**COMMRC 3326**
**Seminar in Media Studies: The Media Ecology Tradition**
**Th 5:30-8:30**
**Fall 2011**

<div align="right">

**Dr. Brent Malin**
**1109L Cathedral of Learning**
**412-624-6798**
**bmalin@pitt.edu**

**Office Hours:**
**Tuesday 10am-12pm**
**Thursday 12pm-2pm**
**and by Appointment**

</div>

Early twenty-first century celebrations and denunciations of so-called "new media" too often ignore the variety of ways in which "old media" were once themselves new. Indeed, much of the scholarly and popular arguments about digital technology—to take the most recent new media moment—sound suspiciously like arguments made about the radio and the telegraph before it, as well as about the transition from oral to written culture. This course will interrogate these arguments by looking at the longer history of new media encompassed in the tradition of "Media Ecology." Heavily influenced by the work of Marshall McLuhan—who drew upon the earlier work of Lewis Mumford and Harold Innis—Media Ecology places the medium of mass communication at the center of its scholarly inquiry. Our course will survey a variety of media ecological works, considering the strengths and weaknesses of this approach and the richly diverse ways in which its techno-centric thinking has been employed.

**<u>Texts & Materials:</u>**
Eisenstein, Elizabeth L. *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe.* 2nd ed. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. ISBN: 9780521607742
David Golumbia. *The Cultural Logic of Computation.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009. ISBN: 0674032926
Harold Innis. *Empire and Communications.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950. ISBN: 9780742555082
Friedrich A. Kittler. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999. ISBN: 0804732337
Lev Manovich. *The Language of New Media.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002. ISBN: 9780262632553
Carolyn Marvin. *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. ISBN: 9780195063417
Marshall McLuhan. *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962. ISBN: 0802060412
Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.* New York,: McGraw-Hill, 1964. ISBN: 9780262631594
Joshua Meyrowitz. *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. ISBN: 019504231X.
Lewis Mumford. *The Myth of the Machine: The Pentagon of Power.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970. ISBN: 9780156716109
Lewis Mumford. *Technics and Civilization.* New York: Harcourt, 1934. ISBN: 0226550273

Walter J. Ong. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word.* London; New York: Methuen, 1982.
     ISBN: 9780415281294
Online essays available through our course Blackboard website.

## Reading Responses:

To help facilitate discussion of our various readings, you will each complete regular reading responses that address some issue raised within our readings and discussions. Your responses need not cover every point raised in the readings, but should engage the readings (and your classmates) in some interesting conversation. Be creative!

You will each complete 6 reading responses.

Half of the class will write and present their readings responses each week. *You will bring copies of your response for each class participant, and be prepared to present and discuss your response in class (don't forget a copy for yourself and for Professor Malin).*

*Your reading responses should be in the vicinity of one single spaced, typed page.*

## Participation and Attendance:

Participation in class discussions is an essential component of this course. Thus, 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.*

## Course Project

You will each complete a major course project over the course of the semester that helps to demonstrate your engagement with the concepts we explore within the class. This will include a brief proposal and a substantial seminar paper of approximately 20 pages. Your final paper should tackle some topic of relevance to media ecology or the study of communication and technology more broadly. You might offer some theoretical discussion of a matter of importance to media and technology studies, a critical examination of a specific media text or technology, or some combination of the two. There are a broad range of approaches that fall under this rubric, so pick topics that are interesting to you and that make the question of technology relevant to other work you may be undertaking. Please feel free to see me as you development and work on your ideas.

*Proposals*
The proposals for your final papers are due on October 13th. Your proposals should help to open up a formal dialog about your project. In order to ensure that you get as much feedback as possible, you will each post your proposal to the discussion board on our Blackboard site. Your proposals should be posted by the beginning of our class on the 13th. We will use the following week to offer suggestions and comments for each others' projects.

In general, your proposal should do the following:

1) Offer a general overview of your project. What will you be discussing and why? What primary sources will you draw on? What secondary sources? Why have you selected these sources or this topic in particular?

2) Identify a journal that your study might fit within and explain the basic approach and perspective of this journal (include relevant information such as citation style, typical abstract length, etc.— which you can normally find by reading the guidelines for submitting essays). While this might be a journal focused explicitly on media technology (e.g. *Television & New Media*, *Technology & Culture*), you should also consider non-technology focused journals that might be interested in how a technological approach could enhance their traditional subject matter. You should look over issues of the journal to get a sense of the kinds of essays they typically publish.

