

**BECA 877**  
**Broadcast History and Historiography**  
**Spring 2006**  
**TH 2:10-4:55**  
**CA 37**

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**Office Hours:**  
**T, 2:00-4:00, W, 3:15-5:00, Th, 12:00-2:00**  
**And By Appointment**

**Description:**

This seminar examines issues in broadcast history as a way of developing a fuller understanding of the historical development of selected broadcast technologies and institutions as well as of the various ways in which such histories are conceived.

**Objectives:**

- 1) Gain a deeper understanding of the history of broadcast and electronic media within the United States
- 2) Consider central methodological issues important to conceiving broadcast history
- 3) Gain skill in researching and writing broadcast history

**Required Texts:**

- Abbate, J. (2000). *Inventing the Internet*. Boston, MIT Press.
- Barnouw, E. (1990). *Tube of plenty: The evolution of American television*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Douglas, S. (1989). *Inventing broadcasting, 1899-1922*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- . (2004) *Listening in: Radio and the American imagination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Engelman, R. (1996). *Public radio and television in America: A political history*. London: Sage publications.
- McChesney, R. (1995). *Telecommunications, mass media, and democracy: The battle for the control of US broadcasting, 1928-1935*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Mullen, M. (2003). *The rise of cable programming in the United States: Revolution or evolution?* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Spigel, L. (1992). *Make room for TV: Television and the family ideal in Postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**Reading Notes:**

To help facilitate our discussions, you will each complete weekly reading notes that demonstrate what you find most important in that week's readings. These need not be elaborately written essays. Rather, these should be page numbers, fragments of quotes, organization names, keywords, key figures, or other landmarks that help you recall interesting passages and ideas for our class discussion. The point is to offer a general sort of outline of our reading that shows the progression of the author's argument and discussion as well as highlights interesting moments in the overall history of

mass communication. This should be typed, but don't worry about being neat. They should capture your ideas without giving you a headache.

**You will provide notes in four key areas:**

*Critical Moments:* Here you will mark key events, figures, and so forth in the overall history of communication laid out by the author. Don't worry about capturing every single moment or person. Focus on those developments that strike you as most important in this overall history. Provide general notes and a *timeline* that reflects these events.

*Critical Themes:* What recurring themes and ideas seem to come up in this reading (battles over patents, debates about public versus commercial media, advertising, etc.)?

*Vectors:* In what ways might these past moments and themes connect to contemporary media issues? Note some recent developments or problems that have commonalities with these past themes and events.

*Historiographic Issues:* Here you will note issues or concerns with the authors historiographic approach and writing. Are there passages that are particularly compelling? What do you find interesting or troubling about the way in which the author puts together his or her narrative? How will does the author use evidence to support this story?

**Primary Sources:**

Starting on February 16<sup>th</sup> some member of the class will bring some media artifact that fits into the history of the author whose works we are reading for that week. For instance, if we are talking about the history of early radio, we might listen to episodes of *Amos and Andy* or another early radio program. We might also look at advertisements for RCA or newspaper articles about the impact of radio written during the time period in question. The point is to find some interesting examples that will allow us to engage and evaluate the author's history in a more primary manner. Be creative! We will assign these dates at the beginning of the semester.

**Midterm Essay:**

Your first essay will be a short primer in writing about media history and in using primary and secondary sources. For this essay, you will search for primary sources connected to a specific media theme then draw these sources together into a historical essay that offers historical insight into a particular media technology. Using the library's online database, the Proquest Newspapers, Historical *New York Times* Historical Archives, the *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature*, and other databases that you find useful, you will find a series of newspaper and magazine articles or other stories that help you to craft an interesting narrative about the media topic you decide to explore.

*The articles you explore should be dated earlier than 1941 and should illustrate the relationship between some media technology and some cultural practice of your choice.* You are free to look for whatever cultural practices you think might be interesting to explore. The following are examples of terms that you might consider exploring. Whatever you chose, it should be narrow and focused enough that you can handle it adequately in a relatively short essay (e.g. you probably won't be able to explore the telegraph, radio, and the telephone (or phonograph, magnetophon, etc.). Try exploring some of the following in a database or periodical guide:

- Telegraph/Radio/Telephone and Medicine
- Telegraph/Radio/Telephone and Crime
- Telegraph/Radio/Telephone and Police
- Telegraph/Radio/Telephone and Religion
- Telegraph/Radio/Telephone and Wedding

Telegraph/Radio/Telephone and Psychic  
Telegraph/Radio/Telephone and Education

Using the newspaper articles and other pieces you find as the PRIMARY SOURCES for your essay you will write a historical analysis of the relationship between the media technology (or technologies) and the cultural practice you discuss.

