Constant Flux:  
Media and Communication from Telegraph to Twitter

KHC CM 103  
Spring 2014  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00am-1230pm  
Room KHC 107

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Office hours: TBD  
Office location: TBD

University Catalogue Description
Students will explore the media environment and analyze the impact of technology and information on their lives. Studies highlight the development of technology over time, assessing how governments, economies and social beliefs were changed in unexpected ways. Students will perform research that uses information from their academic majors as a foundation for examining the role media play in their lives and society. Assessing how the liberal arts, sciences, business and communication have changed with inventions such as the printing press, telegraph, television and computers will encourage students to consider the widespread impact of technology on the historical development of civilization.

Course Description
The course will encourage students to explore the media environment and analyze the impact of technology and information on their lives. The writings of Lewis Mumford and Harold Innis will serve as a foundation for researching the influence of technology on the structure and cultural values of society.

Students will employ the framework of Mumford and Innis as a starting point for their own research, which will apply information from their academic majors toward developing a clear knowledge of the role media play in their lives and society.

The ideas of Marshall McLuhan will provide the second framework for studying media. McLuhan’s concept that media are “extensions of man” will be used to begin answering the core question for the course: How have we been changed by contemporary trends in media? Students will use McLuhan’s technique of “probes” to research how they, their friends, family and society have changed for the better and worse with the rise of digital communication.

Constant Flux will also investigate the democratization of information and culture, while exploring questions about individualism, relationships and our collective unconscious.

The functions of journalism and the press will be studied to assess how citizens consume news and how public opinion is shaped in the digital environment. Emerging
factors such as news as algorithm, filter bubbles, information silos and crowdsourcing will be analyzed within the context of traditional definitions and standards of journalism.

The course will also present students with the opportunity to study the persuasion and entertainment industries, as well as the role of advertising, public relations, and government communication. The changes from hardware to software and product to process will be explored, allowing students to develop analytical skills for navigating the post-industrial world.

**Course Objectives**

Through lectures, course readings, research, team projects and class discussion students will analyze the media environment, developing an understanding of the impact technology and information has on their lives and society.

Students will develop their own theoretical constructs to analyze the role media plays in their lives and society.

Students will incorporate the pedagogical framework of technological determinism as a method for evaluating how media and technology influence government, economics and social beliefs.

The works of Lewis Mumford and Harold Innis will be used to research the impact of technology on the social structure and cultural values of society. Students will extrapolate how the ideas of Innis and Mumford might be applied to the electronic and digital environments.

Students will study ideas of Marshall McLuhan to explore the question, have we been fundamentally changed by electronic and digital media? They will explore questions about individualism, relationships and our collective unconscious.

Throughout the course students will use McLuhan's technique of "probes" to research how they, their friends, family and society have changed for the better and worse with the rise of digital communication.

Students will compare and contrast the content industries including news, entertainment and social media and study how public opinion is shaped by the information environment.

Upon completion of this course you should be able to:

1. Explain and provide your own interpretation and analysis of the writings of Innis, Mumford and McLuhan.
2. Apply the theories of Innis, Mumford and McLuhan to contemporary media, technology and content.
3. Understand how technology affects interpersonal communication and relationships.
4. Analyze the impact of marketing communication on human behavior.
5. Scrutinize the effect of news and entertainment on society.

Probes according to Marshall McLuhan: “I’m making explorations. I don’t know where they’re going to take me. My work is designed for the pragmatic purpose of trying to understand our technological environment and its psychic and social consequences. But my books constitute the process rather than the completed product of discovery; my purpose is to employ facts as tentative probes, as means of insight, of pattern recognition, rather than to use them in the traditional and sterile sense of classified data, categories, containers. I want to map new terrain rather than chart old landmarks.”

Attendance
Attendance in class is required.

Boston University Academic Code of Conduct
All KHC students are expected to adhere to both the University and KHC Academic Code of Conduct. The Academic Code of Conduct can be found at http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/

Grading
- 20% Completion of weekly probes
  Broad thought-provoking questions based on the class content of the week. Students whiteboard their ideas in a group exercise designed to develop an understanding of the impact of media, technology and content on their lives and American society.

- 20% Assignment 1
  No mobile device for you. The ‘gods’ have taken away your mobile devices but everyone else still has theirs. Using the theories of McLuhan and Innis and our class exploration of interpersonal communication, write a five-page essay analyzing the effects that this has on your life.

- 25% Assignment 2
  According to Nielsen Research the average America watches more than 34 hours of live television per week and 3 to 6 hours of recorded programs. Why? Write a five-page thoroughly sourced essay analyzing why in the age of new media, TV still attracts so many eyeballs.

