
COMPARATIVE COMMUNICATIONS HISTORY in Fall 2020 (CM2004)

Course Code	CM2004	Professor(s)	Justin McGuinness
Prerequisites	None	Office Number	G-402
Class Schedule	M: 14:30-16:05 in G-009 R: 09:00-10:35 in G-009	Office Hours	Tuesdays 14h30 – 16h05, by prior appointment.
Credits	4	Email	jmcguinness@aup.edu
Semester	Fall 2020	Office Tel. Ext.	575

Course Description

CM 2004 is a course with a historical focus, looking at the development of human communication practices and technologies. The interplay of speech, sight and sound in different communications regimes is the course's theoretical basis. Students will read a variety of texts examining the nature of communication in different times, places and cultures. They will discover how academics have reflected on the nature of oral and literate cultures, writing, printing and more recent recording and transmission technologies of all kinds, including notably digital media.

Another focus area is the changing production and circulation, presences and consumption of the image. The class will reflect upon the parallel development and expansion of mass media and the global circulation of cultural forms, many originating in the North Atlantic world. A broad span of media forms is covered, including the printed book and newspapers, photography, cinema, television and new media. In short, the aim of CM 2004 is to help students to reflect on media evolution and the interlinked nature of media and socio-cultural forms.

In theoretical terms, students are asked to think about how communications tools are used in different cultural contexts, about differing technologies and mediation. Is technology the ultimate determining factor or should we think in terms of a dialectic between the human and the technical? In the digital age, how have theorists explored how body and machines work together in constructing mediation?

Course Learning Outcomes

Understand the ways in which the history of human mediated communication has been studied, while focusing on the theorization of the main phases of media emergence and, in particular, of the role of technologies in shaping communication practices.

Understand various perspectives and positions on communications history elaborated by key communications theorists.

Understand how institutional actors, from dynastic empires and nation-states to corporations, and social actors and individuals have related to each other through mediated communication.

Understand, from a comparativist perspective, how media change takes place and with what impact in a range of historical periods and geographical locations.

Understand the nature and impact of media convergence in the digital age, and be able to compare the emerging digital media paradigm with earlier periods of media flux and change.

General Education

In taking course CM 2004; students will expand their thinking in the following areas:

Historical knowledge. They will understand, from wide reading, lectures and in-class discussions, ways in which the history of human mediated communication has been studied, including how the main phases of media emergence and, particularly, how technology's role shaping communication has been theorized;

Theoretical foundations and recent developments in communications studies. Students will become aware of positions on communications history elaborated by certain communications theorists. They will also acquire a critical awareness of the nature and impact of media convergence in the digital age, and be able to compare the digital media paradigm with earlier periods of media flux and change;

Global perspectives. The course is taught from a strongly comparativist perspective, with students being encouraged to think of how media change has taken place and with what impact in a range of historical and geographical locations

Practical skills. Students will gain experience in speaking to their peers in preparation for speaking before bigger and unknown audiences in professional life.

These outcomes are aligned with student learning outcomes numbers 1, 2, 3 and 5 for the Department of Global Communications:

- (1) Student work shows **knowledge of the history of communications** and the development of communications as an academic discipline.
- (2) Student work shows **in-depth knowledge of the theoretical foundations and recent developments in particular areas of communications study**.
- (3) Student understands and is able to **compare systems of media, communications and culture from a global perspective**.
- (4) Student work shows ability to make use of research methods, including historical, textual, qualitative and quantitative, in order to write and present research. (Not applicable to this course).
- (5) Student is able to apply **practical skills important to careers in communications**

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By taking this course, students will be able to answer these **critical analytic questions**:

- What sort of technological and cultural phenomena are the object of study in the history of mediated communication?
- What are the main communications shifts in human history, from prehistoric times to the digital present?
- How can the interface between communications technologies and humankind be theorized? As a dialectic? Taking technology as the key variable? Or as the study of mediation and embodiment?
- How has human communications practice varied across time and cultures? How do communications media shape and circulate content, how does socio-cultural practice change as mediation changes?
- Who are some of the central figures in communications history and what is their contribution? Theorists studied will include Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Jack Goody, Eric Havelock, Marshall McLuhan, Walter Ong, and Rosalind Williams.