Your task is to connect the various articles together in a way that tells a story about the uses of a particular media in the earlier twentieth century. How were radios incorporated into weddings or church services in the 1910s and 1920s? How did colleges and universities decide to use radio for educational purposes? What was the view of how radios could be used in prisons? **Your task isn't necessarily to show a particular change or development, but rather to give an interesting picture of a past or forgotten moment of media use.**

**The historical articles you find will be the evidence for your discussion** so you will need to find strong pieces and spend time discussing them in your essay. It's your job to interpret these articles for your reader and show how they fit into the broader history you are discussing.

**You will find at least three scholarly, peer-reviewed journal articles that help support your discussion in one manner or another.** These should lend to your discussion by offering additional historical context or otherwise lending added credence to your points (though the historical story you tell should be primarily drawn from the newspaper articles you find), These scholarly works should be properly cited both within the text of your essay and on a reference page using the proper APA format.

**Your essay should have an interesting, specific title that clearly and provocatively demonstrates the specifics of your argument.** Remember: If you can't come up with a specific title, then it might mean that your argument isn't yet specific enough.

Your essay should be in the 5-7 page range, typed and double-spaced, in a reasonable font.

**Final Essay:**

Your final essay will be a seminar length paper of 15-20 pages exploring some specific issue or topic with the history of media. It should be well researched, drawing together primary and secondary materials into a focused discussion that makes a clear argument and tells a compelling story about the topic you explore.

You should meet with me by March 16<sup>th</sup> to discuss possible topics for your final project. A paper proposal of approximately 3-4 double spaced pages will be due in class on March 30<sup>th</sup>. This proposal should give an outline and justification of your proposed project and offer a bibliography and brief discussion of other work on the topic.

Your final essay is due in class May 25<sup>th</sup>. It should be typed and double-spaced in a reasonable font with a list of cited works in proper APA format. The citations and endnotes should give a clear sense of the primary and secondary sources on which you've drawn. Using the skills you developed while writing your midterm essay to craft a well argued, solidly written historical argument.

### **Participation and Attendance:**

Participation in class discussions is an essential component of this course. You should make every effort to attend each class period and be prepared to contribute in insightful ways. If you must miss a class, be sure to notify me well in advance whenever possible. Additionally, daily participation factors heavily into your final grade, so your regular contributions will greatly influence your overall course evaluation. ***Both the quantity and quality of your contributions are important. The best students will attend every class session and make regular, daily contributions that are insightful, interesting, and that encourage discussion from fellow students—making efforts to engage, respond to, and converse with classmates in intelligent ways without monopolizing discussion or discouraging others from participating.***

### **Library Hints**

**Electronic Databases of Communication Research**—There are a number of electronic databases available that give you access to citations (and sometimes the full text) of scholarly essays in communication research. A few of the best available through the SFSU library include “Communication and Mass Media Complete” and “Academic Search Elite.” You can find these and other library resources through the library’s web site at:

<http://www.library.sfsu.edu/eresource/names.html>

Once you gain access to one of these databases (note that you will need your student ID and PAC number if you want to access these databases from off campus), you should perform an **ADVANCED SEARCH** by selecting this button from the opening screen.

*Be sure that you click the box marked “Scholarly (peer reviewed) Journals,” available if you scroll down slightly on the advanced search.* This will insure that all of your results will be from properly peer review journals as opposed to popular or trade publications.

Enter selected search terms in the available windows. Be sure to experiment with different terms, phrases, and collections of words that reflect the topic you are exploring (though you can also search for specific authors or article titles). Be creative, and try as many different possibilities and categories as you can!

**Finding Essays that Cite another Essay**—For best results in locating pieces that cite one of the essays you’ve read, try using the “Web of Science” citation index available through the library. This is available at:

<http://0-isi10.isiknowledge.com.opac.sfsu.edu/portal.cgi/wos>.

Once you reach this site, click on the “Cited Reference Search” button and then enter the last name and first initial of the original author for whom you are searching. Browse through the list of returned information, selecting and reviewing pieces that reference your particular author.

Once you find an interesting article that cites your original author, you can search through the new article’s bibliography, seeing other essays that it cites (a fast and convenient way to find other research on a particular topic).

If you want to find any of these new articles, you can search for them on one of the databases listed above, or use the listed citation to find the print version of the article in the library.

