

Communication 790: Graduate Seminar: Technology

Fall 2018

Tuesdays 5:30-8pm in CAC 227

Course Website: D2L

Instructor: Alex Ingersoll - alex.ingersoll@uwsp.edu

Office Hours: (CAC 309) Mon & Wed 2:00-3:00pm

"For in this world, communication is never an absolute (only angels communicate absolutely); and a deficiency in one point in a given communicative system may show as a proficiency at some other point (somewhat as persons deprived of sight may become more acute in hearing or touch)."

-(1953) Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change*

"Technologies are artificial, but—paradox again—artificiality is natural to human beings."

-(1982) Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*

Humans are suspended in sociotechnical webs. At any point in human history, communication has been mediated by a variety of tools and formats, whether language, writing, printing, calendars, clocks, towers, perspective, photography, the telegraph, the telephone, the phonograph, film, radio, television, computers, and so on. But in the twenty-first century the question concerning technology has a special urgency. Few of us communicate today without the aid of some kind of machine or technique. The goal of this course is to outline an introduction to the expansive ways in which the discipline of Communication Studies approaches the concept of technology. Part of the aim is to explode what we mean by "technology" and "communication." This class includes an exposure to communication scholarship in a broad way, an introduction to research methods, instruction on the utilization of word, image, and sound archives, and a critical approach to unpacking the philosophy of technology — what does it mean to live in a fabricated world?

The class is founded on the premise that graduate education is best undertaken collaboratively. Therefore, the class will utilize two layers of collaboration: (1) resources and perspectives on "technology" and "communication" will be drawn from the landscape of Communication Studies and will include occasional guest discussions and (2) students will be expected to collaborate on discussions, presentations, and projects to expand their sense of multi-disciplinarity. The goal is to both introduce key disciplinary areas within Communication Studies as well as develop a rigorous analysis of the nature of technology as an integral part of the communication process.

Required Materials

- Peters, John Durham. *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Other course readings available on D2L.

Evaluation

Your final grade in this course is a composite of the different areas listed below. Detailed explanations of each assignment will be given in class at the appropriate times.

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Total</u>
Seminar Leader	20%
Participation	20%
Final Presentation	20%
Final Paper	40%

Grade Breakdown

A (100-93.5%) A- (93.4-89.5%) B+ (89.4-86.5%) B (86.4-83.5%) B- (83.4-79.5%) C+ (79.4-76.5%)
 C (76.4-73.5%) C- (73.4-69.5%) D+ (69.4-66.5%) D (66.4-59.5%) F (<59.4%)

Evaluation Cont.

Since the success of this class depends upon your presence in class, it is expected that you will come to every class on time and ready to engage in the day's materials. Students who attend every single meeting will see their diligence reflected both in their overall grade, and most likely, in the quality of their work. Since this is a graduate level course, your presence and contribution is **HIGHLY VALUED**, therefore missing class is **HIGHLY DISCOURAGED**. I will deduct points from your overall grade if you miss class. Please chat with me for details.

Reminder: this is a graduate level class. I realize that it's easy to get lost or slip by without doing the readings. Discussion and participation is a *very significant* part of your success in this class, even if you don't think you're right or some of the readings confused you (some are quite difficult and their "meaning" is contested even by "experts" - if you think you're understanding everything clearly I'd suggest reading more closely). If you're confused by something, you're probably not the only one.

Engaging with a challenge is a GOOD thing!

We will be reading a range of theorists and writings. Some of the readings assigned in this class are difficult primarily because they use a specialized language in order to critique media technology and historical research methods. This is not designed to torture you but is instead designed to get you to think about communication and technology in terms outside of what you consider to be "common sense." As a result, you should NEVER give up on the readings because they "don't make sense." They are selected to challenge you and we will work through these readings in collaborative group discussions.