- 35% Final Project
  Consumer insight is the gold standard for the content industries. Create a 20 slide PowerPoint that will be presented to the captains of the content industry analyzing media consumption by young adults. What motivates the use of specific technologies? What are young adults looking for in the content they consumer? And most importantly, what will be the next BIG thing for this demographic cohort. Include an appendix with sources for the report.
Course Outline & Readings

PART ONE: MEDIA

Week 1. Introduction to the Course and Course Objectives
Assignments, class participation, grading, and general rules of the road. Overview of the course – exploring the development and impact of technology, information, and the media environment.

Readings:
- "Technological Determinism in American Culture," Does Technology Drive History? (Blackboard)
- "Hooked on Gadgets and Paying the Price"

Week 2. Lewis Mumford and Harold Innis: Laying the Foundation
Examining the intersection of technology, social structure, and the cultural values of society.

Readings:
- "Lewis Mumford as a Historian of Technology in Technics and Civilization," Lewis Mumford, Public Intellectual (Blackboard)
- "Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted."
- "Introduction", Empire and Communications, Harold Innis
- "Minerva's Owl", Empire and Communications, Harold Innis

Week 3. Marshall McLuhan, What Are You Doin'??
McLuhan’s concept that media are “extensions of man” will be examined to begin answering the core question for the course: How have we been changed by contemporary trends in media?

Readings:
- "Why Bother with Marshall McLuhan?" The New Atlantis, Spring, 2011
- "What If He Is Right? " The New Life Out There, 1965
- "The Medium Is The Message", Understanding Media, Marshall McLuhan

Week 4. Interpersonal Communication: People Who Need People
Describing the traditional definitions and applications of human communication according to scholarly research and the popular mass media media. Exploring the essence of verbal and nonverbal interaction.

Readings:
- ""Growing Up Digital, Wired For Distraction"
- "Texting Generation Doesn’t Share Boomers’ Taste For Talk"
Week 5. Defining Interpersonal Communication in the Electronic/Digital Era
The rise of parasocial and mediated interpersonal communication and how this phenomenon is a game changer for personal relationships. What is a friend in the age of social media and friending?
Readings:
- "YU Luv Texts H8 Calls"
- "The End of Courtship"
- "Generation Net: the Youngsters Who Prefer Their Virtual Lives to the Real World"

Week 6. Radio Makes Waves
How bringing news and entertainment into the home changed society. Examining the political and cultural implications of ‘theater of the mind’. How radio became social glue and a medium of propaganda in the U.S. and Germany. Understanding radio’s influence and contribution to the developing culture of celebrity.
Readings:
- “From Oratory to Public Speaking: Fireside Politics”, The Americans, The Democratic Experience, Daniel Boorstin
- “Radio the Tribal Drum”, Understanding Media, Marshall McLuhan

Week 7. Television - ‘The Vast Wasteland’ - Conquers America
Examining how television was the beta test for supercharging total technological change throughout society. How TV reinvented popular culture, marketing and news. The attempt by social scientists to measure the effects of television on human behavior.
Readings:
- Television the Timid Giant”, Understanding Media, Marshall McLuhan
- “Television and the Public Interest,” Newton Minow, 5/9/61
- “A Vast Wasteland Revisited, “ Nieman Journalism Lab, 5/9/11
- "Living With Television: The Violence Profile”, George Gerbner & Larry Gross

Week 8. “You’ve Got Mail”: The Digitization of the Planet
Analyzing the impact of instant interaction and unlimited content on societies around the world. Understanding the impact of computers, software and networking on traditional media. Does handheld technology change everything we think we know about the digital era?
Readings:
- “Automation Learning a Living”, Understanding Media, Marshall McLuhan
- “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” The Atlantic, 7/08
Week 9. If “Video Killed the Radio Star” Why Is There Still Radio?
Studying theories of technological adoption and analyzing the effects of new media on existing media. Considering McLuhan’s concept of hybrid technology as a means of evaluating combinations of technology. Applying the ideas of Evert Rogers on the diffusion of innovations as a means of understanding target audiences.

Readings:
- “What’s Wrong With ‘X’ Is Dead?”
- “Now Playing, Night of the Living Tech”

PART TWO: MARKETING

Week 10. Pondering “Is Advertising Finally Dead?”
Investigating how digital technology did and didn’t change the advertising industry. Examining the "new and improved" techniques for branding in the post-industrial era of process not products. How social media and digital platforms affect the relationship between consumers and products.

Readings:
- "Advertising as Capitalist Realism" Advertising, the Uneasy Persuasion (Blackboard)
- “Can Social Media Sell Soap?”
- “Can Social Media Sell Soap?”

Week 11. Advertising Research Asks: Can We Get Pavlov's Dogs to Buy Milk Bones?
Despite the mantra “the consumer is king/queen,” does advertising manipulate consumers? Studying the newest techniques for predicting consumer behaviors and obsession with measuring all things advertising. Who has the upper hand, advertisers or consumers?