**Finding Popular and Trade Publications**—In addition to finding scholarly research on a particular topic, you may also want to find what the popular media or professional media practitioners are saying about a particular topic (information that you can analyze and comment upon in your own work and research). For this kind of information, “Lexis-Nexis Academic” is a particularly useful database. You can access this database through:

<http://0-web.lexis-nexis.com.opac.sfsu.edu/universe>

Once you get to the site, use the “Guided News Search.” Here, you can search for articles in newspapers and magazines (including trade publications such as *Broadcasting and Cable*) as well as television transcripts and information from news wires. Again, use different combinations of search terms. You can also limit and otherwise specify the dates for articles you want to find

**Finding Historical News Articles**—For researching media history, it can be very helpful to retrieve newspaper articles, advertisements, and other primary documents that tell of particularly important media related developments. One useful source available through “Proquest” gives you access to the full text of articles published in the *New York Times* since 1851. Access this site by selecting “Proquest Newspapers” from the web site:

<http://www.library.sfsu.edu/eresource/names.html>

Once you’ve reached the Proquest site, click on the “Database” window and select “News: The Historical *New York Times*” from the list. Once you’ve reached this historical database, you can begin a full text search of the paper’s various articles and advertisements.

**Grading:**

Participation/Reading Notes:	35%
Midterm Essay:	25%
Final Essay:	40%

**Plagiarism:**

Using someone else’s work as your own, or without proper citation, constitutes plagiarism, and as such is grounds for failure of this course, and disciplinary probation. If you have questions about properly citing an article, or what can be considered plagiarism, please feel free to speak with me. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work is original and contains the appropriate citations, references, etc.

## **Course Schedule:**

February 2<sup>nd</sup>: **Course Introductions**

February 9<sup>th</sup>: **Issues in Media Historiography**

Reading for discussion:

Staiger, J. (2004). The future of the past. *Cinema Journal* 44(1), 126-129.

Musser, (2004). Historiographic method and the study of early cinema. *Cinema Journal* 44(1), 101-107.

Kompare, D. (2003). 'Greyish rectangles': Creating the television heritage. *Media History* 9(2), 153-169.

O'Malley, T. (2002). Media history and media studies: Aspects of the development of the study of media history in the UK 1945-2000. *Media History* 8(2), 155-173.

Dixon, D. (2003). Navigating the maze: Sources for press historians. *Media History* 9(1), 79-89.

Hamilton, J., and Atton, C. (2001). Theorizing Anglo-American alternative media: Toward a contextual history and analysis of US and UK scholarship. *Media History* 7(2), 119-135.

Hamilton, J. (2001). Theory through history: Exploring scholarly conceptions of US alternative media. *The Communication Review* 4, 305-326.

Iggers, G. (2000). Historiography between scholarship and poetry: Reflections on Hayden White's Approach to Historiography. *Rethinking History* 4(3), 373-390.

White, H. (2000). An old question raised again: Is historiography art or science? (Response to Iggers). *Rethinking History* 4(3), 391-406.

Class Activity:

Find one *peer reviewed journal article* covering some area of media history prior to 1950. Bring the essay with you to class and be prepared to discuss it with your fellow students. What does it tell us about the history of the particular media issue it addresses? What does it tell us about the writing of media history more generally?

February 16<sup>th</sup>: **Radio History**

Reading for Discussion: Douglas (*Inventing American Broadcasting*) (Chapters 1-4)  
*First Reading Notes Due in Class (and at each subsequent class)*

February 23<sup>rd</sup>: **Radio History**

Reading for Discussion: Douglas (*LAB*) (Chapters 5-9)

March 2<sup>nd</sup>: **Radio History**

Reading for Discussion: McChesney (Chapters 1-5)

March 9<sup>th</sup>: **Radio History**

Reading for Discussion: McChesney (Chapters 6-10)

March 16<sup>th</sup>: **Radio (Cultural) History**

Reading for Discussion: Douglas (*Listening In*) (Chapters 1-6)  
*Midterm Essay Due in Class*

March 23<sup>rd</sup>: **Radio (Cultural) History**

Reading for Discussion: Douglas (*LI*) (Chapters 7-12)

March 30<sup>th</sup>: **Television History**

Reading for Discussion: Barnouw (Chapters 1-3)  
*Final Essay Proposal Due in Class*

April 13<sup>th</sup>: **Television History**

Reading for Discussion: Barnouw (Chapters 4-6)

April 20<sup>th</sup>: **Television (Cultural) History**

Reading for Discussion: Spigel

April 27<sup>th</sup>: ***Cable Television History***

Reading for Discussion: Mullen

May 4<sup>th</sup>: ***Public Broadcasting History***

Reading for Discussion: Engelman (Chapters 1-7)

May 11<sup>th</sup>: ***Public Broadcasting History***

Reading for Discussion: Engelman (Chapters 8-12)

May 18<sup>th</sup>: ***Internet History***

Reading for Discussion: Abbate

May 25<sup>th</sup> (1:30-4:00): ***Course Presentations***

*Final Essays Due in Class*