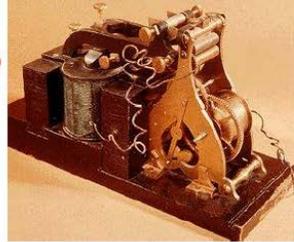


# Media and Communications in American History



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In 1964, cultural theorist Marshall McLuhan declared that “the medium is the message.” The statement has confounded critics for half a century (not to mention several generations of undergraduate and graduate students), but at its core, McLuhan seems to have meant that media matter; that is, the structure that permits the flow of ideas, information, and goods influences not only how those materials travel but alters their very content. This course undertakes to explore that process by examining the political and commercial structure of communications and media in the United States, which some historians call the “political economy of the media.”

In particular, we will focus our attention on three crucial questions that address how media and American society and culture have influenced and shaped one another:

1. In what ways has technological change shaped the business of communications and the ways in which Americans have received and transmitted news and information?
2. What effect have economic interests had on the actions of innovators in communications technology, those who work in the media, and American media audiences?
3. Why and how have politicians and government officials chosen to intercede in the practices or structures of media and communications?

## SCHEDULE OF COURSE MEETINGS

**NOTE:** All dates and assignments are subject to change. Please be aware of any announcements made in class or via the course Blackboard site.

- Weds., Sept. 4            Introduction to the Course
- Mon., Sept. 9            Business and Economic History 101  
What is the history of media and communications?  
**Reading:** Starr, *Creation of the Media*, introduction, ch. 1  
Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), introduction (Blackboard)  
Alfred D. Chandler, Jr. *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 1-12 (Blackboard)
- Weds., Sept. 11        Theoretical concepts: The Public Sphere  
**Reading:** Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article," trans. Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox, *New German Critique*, no. 3 (1974): 49-55 (Blackboard)  
Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?" *Daedalus* 111, no. 3 (1982): 65-83 (Blackboard)
- Mon., Sept. 16        Printing in Colonial America  
**Reading:** Starr, *Creation of the Media*, Ch. 2
- Weds., Sept. 18        The Newspaper in Colonial America  
**Reading:** Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*, excerpts (Blackboard)  
<http://franklinpapers.org/franklin//framedVolumes.jsp?tocvol=50>
- Mon., Sept. 23        A Revolution for Press Freedom?  
**Reading:** Starr, *Creation of the Media*, ch. 3  
Richard D. Brown, "The Shifting Freedoms of the Press in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, v. 1 of *A History of the Book in America*, ed. Hugh Amory and David D. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 366-376.

- Weds., Sept. 25      Going Postal  
**Reading:** Richard John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), Ch. 1  
David M. Henkin, *The Postal Age: The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), ch. 1
- Mon., Sept. 30      Publishing in the Early United States  
**Reading:** Starr, *Creation of the Media*, ch. 4  
Cathy N. Davidson, "The Life and Times of Charlotte Temple" in *Reading in America: Literature and Social History*, ed. Davidson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 157-79
- Weds., Oct. 2      Electric Communication  
**Reading:** Starr, *Creation of the Media*, ch. 5
- Mon., Oct. 7      Postal Reform  
**Reading:** Pliny Miles, *Postal Reform: Its Urgent Necessity and Practicability* (New York: Stringer & Townsend, 1855), excerpt (Google Books: [http://books.google.com/books?id=\\_k4ZAAAAYAAJ&pg=PR1#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=_k4ZAAAAYAAJ&pg=PR1#v=onepage&q&f=false))
- Weds., Oct. 9      Communication by Sound  
**Reading:** Starr, *Creation of the Media*, ch. 6
- Mon., Oct. 14      Columbus Day - NO CLASS
- Weds., Oct. 16      Regulating Society  
**Reading:** Starr, *Creation of the Media*, ch. 7  
Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, "Victoria Woodhull, Anthony Comstock, and Conflict over Sex in the United States in the 1870s," *Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (2000): 403-34 (Blackboard)  
Anthony Comstock, *Traps for the Young*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883), Preface, Chs. 2, 3, 4, 8 (Google Books: <http://books.google.com/books?id=Ylau5zIE-4gC&pg=PR3#v=onepage&q&f=false>)

