



**Syllabus
MCOM 3190 –
Innovations in Mass Communications
Winter 2006**

**Tues./Thurs. 11 a.m. - 12:50 p.m.
Rm. 119 Mass Communications Building**

Instructor: Christof Demont-Heinrich

Office: Mass Communications and Journalism Studies Building, Room 107A

Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. and by appointment

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Class Web Site: We will be using Blackboard

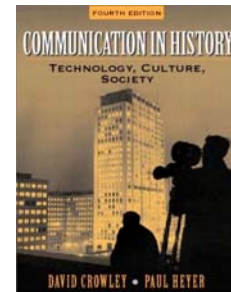
Teaching Assistant: Jess Evett – e-mail: jevett@du.edu

Required Texts:

- Crowley, D., & Heyer, P. (2003, 4th edition). *Communication in history: Technology, culture, society*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

The textbook is available at the DU bookstore (I've asked them to purchase mostly used copies to help save you money), and through other commercial bookstores such as amazon.com, etc.

- *Some of our class reading material will be from additional sources. These include: E-copies of essays and articles, web site articles, and in-class handouts.*



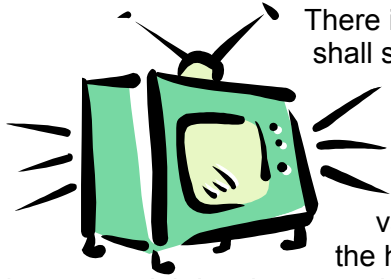
Course Objectives

We use communications technologies all the time. Many of us will end up working in media and communications industries in which we'll develop, hone and work with communication technologies every day. Yet we rarely, if ever, stop to think about how these technologies--cell phones, laptops, iPods, portable TVs and DVD players, video games, and so on--affect us and the world around us.

Where do these technologies come from? Who developed them? For what purposes? Who controls them? Who profits from them (and who does not)? How are they used, by whom, for what purposes, and with what potential implications for whom? What does the future of communications technologies look like, and how does the future both reflect, and build upon, the past?

These questions spring from a broader question that will form the foundation of this class:

- What is relation between communications technologies and human society?



There is no clear-cut, or "right" answer to this question. Indeed, as you shall see, there are competing views on the nature of this relation.

The goal of this course is not to push you toward one of these views in particular. The larger aim is to inspire you to develop a deeper, broader, *contextual* understanding of the history of various communications technologies. The more you know about the history of communications technologies and their complex role in human social development, the more you, as a future media or communications professional, will be able to tap this knowledge in order to build upon, and surpass, the contemporary socio-technological order.

Overall, the primary aims of this course are:

- to provide an overview of major, sometimes competing, perspectives on the relationship between human society and communications technologies
- to provide an historical overview of the evolution of different communications technologies, including print, the telegraph and telephone, photography, radio and recording, film, television, computers and other forms of "new media" (the Internet, WWW, cell phones, satellite TV, etc.)
- to set contemporary communications technologies against the larger historical context out of which they emerge
- to build an understanding of the socially and culturally grounded nature of various communications technologies
- to inspire you to critically analyze the role of various communications technologies in contemporary society, and in your own life -- with a special emphasis on the link between communications technologies and larger human power relations
- to provide you with hands-on opportunities to critically link, and reflect upon, the relationship between "old" and "new" communications technologies -- and the role that these might be said to play in society as a whole and in your own life
- to provide you with a chance to compare "old" and "new" communications technologies in interesting, useful and engaging ways
- to do the above with a special emphasis on the notion of convergence -- and an emphasis on the ways in which the convergence of the televisual, the digital, the written, and the aural might be said to be "new," "old," or, perhaps, a combination of both
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At the end of this quarter you will be able to locate new, interesting and useful information about old and new communications technologies. You will also be able to engage in a sophisticated and historically grounded analysis about how these technologies affect, and are affected by, larger social developments. Put slightly differently, you'll be in position to write the next cover story for *Wired* magazine!

Historical Overview of Communications Technologies

Context, especially historical context, is essential to intelligently addressing the fascinating question of the relation between communications technologies -- which includes everything from human art, symbols, alphabets and writing to wireless networking and computers -- and human society. We will therefore devote a considerable amount of time to looking at the historical rise of various communications technologies, from writing and print to computers and the Internet. Articles by media and communication scholars will serve as the foundation of our historical lens.

However, ours won't be an exercise in "dry" historical discussion. We will regularly ground "past" history in the present. We will do so by way of comparative "then" and "now" discussions, debates, and individual and collective analyses, some of which will assume the form of formal writing and/or presentation assignments.

Much of our intellectual springboard will be provided by you. You will be required to regularly provide reading material for your fellow classmates -- and for the instructors. Ideally, this material will allow the rest of the class to draw connections between social, political, cultural, and, especially, power issues that have swirled around the rise of "old" communications technologies such as radio and similar issues that swirl around contemporary communications technologies, for example, satellite radio.



This course will use hands-on research, analysis, frequent writing assignments, and group work to promote multi-way learning, dialogue and interesting and informed discussion. The course will also bring in guest speakers and use audio-visual materials in order to expose you to different ideas and perspectives, increase awareness and understanding, and, most fundamentally, to stimulate critical reflection and thought about the complex relation between communications technologies and human society.

