COMM339|communication, technology, and culture

University of Southern California || Annenberg School for Communication
Fall 2018 || Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3:20pm || ASC 204

Instructor: Melina Sherman

office	ASC G6 (Basement)
office hours	Tuesdays, 3:30-5:30pm and by appointment
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COURSE INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to teach the history and theories surrounding the development and use of technologies, both those considered to be specifically related to communication as well as other technologies that are crucial for understanding contemporary culture, society, and politics. We will also be learning about how these technologies condition and are conditioned by transformations in the cultural landscape. As you can see by reading the schedule listed below, I take a rather broad perspective when analyzing technology. Therefore, the focus of this class will not be limited to *traditional* communication technologies such as television, film, social media, and so on. Rather, I contend that technologies such as space, infrastructure, disaster protocols, medical technologies, music, and the human body are also technologies in their own right. That is to say, they have both technological and communicative functions and have profound effects on the ways in which our culture, society, economy, and political landscape has evolved (and continues to evolve) over time. Thus, the syllabus outlined below is quite broad. My intention is to demonstrate to you that technology is often to be found in places where we do not expect to see it; it is, in fact, everywhere, and we are in constant interaction with it every hour of every day. Whether or not we are aware of the relationship we have to technology, there is no doubt that it is constantly shaping our, personalities, actions, values, and the ways we choose to interact with ourselves, others, and the world in which we live.

COURSE MATERIALS:

All required readings will be posted on Blackboard. All you need to bring is a laptop, pen, paper, and your own brilliant minds.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance/Participation: Students are required to attend class regularly, to contribute to class discussions, and to do weekly reading and discussion posts. Attendance in lecture is crucial: There will be a significant amount of information covered, some of which may not be in the readings. Therefore, you cannot pass the course if you do not attend most of the lectures. There are several writing assignments for this class, which means that both keeping up with class readings and attending

lectures are interlinked, and it is key that you manage your time to do both. Students who miss more than **four lectures** will have their grades reduced and risk failing the course.

The final grade will be based on the following distribution:

- Attendance and participation – 20 points
- Discussion posts – 10 points, due every week (Mondays by 5pm)
- Paper 1 – 10 points
- Paper 2 – 20 points
- Final project presentation – 20 points
- Final paper – 20 points

Total = 100 points

Papers: There are three papers due in this class. Each should be 6-8 pages long and will be checked for grammar, spelling, citations, and writing style. The prompt for each assignment will be distributed at least one week prior to the due date. These papers are designed to have you think in broader theoretical terms about the concepts and issues we discuss in class. They will ask you to call on the readings, but are not intended for you to summarize what you have read. Rather, these papers will provide you with an opportunity to analyze the cultural, communicative, and political practices and discourses that are embedded within different technologies. Papers will be due in class on the date indicated in the schedule below. You should turn in a hard copy as well as upload a digital copy to Blackboard. In total, the papers are worth 50% of your final grade.

Discussion posts: This assignment requires you to post a paragraph to the Discussion Board on Blackboard on the Monday evening before every class (by 5pm). Again, these posts are not intended for you to summarize what you have read. Rather, you should use them to pose key questions that you developed while doing the readings, and to analyze/assess the arguments that have been made by the authors. A high quality (A-grade) post will do the following: 1) Pose questions about the readings, preferable questions that we can use to jumpstart discussion the following day; 2) Develop an analysis or argument regarding the material you read, and 3) Relate the concepts and theories discussed in the readings to an ongoing problem/phenomenon in culture or politics, or to your own personal experience.

Final paper/presentation: This course will also require you to give presentations of your final project. While I expect the final project to be in a form OTHER THAN A PAPER (a poster, song, poem, video, performance, powerpoint presentation, etc.), you will end up handing in your project in the form of a paper during exam week. This project will be designed to ask you to synthesize what you learned over the course of the semester, to demonstrate your understanding of the theoretical/conceptual material (which you can also do by critiquing that material), and to connect that material to events in the real world. The last two class periods will be dedicated to your presentations.

COURSE POLICIES

Annenberg School for Communication Academic Integrity Policy: The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will receive a failing grade in the course and may be dismissed as a major. In addition to the formal academic integrity policy, our pedagogical policy is based on mutual respect; all students are encouraged to use the classroom as a space in which to speak and to voice their opinions. Our expectation is that you will respect not only the professors but also your fellow classmates when they are participating in discussion.

A final note about Academic Integrity: at the Annenberg School, we are fortunate to have classrooms with wireless Internet connection. This is not, however, an opportunity for students to surf the Internet for something more interesting then the class lecture, update their Facebook profiles, IM friends, or play solitaire. Our class is also not available for tweeting—please do not do this. If this kind of activity gets to be a problem, laptop computers will not be allowed in the auditorium.