- Mon., Oct. 21            Managing the System  
**Reading:** Chandler, *The Visible Hand*, 188-205 (Blackboard)  
Robert MacDougall, "Long Lines: AT&T's Long-Distance Network as an Organizational and Political Strategy," *The Business History Review* 80, no. 2 (2006): 297-327 (Blackboard)
- Weds., Oct. 23            Copyright Law and the News  
Guest Lecture by Heidi Tworek, Harvard University  
**Reading:** TBA
- Mon., Oct. 28            Wartime Propaganda and Censorship  
**Reading:** Starr, *Creation of the Media*, ch. 8  
Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), Ch. 2  
**In class:** *Schenck v. United States*, 249 U.S. 47 (1919), opinion by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (Blackboard)
- Weds., Oct. 30            Radio and American Culture  
**Reading:** Kate Lacey, "Radio in the Great Depression: Promotional Culture, Public Service, and Propaganda," in *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*, ed. Michele Hilmes and Jason Loviglio (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 21-40 (Blackboard)  
Bruce Lenthall, "Critical Reception: Public Intellectuals Decry Depression-Era Radio, Mass Culture, and Modern America," in *Radio Reader*, pp. 41-62 (Blackboard)  
**In class:** Franklin D. Roosevelt, Fireside Chat on the Banking Crisis (March 12, 1933) (<http://youtu.be/osYAEggOtl8>)
- Mon., Nov. 4            The Movie Industry  
**Reading:** Starr, *Creation of the Media*, ch. 9  
Stephen Vaughan, "Morality and Entertainment: The Origins of the Motion Picture Production Code," *Journal of American History* 77, no. 1 (1990): 39-65 (Blackboard)
- Weds., Nov. 6            Did Motion Pictures Corrupt the Youth?  
**Reading:** Henry James Forman, *Our Movie Made Children* (New York: 1935), Chs. 10-11 (Blackboard)  
**In class:** Motion Picture Production Code of 1930 (Blackboard)
- Mon., Nov. 11            Veterans' Day - NO CLASS

- Weds., Nov. 13      Film: *Citizen Kane* (dir. Orson Welles, 1941)
- Mon., Nov. 18      *Citizen Kane*, continued
- Weds., Nov. 20      Technology and the Meaning of Art  
**Reading:** Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical  
Reproduction" (1936) (Blackboard)
- Mon., Nov. 25      Organizing Communication  
**Reading:** Starr, *Creation of the Media*, chs. 10-11  
**In class:** Communications Act of 1934 (excerpt)
- Weds., Nov. 27      Broadcast Television  
**Reading:** Baughman, *Republic of Mass Culture*, chs. 1-3
- Mon., Dec. 2      The Emerging Dominance of Television  
**Reading:** Baughman, *Republic of Mass Culture*, chs. 4, 6, 8
- Weds., Dec. 4      Deregulation: The Post Office at the Vanguard  
**Reading:** *Towards Postal Excellence: The Report of the President's Commission on  
Postal Organization* (1968), excerpt (Blackboard)
- Mon., Dec. 9      Deregulation: Telecommunications  
**Reading:** Baughman, *Republic of Mass Culture*, ch. 10  
"The Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998," U.S. Copyright  
Office (<http://www.copyright.gov/legislation/dmca.pdf>)  
**In class:** Telecommunications Act of 1996 (excerpt)  
*New York Times*, 1981-1994 coverage of Ma Bell antitrust suit
- Weds., Dec. 11      Conclusion  
**Reading:** Starr, *Creation of the Media*, ch. 12  
Richard R. John, "From Franklin to Facebook: The Civic Mandate for  
Communications," in *To Promote the General Welfare: The Case for Big  
Government*, ed. Steven Conn (New York: Oxford University Press,  
2012), 156-72

## REQUIRED TEXTS

James L. Baughman, *The Republic of Mass Culture: Journalism, Filmmaking, and Broadcasting in America Since 1941*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

Paul Starr, *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

The above texts are all available through the Framingham State bookstore. Additional readings will be found on the course Blackboard site and library e-reserves.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### 1. Class Participation (20%)

Participation is vital to your success in this course. You are expected to attend all course meetings and to come to class prepared. That is, you should have completed the assigned reading, have it with you in class, and be prepared to participate actively in class discussion through comments and questions. You will lose credit for participation after three absences, except in documented cases for extended family or medical emergencies.