Current Events

You will be expected to keep abreast of contemporary developments in communications technology by way of television, radio, print and, especially, web-based news sources. You may read and watch as many different sources of news as you wish. The more the better. However, in order that we can have informed discussion and debate based on the same basic informational foundation, you **must** regularly consume the following news sources:

- ✓ *Wired* magazine online - <http://www.wired.com>
- ✓ *The Denver Post* business section

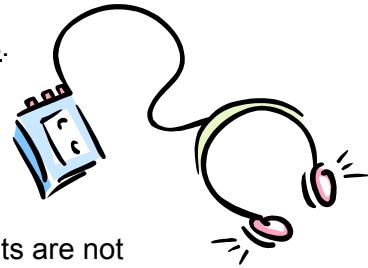
Assignments, Homework, Quizzes, Participation & Attendance

Individual Writing Assignments: There are five individual writing assignments. Assignment sheets for these will be posted on Blackboard.

Deadlines: Barring extreme circumstances, you will be expected to turn in your papers by deadline, or you will receive a zero (F) on that assignment.

Revision. You may revise all five writing assignments. You are strongly urged to come in and talk to me before revising. *I will average the first grade you with the second grade you earned for your final grade. If you received an 75 on the first story and a 90 on the second, your final story grade would be a an 83.*

Pop Quizzes: There will be six pop quizzes. Your best five quiz grades will count. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class. I will not re-administer quizzes for those who arrive to class late! The questions on these quizzes will relate to the readings, lecture, and current developments in communication technology. I reserve the right to increase the number of quizzes -- and the total percentage of your semester grade that they are worth -- if it becomes apparent to me that many students are not keeping up with the class readings.



Short discussion board posts & writing assignments: I will use in- and out-of-class writing prompts and require that you do some short written homework assignments in order to keep you writing and thinking about a variety of important critical social and cultural issues and considerations relevant to the course. Most of these prompts and homework assignments will be posted to the class electronic bulletin board. This will allow other members of the class to benefit from your insights. Hopefully, this bulletin board will also facilitate exchange of ideas, information and knowledge among students. In fact, I will be relying heavily on you to facilitate learning and exchange on the class discussion board.

Participation & Attendance: In-class participation and discussion are vital to a healthy and effective learning environment. You may be periodically called upon to ask/answer questions. You will also be called upon to participate in short in-class group activities and subsequent group presentations. Student names must be affixed to any group work (overheads, etc.) and will be used as a partial basis upon which to determine individual participation grades.

Grading & Attendance

Grading Breakdown:

- writing assignments = 50%
 - summary response paper #1 7.5%
 - summary response paper #2 7.5%
 - position paper 10%
 - compare & contrast paper 12.5%
 - convergence paper 12.5%
- Formal group project (in-class presentation, 8-10 page paper) = 20%
- Informal group work (lead class discussion, provide readings, questions) = 5%
- Pop quizzes (best 5 of 6) = 7.5%
- Short in- and out-of-class writing assignments = 7.5%
- Participation, attendance = 10%

Grading Scale:

93%+ A
90%-92% A-

87%-89%	B+
83%-86%	B
80%-82%	B-
77%-79%	C+
73-76%	C
70-72%	C-
67%-69%	D+
63%-66%	D
60%-62%	D-
59% -	F

If you attend class, do the required work and have a reasonable grasp of the information, you should have no trouble earning at least a "C," which indicates satisfactory work.

With the exception of documented absences [official doctor's note, etc.] you will NOT be allowed to make up a pop quiz, exam, etc. if you miss class. If you have a legitimate, documented reason for missing an upcoming class [official CU athletic/extracurricular event, etc.], it is your responsibility to inform the instructor beforehand. Some lecture notes will be posted to the class web site. However, not all will be. It is your responsibility to contact other class members for in-class notes, assignment sheets, etc. if you miss class.

Policies

1. Every absence will hurt you -- and the class, which benefits from the full and regular participation of all students. Upon the third absence, the *starting* point from which I compute your semester grade will be dropped a full letter grade to a 'B' (85). Upon the fourth absence, the starting point will drop to a 'C' (75), the fifth to a 'C-' (70), and so on.
2. Rude or abusive behavior such as talking excessively while the instructor or fellow students are addressing the class and/or personal verbal attacks on another student, groups of students, or the instructor will not be tolerated. This type of behavior will have an extremely negative impact on your participation grade!
3. PLEASE turn off all cell phones/pagers, etc. before coming to class. Thank you :-).
4. Cheating or plagiarizing the work of another will result in an automatic "F" for that assignment. Additionally, university policy permits harsher actions. If you have any questions about what constitutes (or does not constitute) plagiarism, ask me before you turn something in.
5. If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please let me know as soon as possible.
6. If you are involved in DU athletics or some other form of extra-curricular activity that will interfere with your attendance, you are required to let me know far ahead of time so that we can make any accommodations that are allowed according to official DU policies.
7. If you have any questions or concerns during the course of the semester about anything, please feel free to contact me. E-mail (cdemonth@du.edu) is far and away the best way to reach me!