3) Explain the scholarly relevance of your project. Why should scholars be interested in your project? Use your selected journal as a way of framing this approach. What about your essay would readers of this journal find particularly interesting? What could your essay contribute to their typical areas of study? More generally, what will your essay bring to scholarly understandings of your specific topic itself?

3) Explain the cultural relevance of your project. Why should my mom care about your project? She's a smart woman, but despite the fact that she has a son studying communication, she has no real investment in media or technology scholarship. How might your project be relevant to her, or to others outside the academy? What important cultural questions does will your project help to negotiate or explain?

4) List some potential resources for your project. What scholarly secondary sources might you draw on? A simple list of sources is fine.

Your proposal should be long enough to lay out your project in a clear, interesting way. I assume that 3-5 double spaced pages will be more than sufficient.

*Papers*
Your final papers are due by email no later than Friday, December 16th. Your paper should be well-researched, carefully argued, and clearly written, and should satisfy and enhance the ideas you lay out in your proposal. It should use the citation style typical of the target journal you identify and include a clearly written abstract in the style and length called for in the journal's submission guidelines.

## Grading
| | |
|---|---|
| Reading Responses: | 30% |
| Final Project: | 40% |
| Participation: | 30% |

## 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.

COMMRC 3326
The Media Ecology Tradition
Th 5:30-8:30
Fall 2011

**Weekly Syllabus**

*This schedule is subject to revision.*

September 1, Thursday:
        Lance Strate. "Studying Media as Media: Mcluhan and the Media Ecology Approach."
            *MediaTropes* 1 (2008): 127-42. (recommended) (online)
        James W. Carey, and John J. Quirk. "The Mythos of the Electronic Revolution." *American*
            *Scholar* 39, no. 2-3 (1970): 219-424. (recommended) (online)
        Neil Postman. "The Humanism of Media Ecology." *Proceedings of the Media Ecology Association*
            1 (2000): 10-16. (recommended) (online)
        Lance Strate. "A Media Ecology Review." *Communication Research Trends* 23, no. 2 (2004): 3-
            48. (recommended) (online)
        **Course Introductions**

September 8, Thursday:
        Lewis Mumford. *Technics and Civilization.* New York: Harcourt, 1934.
        **Group A: Reading Response #1 Due in Class**

September 15, Thursday:
        Harold Innis. *Empire and Communications.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950.
        **Group B: Reading Response #1 Due in Class**

September 22, Thursday:
        Marshall McLuhan. *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man.* Toronto: University
            of Toronto Press, 1962.
        **Group A: Reading Response #2 Due in Class**

September 29, Thursday:
        Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.* New York,: McGraw-Hill,
            1964.
        **Group B: Reading Response #2 Due in Class**

October 6, Thursday:
        Lewis Mumford. *The Myth of the Machine: The Pentagon of Power.* New York: Harcourt Brace
            Jovanovich, 1970.
        **Group A: Reading Response #3 Due in Class**

October 13, Thursday:
        Walter J. Ong. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word.* London; New York:
            Methuen, 1982.
        **Group B: Reading Response #3 Due in Class**

**Paper Proposal Due in Class**

October 20, Thursday:
Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*. 2nd ed. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
**Group A: Reading Response #4 Due in Class**

October 27, Thursday:
Joshua Meyrowitz. *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
**Group B: Reading Response #4 Due in Class**

November 3, Thursday:
Carolyn Marvin. *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
**Group A: Reading Response #5 Due in Class**

November 10, Thursday:
Lev Manovich. *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002.
**Group B: Reading Response #5 Due in Class**

November 17, Thursday:
NO CLASS

November 24, Thursday:
NO CLASS

December 1, Thursday:
Friedrich A. Kittler. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999.
**Group A: Reading Response #6 Due in Class**

December 8, Thursday
David Golumbia. *The Cultural Logic of Computation*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009.
**Group B: Reading Response #6 Due in Class**

December 15, Thursday:
**End of Semester Gathering: 5814 Howe St.**

**Final Papers Due by email, no later than Friday, December 16, 5:00 pm**