Disability: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.- 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213)740-0776.

Academic Conduct: Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards*.
https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/.
Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* http://equity.usc.edu/ or to the *Department of Public Safety* http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems: A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs (website can be accessed at this address: http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information

http://emergency.usc.edu will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, TOPICS, & READINGS
*Note that readings are subject to change
*All readings will be posted to Blackboard

Week 1 – Theories of Technology & Culture

Tuesday, August 21 – Introduction

Thursday, August 23 – Do technologies have politics?
- James Carey, "A cultural approach to communication," *Communication and Culture.*
- Karl Marx, "The Fetishism of the Commodity and its Secret"
- Ian Hacking, "Making Up People"

Week 2 – Technology and Relationships (Communication, Love & Sex)

Tuesday, August 28 – Anti-social social networks?

- Sherry Turkle. (2011). Selection from *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*
- Eggers, "We Like You So Much and Want to Get to Know You Better." Find at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/29/magazine/dave-eggers-fiction.html?pagewanted=all
- Optional: Lee Rainie & Barry Wellman. (2012). Selection from *Networked.* MIT Press.

Thursday, August 30 – Technology, love, & sex || **Guest lecture by Xam Chen**
- Anthony Giddens (1992). Chapter 8 from *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies.*
- Hobbs, M., Owen, S., & Gerber, L. (2016). Liquid love? Dating apps, sex, relationships and the digital transformation of intimacy. *Journal of Sociology.*

Week 3 – Remix Culture

Tuesday, September 4
- Theodore Adorno, "On Popular Music"
- Dick Hebdige, "Style as Bricolage*"* from *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*

Thursday, September 6
- Michael Veal, Chapter 2 from *Dub: Soundscapes and Shattered Songs in Jamaican Reggae*
- Wayne Marshall, "Treble Culture," from *Frequency-Range Aesthetics.*

Week 4 - Technology & the Body; the "Quantified Self"

Tuesday, September 11 – The Quantified Self
- Gina Neff & Dawn Nafus (2016). Introduction and Chapter 1 from *Self-Tracking*
- John Cheney-Lippold. (2017). "Subjectivity: Who Do They Think You Are?" from *We are Data: Algorithms and the Making of our Digital Selves*

Thursday, September 13 – Technology and the Body
- Cressida J. Heyes. (2006). "Foucault Goes to Weight Watchers." *Hypatia.*
- Phillip G. White & Games Gillett. "Reading the Masculine Body: A Critical Decoding of Advertisements in *Flex* Magazine" *Society of Sport Journal.*

Week 5 – Technological Disasters

Tuesday, September 18: A Risky World?
- Ulrich Beck (1992). Introduction from *Risk Society.*
- Andy Lakoff. (2017). Selection from *Unprepared: Global Health in a Time of Emergency*
- Francois Ewald. (2002). "The Return of Descartes's Malicious Demon: An Outline of a Philosophy of Precaution."

Thursday, September 20: New Forms of Risk
- Adriana Petryna. (2002). Selection from *Life Exposed: Biological Citizenship After Chernobyl*
- Stephen Collier (2013). Neoliberalism and natural disaster. *The Journal of Cultural Economy.*
- Tim Harford. (2016 October 11). "Crash: How Computers are Setting Us Up for Disaster." *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/oct/11/crash-how-computers-are-setting-us-up-disaster

PAPER 1 DUE BY 2PM ON 9/21. TURN IN HARD COPY IN CLASS.

Week 6 – Technology & Space

Tuesday, September 25: Spaces of Power
- Natasha Schull (2015). Chapters 1-3 from *Addiction by Design*

Thursday, September 27: The Politics of Urban Planning
- Catherine Fennell, "Aren't We All Flint?" Limn Magazine Find at http://limn.it/are-we-all-flint/
- Michael Sorkin (1992). "See You in Disneyland", *Design Quarterly.*
- Eward Soja. (1983). "Urban Restructuring: An Analysis of Social and Spatial Change in Los Angeles." *Economic Geography.*

Week 7 – Gender & Technology

Thursday, October 2: Gender & Domestic Technology
- Ruth Schwartz Cowan (1976). "The 'Industrial Revolution' in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the 20th Century," *Technology and Culture.*
- Ruth Schwartz Cowan, from *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave.*

Thursday, October 4: Gender and Video Games
- Justine Cassell and Henry Jenkins, eds., *From Barbie® to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000).
- "If You Don't Have Anything Nice to Say, SAY IT ALL IN CAPS" Episode from This American Life. Listen at https://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/545/if-you-dont-have-anything-nice-to-say-say-it-in-all-caps?act=1
- Chess, S., & Shaw, A. (2015). A conspiracy of fishes, or, how we learned to stop worrying about# GamerGate and embrace hegemonic masculinity. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *59*(1), 208-220.