General Requirements

There are a number of expectations that are common to each class at UWSP but I want to emphasize:

1. **If you plagiarize the work of others, you will fail the course.** Please be aware of what plagiarism entails (<http://www.plagiarism.org>). Proper citation is REQUIRED for ALL sources, including information you use from Internet publications and sites. Also, remember that you CANNOT legally use someone else's music or art work UNLESS you get written permission from the copyright holder, or unless you purchase a license allowing you to use specific music or images. The only exception is if the work in question is in the public domain or explicitly states that you may use it free of charge. Any student caught plagiarizing will receive a grade of "F" for the class.
2. All cell phones must be turned off before class, **no excuses (unless it relates to class materials!!!)**. You may use your computer for class but you cannot be using it for leisure purposes. Any time the room is dark, you may not create any light.
3. Creating an environment of mutual respect is *paramount* to successful work. While difference of opinions and vigorous debate are highly encouraged, you will be expected to refrain from using disparaging remarks (e.g., sexist, racist, homophobic language). **The material presented in class may**

challenge you and I expect you to approach these materials in the spirit of the wider educational environment. The selection of these materials are intended to spark a healthy discussion and I expect mature and respectful interactions. All reactions will be welcomed in class and respected, and they will be received in the spirit of extending discussion rather than forestalling it.

4. Late assignments are highly discouraged. **I will not accept any assignment, quiz, or other class material past the due date.** Please don't come to class without homework due to technical difficulties (my computer crashed, printer ran out of ink, not enough batteries, etc.). Don't wait until the last minute to do your work. If you do, you will be rushed, your work will suffer and you won't have time to deal with the *inevitable* computer issues.

Communicating with Me

The best way to talk to me is during my office hours. I am available over email but it may take me a day to respond. This means that you will need to ask questions about assignments more than 24 hours before they are due. If you are having problems completing the assignments, you need to communicate the issues with me at least 24 hours before the assignment is due so we may lay out alternative courses of action.

Community Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

UW-Stevens Point values a safe, honest, respectful, and inviting learning environment. In order to ensure that each student has the opportunity to success, we have developed a set of expectations for all students and instructors. This set of expectations is known as the *Rights and Responsibilities* document, and it is intended to help establish a positive living and learning environment at UWSP. Read more here: <https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/CommunityRights.pdf>

Academic integrity is central to the mission of higher education in general and UWSP in particular. Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) is taken very seriously. Don't do it! The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. For more information, see the UWSP "Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures" section of the *Rights and Responsibilities* document, Chapter 14, which can be accessed here: <https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Student-Conduct.aspx>

Assistive Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, check here: <https://www.uwsp.edu/hr/Pages/ADA-Resources.aspx>

If you have a disability and require classroom and/or exam accommodations, please register with the Disability and Assistive Technology Center and then contact me at the beginning of the course. I am happy to help in any way that I can. For more information, please visit the Disability and Assistive Technology Center, located on the 6th floor of the Learning Resource Center (the Library). You can also find more information here: <https://www.uwsp.edu/datc/Pages/default.aspx>

Course Schedule

Week 1, 9/4: Overview & Goals of Course

Discussion: Review the syllabus, note goals & expectations, introduce key terms.

I. Communication & Technology

Week 2, 9/11: The Problem of Communication, Dialogue, & Dissemination

Reading: Peters, John Durham. "Introduction: The Problem of Communication" and "Ch. 1: Dialogue and Dissemination," In *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*, 1-62. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Week 3, 9/18: Hegel, Marx, Kierkegaard, & Spiritualists

Reading: Peters, John Durham. "Ch. 2: History of an Error: The Spiritualist Tradition" and "Ch. 3: Toward a More Robust Vision of Spirit: Hegel, Marx, and Kierkegaard," In *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*, 63-135. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Week 4, 9/25: Bridging the Chasm

Reading: Peters, John Durham. "Ch. 4: Phantasms of the Living, Dialogues with the Dead" and "Ch. 5: The Quest for Authentic Connection, or Bridging the Chasm," In *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*, 137-225. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Week 5, 10/2: Horizons of Incommunicability

Reading: Peters, John Durham. "Ch. 6: Machines, Animals, and Aliens: Horizons of Incommunicability" and "Conclusion: A Squeeze of the Hand," In *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*, 227-281. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.

