

**Communication 5930-001  
Media and Technology  
Summer 2001 (session C)**

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***course description and objectives***

This course is an introductory survey of cultural, critical, and qualitative approaches to studying the mass media and communication technologies. Topics covered will include:

- the relationship between the media and technology (on the one hand) and creativity and artistic expression (on the other)
- semiotics and the interpretation of media texts
- ideology, hegemony, and the media's role as a socio-political force
- audience research and media ethnography
- political economy and the corporate control of news and information
- cultural history of media and communication technology
- the role of media and communication technology in the (re)construction and maintenance of personal identity
- the social and cultural impact of new communication technologies

***required texts***

- Scott McCloud, *Reinventing Comics*
- Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements*
- Virginia Nightingale, *Studying Audiences*
- Ben Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly* (6th edition)
- Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices*
- Gilbert B. Rodman, *Elvis After Elvis*
- Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* [out of print]
- Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New*
- Allucquère Rosanne Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age*
- Andrew Herman and Thomas Swiss (eds.), *The World Wide Web and Contemporary Cultural Theory*

Except for the Williams book -- which we will read in photocopied form -- all the books are available at Inkwood Books, 216 S. Armenia, Tampa (253-2638).

### ***papers***

You will write three 2000-2500 word (roughly 8-10 pages) essays over the course of the ten-week session. Topics and due dates are as follows:

- paper #1 -- due in class on 7 June -- critical response to McCloud, Williamson, and/or Nightingale
- paper #2 -- due in class on 28 June -- critical response to Bagdikian, Hilmes, and/or Rodman
- paper #3 -- due in class on 19 July -- critical response to Williams, Marvin, Stone, and/or Herman/Swiss

Each of these papers should be a critical response to one of the listed books: i.e., rather than being just a summary of the book in question, it should present a thoughtful, argumentative response to that book. For instance, you might address one or more of the following types of questions:

- What are the book's main strengths? What theoretical advances does it make? What new knowledge does it add to our understanding of the mass media and/or communication technologies? What useful arguments does it present?
- What are the book's main weaknesses? What facts does it get wrong that it shouldn't? What faulty conclusions does it come to? What flawed agenda(s) does it manage to promote?

At your discretion, you can substitute a 2000-2500 word proposal for a media/technology research project for one of these essays. If you plan to take advantage of this option, you need to clear your proposed proposal topic with me at least two weeks ahead of the due date in question.

### ***grading policy***

Those of you who've had classes with me before know that I'm not a big fan of grades at the graduate level. Presumably, your main concern here is with learning something about the study of media and technology, not with whether you can maintain a 4.0 GPA. Assuming you show up for class consistently, participate in our discussions regularly, and complete the assigned papers in satisfactory fashion, you should get an A. That being said, in cases where people seem to be slacking off, I do reserve the right to go deeper into the alphabet when I fill out my final grade sheet. Under such unfortunate circumstances, grades will be calculated as follows:

Attendance/participation	25%
Essays	75% (25% each)

***creating media art***

15 May no readings  
17 May McCloud [all]

***interpreting media texts***

22 May Williamson [all]  
24 May **NO CLASS**

***studying media audiences***

29 May Nightingale [pp. vii-106]  
31 May Nightingale [pp. 107-152]

***following the money***

5 June Bagdikian [pp. viii-192]  
7 June **paper #1 due**  
Bagdikian [pp. 193-252]

***historicizing the media***

12 June Hilmes [pp. xiii-182]  
14 June Hilmes [pp. 183-290]

***explaining media culture***

19 June Rodman [all]  
21 June **NO CLASS**

***understanding media as technology***

26 June Williams [pp. vii-112]  
28 June **paper #2 due**  
Williams [pp. 113-146]

***historicizing technology***

3 July Marvin [pp. 3-151]  
5 July Marvin [pp. 152-235]

***mediating identity***

10 July Stone [pp. 1-121]  
12 July Stone [pp. 122-183]

***untangling the web***

17 July Herman and Swiss [pp. 1-182]  
19 July **paper #3 due**  
Herman and Swiss [pp. 183-275]