

# Media and technology

Comm 8210-002

Prof. Gil Rodman

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office hours (253 Ford): TuTh 10-11:15a, W 10-11:30a, and by appointment

# Syllabus

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## Course description

It has become something of a cliché to claim that the world has been “revolutionized” by the broad and eclectic range of “new” communication technologies that includes the Internet, laptop computers, TiVo, iPods, Blackberries, and the like. How true that cliché is, however, depends a great deal on which technologies one is talking about, where in the world one is trying to measure their impact, and precisely what counts as a “revolutionary” change. The actual relationship between technology and culture is rarely (if ever) as simple as such clichés make it out to be. Our readings are a mixture of “classic” works on the cultural politics of media technology; critical studies of various forms of “new” media (past and present); and examinations of social, cultural, and political issues arising from the ever-shifting terrain of contemporary media technology. This course does not pretend to be an exhaustive survey of all the major critical approaches to media technology (or, for that matter, all the major forms of media technology), but it should be sufficiently broad to provide a useful sense of that larger terrain.

## Readings

All our books should be available at the University Bookstore in Coffman Union:

- James Boyle, *The Public Domain*
- Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, *YouTube*
- Raiford Guins, *Edited Clean Version: Technology and the Culture of Control*
- Lawrence Lessig, *Code: Version 2.0*
- Amanda D. Lotz, *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*
- Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New*
- Eric S. Raymond, *The Cathedral and the Bazaar* [revised edition]
- Jennifer Daryl Slack and J. Macgregor Wise, *Culture and Technology: A Primer*
- Allucquère Rosanne Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age*
- Ted Striphas, *The Late Age of Print: Everyday Book Culture From Consumerism to Control*
- Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* [Routledge Classics edition]

Please note that earlier editions exist for the Lessig and Raymond books, and that the Williams book has been published in at least three different editions over the years. Additionally, both the Boyle and Lessig books are available online as free PDFs, while most of the essays that comprise the Raymond book are available online in HTML form. If you're using any of these other editions, you're on your own with respect to differences in pagination and/or content.

## Attendance/participation

Our weekly meetings will be oriented around seminar-style discussions, rather than formal lectures. As such, your primary responsibility each week will be to show up prepared to contribute thoughtfully and productively to our conversations about the assigned readings. You are not expected to demonstrate perfect and immediate mastery of the issues raised by our readings -- questions and requests for clarification are more than welcome contributions to our conversations -- but you are expected to be an active and regular participant in our ongoing dialogue. I'll chime in often enough (and at enough length) that you'll certainly get my take on our readings, but this course is not a spectator event for any of us.

## Grading policy

Presumably, you're enrolled in this course because you genuinely want to learn about media and technology, and so your presence is motivated by something other than the desire to add an(other) A to your transcript -- and that's the way it should be. With this in mind, my default assumption is that it's counter-productive for me to make you worry about how your work for this course translates into a letter grade. As of Day One, you begin the course with an A. If you show up for all our class meetings, participate intelligently in our discussions (both in class and online), and complete the required writing assignment(s) in satisfactory and timely fashion, you'll keep that A. That being said, in cases where people are clearly slacking off, I reserve the right to go deeper into the alphabet when I submit final grades. Under such unfortunate circumstances, your grade will be calculated using the following formula:

Attendance/participation	15%
Course blog	15%
Written assignment(s)	70%

## Course blog

We will conduct a significant amount of discussion and course business online via a course blog. Full details on how to access and contribute to the blog are available on a separate handout. Here's a partial list of the ways we will use the course blog this semester as:

- a central "bulletin board" for official course announcements and major course handouts
- an informal discussion space for continuing and/or augmenting our in-class conversations
- a space for mutual support and feedback with your course-related research and writing

Ideally, the course blog should function as a space that's serious enough for people to share more extended thoughts on the course material than it may be possible to share in person, but simultaneously casual enough to allow people to post textual fragments, "in progress" ideas, and jovial interaction.

## Final paper

Your major project for the semester is a 6250-7500 word research paper. Topics can (and will) vary, but your overall project should demonstrate a clear and significant relationship to the course theme. Ideally, the finished product should be suitable -- at least in terms of its subject matter -- for submission to a conference or a refereed journal. Major deadlines for this project are as follows:

Preliminary 1-on-1 meeting	11 Feb
250-500 word proposal	18 Feb
Full-length draft	29 Apr
In-class group workshopping	6 May

Proposals and final drafts should be posted to the course blog and submitted in hard copy format.

## Reading/deadline schedule

<b>21 Jan</b>	no readings
<b>28 Jan</b>	Slack and Wise
<b>4 Feb</b>	Marvin
<b>11 Feb</b>	<b>final paper meeting deadline</b> Williams
<b>18 Feb</b>	<b>final paper proposal due</b> Stone
<b>25 Feb</b>	Lessig, pp. ix-153
<b>4 Mar</b>	Lessig, pp. 154-345
<b>11 Mar</b>	Raymond
<b>18 Mar</b>	<b>spring break</b>
<b>25 Mar</b>	Boyle
<b>1 Apr</b>	Guins
<b>8 Apr</b>	Burgess and Green
<b>15 Apr</b>	Lotz
<b>22 Apr</b>	Striphas
<b>29 Apr</b>	<b>no class</b> <b>final papers due</b>
<b>6 May</b>	<b>final papers workshop</b>