### 2. Course Blog (20%)

The majority of your writing in the course will come via a course blog (<http://hist339fsu.wordpress.com>). You will be expected over the course of the semester to write 10-12 blog posts that respond to the readings, reflect on class discussions, and discuss other course-related issues. I will distribute a schedule in Week 2 for writing posts.

Although the culture of blogging encourages more relaxed writing than formal papers, you are still expected to adhere to the norms of standard written English. In addition, please be polite and respectful of your classmates and colleagues in both posts and any comments that may ensue.

### 3. Midterm Examination – due Monday, October 28 (15%)

The midterm will require a take-home paper in which you answer an interpretive question in 4-6 pages that covers material from the first seven weeks of the course. You will be required to use at least ten readings from those classes in answering the questions. I will distribute the question and further instructions approximately two weeks in advance.

### 4. Book Review – due Wednesday, Dec. 11 (20%)

You will select **one** of the following two books:

- a) Jeff Jarvis, *What Would Google Do?* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009)
- b) Siva Vaidhyanathan, *The Googlization of Everything (And Why We Should Worry)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012)

Each book responds to a new technology (the Internet) and a new media company (Google) and the role of both in contemporary society. Your assignment will be to consider your selected book as history for a review of approximately 6-8 pages. Full details on the review will be distributed before Thanksgiving.

### 5. Final Exam (25%)

The final exam will be held on the date and time appointed by the Registrar, Monday, December 16 at 8:00am. It will include several short interpretive questions and identifications, source analyses, and essays. Full details will be distributed approximately one week before the exam.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### Blackboard

Please be sure that you are properly enrolled for the course Blackboard site and be sure to check it regularly. The site will be updated regularly with PowerPoint slide shows for class, course assignments, and supplementary materials.

### Communication

All students are required to maintain a Framingham State e-mail account, and course announcements will be sent to that address and posted to the course Blackboard site. Please check your FSU account and Blackboard regularly for updates.

### Etiquette

Students are permitted to use electronic devices (including laptops, tablet computers, cell phones, etc.) to take notes or access readings during class. However, you are expected at all times to be engaged in the class discussion, which means that you are prohibited from texting, making or receiving phone calls, surfing the internet, sleeping, and any other activity that distracts you or your classmates. The instructor reserves the right to assign a zero for participation for the day for any student found in violation, as well as to ban electronic devices should it become a recurring problem. Please show respect and consideration for your classmates.

All lectures and course materials are copyright to the instructor and may not be reproduced or distributed without written permission. You may not record lectures without prior approval in writing.

### Accommodations

Any student with a disability or other extenuating circumstances should see the instructor as soon as possible to make appropriate arrangements. It is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor of any accommodations provided through CASA, including written documentation.

### Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

The academic community is built upon the free, open, and honest exchange of ideas and opinions. In order to achieve such an environment, students need to be confident that their peers are holding themselves to the same high standards. Cheating undermines the reputation of a university's degrees and violates the trust of all members of our intellectual community. Accordingly, no form of cheating will be tolerated in this course. All students are expected to conform to the university's code of conduct at all times. Any student found cheating will be

referred to the Dean of Students according to university policy. Cheating on any assignment will result in an automatic failure of the assignment and other possible repercussions.

Plagiarism is defined as the act of using the ideas or work of another person or persons as if they were one's own without giving proper credit to the source. You must acknowledge the original author or source of all quotations and ideas through quotation marks, footnotes, etc. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to the following:

- the submission of a work, either in part or in whole completed by another;
- failure to give credit for ideas, statements, facts or conclusions which rightfully belong to another;
- failure to use quotation marks when quoting directly from another, whether it be a paragraph, a sentence, or even a part thereof;
- close and lengthy paraphrasing of another's writing, without credit or originality;
- use of another's project or programs or part thereof without giving credit.

Submission of a work completed for another class either in a previous or concurrent term is academic dishonesty. In short, plagiarism is not allowed under any circumstances. If you have any questions about whether something might be considered plagiarism, *please ask*.

For more information on Framingham State's policies on academic honesty and plagiarism, please see the CASA Writing Guide at: [http://www.fscmedia.com/web-external/writing-guide/plagiarism\\_fsc.html](http://www.fscmedia.com/web-external/writing-guide/plagiarism_fsc.html).