Week 8 – Technologies of Surveillance

Tuesday, October 9
- "The Body of the Condemned" and "Panopticism," from Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (pp. 3-6; 195-228)
- Marwick & boyd (2014). "Networked privacy: How teenagers negotiate context in social media." *New Media and Society.*

Thursday, October 11
- Greenwald, "The Harm of Surveillance," from *No Place to Hide.* (pp. 170-209).
- Gabriella Coleman. (2014). "And now you have got our attention," from *Hacker, hoaxer, whistleblower, spy: The many faces of Anonymous* (pp. 1-17).

Week 9 – Technology and Identity

Tuesday, October 16
- Victoria E. Johnson. (2008). "Essential, desirable, and possible markets: Broadcasting Midwestern tastes and values." From *Heartland: Prime Time Television and the Struggle for U.S. Identity.* (pp. 32-58)
- Susan Douglas, "Letting the boys be boys: Talk radio, male hysteria, and political discourse in the 1980s." From Hilmes & Loviglio (eds.), *The Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio* (pp. 485-501).

Thursday, October 18
- J.D. Vance (2015). Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, and 11 from *Hillbilly Elegy.*

Week 10 – Digital Cultures

Tuesday, October 23
- Tom Boellsdorff. (2008). Selection from *Coming of Age in Second Life*.
- Alice Marwick. (2016). Selection from *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age* (Yale U. Press, 2013). (Skype-in confirmed, 12:15pm)
- Todd Wolfson. (2014). Selection from *Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left* (U. of Illinois Press, 2014).
- Angela Nagle. (2017). Selection from *Kill all Normies: Online Culture Wars From 4Chan And Tumblr To Trump And The Alt-Right*

PAPER 2 DUE BY 2PM ON 10/24. TURN IN HARD COPY IN CLASS.

Thursday, October 25 || **Guest lecture**

Week 11 – The Pharmaceutical Society

Tuesday, October 30
- Andrew Lakoff (2005). Introduction from *Pharmaceutical Reason*.
- Emily Martin (2007). Chapter 6, "Pharmaceutical Personalities" from *Bipolar Expeditions*.
- Joe Dumit (2012). Selection from *Drugs for Life: How Pharmaceutical Companies Define our Health*

Thursday, November 1
- Emilie Gomart. (2002). Methadone: Six Effects in a Substance. *Social Studies of Science*.
- Sam Quinones. (2915). Preface and Introduction from *Dreamland: The Truth Behind America´s Opiate Epidemic*.
- **Watch:** Vice, "The Drug Deadlier than Heroin" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28rJqj-7pEY
- **Optional:** Melina Sherman, "Opiates for the Masses: Constructing a Market for Prescription Painkillers," *Journal of Cultural Economy,* 9, 1-14.
- **Optional:** Melina Sherman, "How to Train Your Opioid Consumer: Branding Painkillers in the Opioid Epidemic." *Communication, Culture and Critique, 10*(3). Forthcoming in December, 2017 issue.

Week 12 – Experimental Technologies

Tuesday, November 6 – Race & Experimentation
- ◼ Jenny Reardon & Kim TallBear. (2012). "Your DNA is our History." *Current Anthropology.*
- ◼ Harriett Washington. (2006). Chapters 12 and 15 from *Medical Apartheid*
- ◼ **Optional**: Ruth Malone et al. (2006). "It's Like Tuskegee in Reverse." *American Journal of Public Health*

Thursday, November 8 – Experimentation, Inequality and Uncertainty
- ◼ Jill Fisher (2009). Chapters 1 and 2 from *Medical Research for Hire: The Political Economy of Clinical Trials*
- ◼ Andrew Lakoff. (2007). "The Right Patients for the Drug: Managing the Placebo effect in Anti-Depressant Trials."

Week 13 - Networked Social Movements

Tuesday, November 13
- ◼ Jodi Dean (2005). "Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics." *Cultural Politics, 1*(1), 51-74.
- ◼ Manuel Castells (2012). Opening and from *Networks of Outrage and Hope.*

Thursday, November 15
- ◼ Malcolm Gladwell, "Why The Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted"
- ◼ **Watch**: Free the Network - http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/free-network/

Week 14 – Presentations Part 1

Tuesday, November 20 – Presentations

Thursday, November 22 – NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Week 15 –Presentations Part 2

Tuesday, November 27 – Presentations

Thursday, November 29 – Presentations

FINAL PAPER DUE DECEMBER 7