General Information and Requirements

The course examines history and the history of communication, including the means (technologies) of communication, social practices (institutional, collective, individual) that intersect with the study of communication and media, and cultural forms (texts, products). It situates the study of media, technology, and culture within historical contexts, comparative historical research, media archaeology, genealogy, and media history.

As a graduate seminar, the course is designed for extensive discussion and substantial reading. All reading assignments are required and should be completed by the assigned dates. We assume you will come to class having completed the readings and prepared to actively participate in all class sessions. Participation will count as 25% of your course grade.

In addition to keeping up with readings and participating in class discussions, you will have two written assignments. The first assignment is a reflective response paper that engages with the readings from weeks 1-5, which address broader theoretical questions about history in general, communication/media history in particular, and the relation of technology, communication and history. Your paper should take off from these readings, engage explicitly with the ideas of at least six of the authors and connect them to your own research interests. The paper should address at least two of the following questions: What are some ways of conceptualizing history and of “doing” history? What constitutes the object of inquiry and purpose of studying history/communication history? How have different scholars and/or paradigms approached the problem of history/communication history? How might we conceive the relationship of technology, society and history, and what are the implications for understanding the history of communication technology? What are particularly pressing issues for history/communication history in our digital age? To which authors, ideas, concepts, and approaches are you drawn, which do not attract you, and why? The paper should be 7-8 pages, double-spaced. The response paper is due Monday, February 24. It will count as 25% of your course grade.

The second assignment is a research paper on a subject of your choosing. You have a choice of two approaches: **Option 1:** a historiography or **Option 2:** a straightforward historical analysis. **Option 1:** Historiographic Essay. A historiographical essay examines how people writing at different points in time have attempted to understand and explain a particular issue, concept,
object or event. For example, a historiographic examination of journalistic objectivity would explore how people writing at different points in the history of journalism have conceptualized, explained, justified, defended, criticized, etc. the concept of objectivity in journalistic practice; it would also formulate explanations for these differences. Sources might include writings by journalists, editors, publishers, educators, scholars and historians. Engaging in historiography helps us recognize that thought is itself a historical phenomenon that undergoes change and becomes part of the conditions of the emergence and development of subsequent thought. A benefit of conducting this kind of research is that it gives us a greater understanding of where our own ideas and assumptions have come from. **Option 2:** Straightforward Historical Analysis. This approach involves conducting historical research on your topic. For example, you might examine the historical background of your object of inquiry (e.g., a history of a television genre, of a type of media practice, of media treatment of a political issue, etc.). If you’re interested in theory, you could do an intellectual history of key thinkers associated with a particular theory and the historical context in which they formulated their ideas. Those of you working on a thesis or dissertation might consider using this assignment to do a historical background chapter for that larger work.

Whichever approach you choose, you must submit a 1-2 page **paper proposal** that includes the following: a statement of the research question and justification of its significance and relevance; a brief discussion of how you’re going to approach the research question and preliminary hunches about the answer(s) you’ll find; identification of relevant sources (primary and secondary) you’ll be using; and identification of questions/topics from the course that you’ll be addressing. **The proposal is due March 13.** We’ll read and respond to the proposals and return them by **March 20.** The proposals won’t be graded, but they are part of the final paper requirements.

The research paper should be 20-25 pages double-spaced (excluding notes and bibliography). You may use Chicago, APA or MLA citation style. **The research paper is due the final class meeting May 1.** This assignment will count for 50% of your course grade.

**Course Policies**
All assignments are due on the designated dates; late papers will be accepted only in cases of genuine emergency and must be arranged with me beforehand. If you are having problems meeting any of the deadlines, please come and talk to us as soon as the difficulty arises. Please also feel free to consult with us about any aspect of the course. Note: Email is the best way to contact us. We’ll try to respond to emails within 24 hours, but occasionally it may take longer to get back to you.

Academic Honesty: All work must be your own. Cheating or plagiarizing will be penalized with an automatic “F” for the assignment in question.

**Course Texts**
2)Selected readings available on D2L
Course Schedule

Week I (January 16): **Introduction: Course Themes, Structure, Requirements.**
Readings:

Week II (January 23): **The Problem of Communication in/and History**
Readings:
Menahem Blondheim, “‘The Significance of Communication’ according to Harold Adams Innis,” pp. 53-81 in Rita Watson and Menahem Blondheim, eds., *The Toronto School of Communication Theory: Interpretations, Extensions, Applications* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007)

Week III (January 30): **Select Approaches to the History of Media and Communication**
Readings:

Week IV (February 6): **History and Communication Technologies**
Readings:


Week V (February 13): **Doing Communication History in a Digital Age**

Roy Rosenzweig, “Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era,” American Historical Review 08.3 (June 2003): 735-762.


Week VI (February 20): **NO CLASS. PAPER DUE MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24**

Week VII (February 27): **Orality, Conversation, Rhetoric**
Briggs and Burke, Chap. 1, “Introduction,” *Social History of the Media* (Polity 2010), pp. 1-12


Week VIII (March 6): **Writing, Literacy and the Written/Printed Word**
Readings:


Ron Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, “Print Culture,” in Simonson et al., eds, *Handbook of*
Communication History (Routledge 2012)
Briggs and Burke, Chaps. 2-3, “Printing in its Contexts,” and “Media and Public Sphere in Early Modern Europe,” (Polity 2010), pp. 13-90

Week VIX (March 13): Visual Communication (Photography, Cinema) RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL DUE
Readings:
Briggs & Burke, ch. 4 “Technologies and Revolutions” in Social History of the Media (Polity 2010), pp. 91-120

Week X (March 20): Sound Media and Listening
Readings:
Briggs & Burke, excerpts from Chap. 5, “New Processes and Patterns” in Social History of the Media (Polity 2010), pp. 132-160
Kate Lacey, excerpts from Listening Publics: The Politics and Experience of Listening in the Media Age (Polity, 2013), 1-50, 113-131: “Listening In and Listening Out,” “The Modernization of Listening,” and “The Privatization of the Listening Public”

Week XI (March 27): SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS
Week XII (April 3): Amusement, Persuasion, Consumption
Readings:
Briggs & Burke, Chap. 6 “Information, Education, Entertainment,” Social History of the Media (Polity 2010), pp. 179-238

Week XIII (April 10): Television and Beyond
Readings:
Laurie Ouellette, “Television,” in International Encyclopedia of Media Studies (Blackwell 2013)

Week XIV (April 17): The “Digital Revolution”
Readings:
Briggs & Burke, Chaps. 7 & 8 “Media Convergences” and “In and Out of Cyberspace,” Social History of the Media (Polity 2010), 237-302
Mark Andrejevic, “Media and Mobility,” in International Encyclopedia of Media Studies (Blackwell 2013)
Week IV (April 24): **NO CLASS, WORK ON FINAL PAPER**

Week XVI (May 1): **RESEARCH PAPER DUE, Presentations in class**