sontag, "In Plato's Cave".
- Smith, "The Criminal Body and The Portrait of a Type".
- Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Illuminations.

(Group presentation #5 – photography; Group presentation #6 – visual prints)

March 6: Film

- McLuhan, Chapter 29
- Mast, "Film Narrative, Commercial Expansion".
- Horkheimer and Adorno, "The Culture Industry".

(Group presentation #7 - film)

March 13: Radio

- McLuhan, Chapter 30
- Crissell, "Radio Signs".
- Cantril, "The Invasion from Mars".

(Audio – Orson Wells, "The War of the Worlds")

(Group presentation #8 - radio)

March 20: TV

- McLuhan, Chapter 31
- Meyrowitz, J. "From Print Situations to Electronic Situations".
- Joyrich, "Good Reception? Television, Gender and the Critical View".

(Video, NFB, "Magic in the Sky")

(Group presentation #9- TV)

March 27: Digital cultures

- McLuhan, Chapter 1 (again) and 33
- Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations".
- Poster, "Authors Analogue and Digital".

(Group presentation #10 - digital)

MEDIA DIARY DUE

April 3rd: Canada as mediated nation

- Charland, "Technological Nationalism".
- Cosgrave and Cormack, "Disenchanted Wonder: Collecting Canadian Identity through the CBC 'Seven Wonders of Canada' Project".