II. Technology and Power

Week 6, 10/9: Technology and Social Change

Reading: -Shapin, Steven. "What Else is New? How Uses, Not Innovations, Drive Human Technology," *New Yorker*, May 14, 2007.
-Carey, James W. "Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph," In *Communication As Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, 201-229. New York, NY: Routledge, 1989.
-Williams, Raymond. "The Technology and the Society," In *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, 1-25. New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1975.

Week 7, 10/16: Time and Space

Reading: -Innis, Harold A. "The Bias of Communication," In *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change*, 325-349. Ed. by Daniel Drache. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995.
-McLuhan, Marshall. "Understanding Media" and "Playboy Interview," In *Essential McLuhan*, 149-161, 233-269. New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1995.

III. Technologies of the Word

Week 8, 10/23: Conversational

Guest: Professor Tim Halkowski

Reading: -Sacks, Harvey. "On doing 'being ordinary,'" In *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*, 413-429. Ed. by J. Maxwell Atkinson & John Heritage. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
-Havelock, Eric. "The Alphabetic Mind: A Gift of Greece to the Modern World," *Oral Tradition*, 1/1, 134-150, 1986.

Week 9, 10/30: Rhetorical

Reading: -Charland, Maurice. "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* vol. 73, no. 2 (1987): 133-150.

-Zarefsky, David. "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 3 (2004): 607-619.

-Obama, Barack. "President Barack Obama's Inaugural Address." 20 January 2009, Washington, D.C. Online at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2009/01/21/president-barack-obamas-inaugural-address>

-Trump, Donald. "The Inaugural Address." 20 January 2017, Washington, D.C. Online at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/the-inaugural-address/>

IV. Technology and Human Organization

Week 10, 11/6: Interpersonal

Reading: -Baym, Nancy K., Yan Bing Zhang, Adrienne Kunkel, Andrew Ledbetter, & Mei-Chen Lin.

"Relational Quality and Media Use in Interpersonal Relationships," *New Media & Society* vol. 9, no. 5 (2007): 735-752.

-Ledbetter, Andrew M. & Joseph P Mazer. "Do Online Communication Attitudes Mitigate the Association Between Facebook Use and Relational Interdependence? An Extension of Media Multiplexity Theory," *New Media & Society* vol. 16, no. 5 (2014): 806-822.

-Edwards, Chad, Autumn Edwards, Patric R. Spence, & Ashleigh K. Shelton. "Is That a Bot Running the Social Media Feeds? Testing the Differences in Perceptions of Communication Quality for a Human Agent and a Bot Agent on Twitter," *Computers in Human Behavior* 33 (2014): 372-376.

-Goble, Henry & Chad Edwards. "A Robot That Communicates With Vocal Filters Has ... Uhhh ... Greater Social Presence," *Communication Research Reports* 00, 00 (2018): 1-5.

Week 11, 11/13: Organizational

Reading: -Rice, Ronald E. & Paul M. Leonardi. "Information and Communication Technologies in Organizations," In *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Communication: Advances in Theory, Research, and Methods*, 425-442. Ed. by Linda L. Putnam and Dennis K. Mumby. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014.

-Miller, Katherine. "Technological Processes," In *Organizational Communication: Approaches and Processes*, 235-253. Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2015.

Week 12, 11/20: NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING BREAK

V. Media

Week 13, 11/27: Technology & Culture

Guest: Professor Liz Fakazis

-Selection from Lynn Spigel's *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Week 14, 12/4: Technologies of Representation

Guest: Professor Cary Elza

Reading: -Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," In *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. by Julie Rivkin & Michael Ryan. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

-Gunning, Tom. "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator," In *Film Theory & Criticism*. Ed. by Leo Braudy & Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Week 15, 12/11: Ways of Seeing

Guest: Professor Kelly Wilz

Reading: -Selections from John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1973.

-Stoneman, Adam. "The New Conspicuous Consumption," In *Jacobin Magazine*. Online at <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/06/rich-kids-of-instagram-berger-ways-of-seeing/>

Week 16, 12/20, 5:00-7:00pm: Final Presentations