Readings:
- “Hidden Persuaders II”
- " Ignore the Human Element of Marketing at Your Own Peril”
- " Making Ads That Whisper to the Brain”
- “Retail therapy”
- “Tracking Viewers From TV to Computer to Smartphone”

Week 12. Political Advertising: Selling Candidates Like Soap Insults Soap
Assessing the rise of the permanent campaign and the political media consultants who dominate elections and governance. Is the importance of charisma and image in contemporary politics a new phenomenon? The transition from retail politics to mediated campaign to data-driven elections. Exploring why the average person hates politics and politicians.

Readings:
- "Barack Obama's Persuasion Army"
- "Beware the Smart Campaign"
- "How Technology Has Restored the Soul of Politics"
- "When the Nerds Go Marching In"

PART THREE: NEWS MEDIA

Week 13. From Telegraph to Twitter: How Technology Changed the Definition of News
Analyzing the impact of technology on the content, delivery and audience of news. Changes in the fundamentals of journalism; who, what, where, when and why throughout the evolution of the press in America.

Readings:
- "Goodbye to the Age of Newspapers," The New Republic, 3/4/09
- "The Murrow Doctrine," The New Yorker, 1/23/06

Week 14. Frank Magid, The Man Who Shaped Broadcast News As We Know It
Detailing the rise of the News Consultants and how they changed the scope of broadcast journalism. Assessing the impact of newscasters as stars and the philosophy "if it bleeds it leads" on broadcast journalism. Understanding the transition of cable news into partisan talk shows.

Readings:
- "Faces and Places", "Tom Swift and His Electronic Poll Taker",
- "Blueprint", "In the Palace of the Ice King", The Newscasters, Ron Powers

Week 15. Does Crowd-Sourced News Make You William Randolph Hearst?
How social media has overshadowed and redefined 'legitimate' news. Understanding the transition of power from traditional reporting to everyone posting on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. How 24/7 seems quaint in the era of social networking.

Readings:
- "How Mainstream Media Outlets Use Twitter," PEJ, 11/14/11
- "What Facebook and Twitter Mean for News," PEJ, 2012

Additional Readings:
- "All the News That's Fit to Print Out," New York Times, 7/1/07
• “Wikipedia And The Death of The Expert,” The Awl, 5/17/11
• “68 Blocks: Life, Death, Hope,” Boston Globe, 12/16/12
• “Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek,” New York Times, 12/23/12

LINKS


Television and the Public Interest, Newton Minow, 5/9/61 http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/newtonminow.htm


Illuminating Texts, Boston Globe, 7/10/11 http://bo.st/n7fnTF

How We Read Now, Boston Globe, 7/17/11 http://bo.st/qNeAmD

How Johnny Will Read, Boston Globe, 7/24/11
http://bo.st/ncgjkr

**Writer’s Block: The End of Bookstores**, The New Republic, 3/24/11
http://on.tnr.com/tBF7BY

**Things to Do in Cyberspace When You’re Dead**, New York Times, 1/9/11
http://nyti.ms/khyisr

**Life and Death Online: Who Controls a Digital Legacy**, Wall Street Journal, 1/5/13
http://on.wsj.com/Xo1Jg0


http://on.wsj.com/b9tsz8

**Living Room Candidate**, 1964 Presidential Campaign TV Spots
http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1964

http://nyti.ms/eMaAhp

**Obama’s Media Machine: State Run Media 2.0?** ABC News, 2/15/11
http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/president-obama-white-house-media-operation-state-run/story?id=12913319#.UBhHQK6QeXN

**Mirror, Mirror on the Web**, The Nation, 1/29/07
http://www.thenation.com/article/mirror-mirror-web

**Brave New World of Digital Intimacy**, New York Times, 9/5/08
http://nyti.ms/mtHJtv


**The End of Forgetting**, New York Times, 7/21/10
http://nyti.ms/URjVBU

**Goodbye to the Age of Newspapers**, The New Republic, 3/4/09
http://on.tnr.com/61mWO

**The Murrow Doctrine**, The New Yorker, 1/23/06
http://nyr.kr/SmW24a
How Mainstream Media Outlets Use Twitter, *PEJ*, 11/14/11

What Facebook and Twitter Mean for News, *PEJ*, 2012

68 Blocks: Life, Death, Hope, *Boston Globe*, 12/16/12
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Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek, *New York Times*, 12/23/12
http://nyti.ms/Vcp9Bx

All the News That’s Fit to Print Out, *New York Times*, 7/1/07
http://nyti.ms/kIahMH

http://bit.ly/kRrArz

http://nyti.ms/jazdHp