Students taking CM 2004 will also develop the following **skills**:

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- read academic text for argument and detail, and to develop a point of view on how the argument is being made;
 - understand the structure of academic work in communications studies and be able to read with some confidence the main parts of an academic book chapter or paper (abstract, research questions, discussion of substantive area, methodology, construction of a corpus of data, analysis);
 - present the argument of an academic paper to an audience, using visual software if appropriate;
 - participate in a formal debate on a communications related issue, and reflect on the effectiveness of this particular mode of rhetorical communication.

Course Outline

DETAILED OVERVIEW OF COURSE THEMES IN COMPARATIVE COMMUNICATIONS HISTORY:

Introduction

What is mediated communication? Mediums, media and 'the media' / How does a comparative history of communication relate to the rest of the major in communications?

Theme 1: Primary orality

The emergence of visual culture in small-scale societies without writing / Archaeological evidence of early humankind / Ethnic memory and history in oral societies / The variety of visual culture / image and icon, symbol and sign / Parry Lord Hypothesis / Case study: the Quipu / And a contrast: What is new about new media?

Theme 2: Pre-modern media and biotope. The diversity of early 'literacies'

Where did writing begin? What was its impact on human societies? Hierarchy, bureaucracy and agriculture / *The Epic of Gilgamesh* / Pictograms, semasiographic writing, the rebus principle / hieroglyphs and cuneiform / The alphabet, from Uruk to Rome / Medea / The first libraries / the possibilities offered by writing and digital technologies – *Phaedrus* and *Her*.

Theme 3: From scroll to codex

The book in the mediaeval Middle East and Europe / The Lindisfarne Gospels / The Qur'an of Sultan Baybars / The manuscript: circulation and production / U. Eco's *In the Name of the Rose* / Case study: knowledge in mediaeval Baghdad

Theme 4: The Gutenberg Revolution

Where did print first appear? Why? / Reform and Counter-Reform / The Wycliffe Bible, the Sforza *Libro d'ore* and Vesaius *De humanis corporis fabrica* / Print vernaculars, the early press and propaganda / The rise of the reading public / Case study: printing in the Ottoman Empire.

Theme 5: Four c's : Time-space compression, capitalism, consumption and community

The rise of industry and empire / inventions and infrastructure: photograph, telegraph and telephone / the city planned, piped and wired / spaces of consumption: great exhibitions and department stores / Case study: Second Empire Paris.

Theme 6: Mass society and communication

Massification of voice and image: radio, cinema and television / Communication and spaces, domestic and local, urban and national / The rise of the nuclear-family home / Sprawl town / Totalitarianism Case studies: *Electric Edwardians* and Nation-state and news: the BBC, 1954-1963, also Um Kalthoum, the Voice of the East.

Theme 7: Fragmentation, convergence and virtuality

The photograph as communication: histories personal and national, interactive individuals / Big Brother – or Little Brothers / Spaces of flows, networks of Control / the GAFA / Aerotropolis.

CLASS SCHEDULE (Autumn 2020):

The class is divided into seven major themes. Examination and test dates will be signaled in the course of the term. Note that there may be certain changes to the schedule, in terms of readings and pace, depending on the class' specific interests.

September

Week I – 23rd – 25th

24th September. Introduction to the course. Aims and assignments. A comparative approach to communications history in a Global Communications degree.

Week II – 28th – 2nd

Theme 1: Primary orality

Monday 27th September Discussion of **Marshack's** "The art and symbols of ice-age man" and extracts from **Sale's** *After Eden* (on Bb). In-class viewing, *The Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (Werner Herzog). Also: **T.J. Clark**, "Lucky Hunter Gatherers"

Theme 2: Pre-modern modern media and biotope. Diverse 'literacies'.

Sound, textile and sign: pre-industrial media to overcome distance and time.

Thurs 01st October Discussion of **Gleick** "Drums that talk" and **Ascher and Ascher** "Civilisation without writing". Also introductory remarks to **Walter Ong** chapter 3, "Some psychodynamics of orality".

NB September 30th – last day to drop/add courses online

October

From **week III** onwards, students will **present articles or book chapters to the class**, either alone or in pairs. The presentations will relate the text to the broader themes covered in the course.

Week III – 5th – 9th

Monday 05th October Discussion of “Some psychodynamics of orality” by **Walter Ong**.

Thursday 08th October What did writing do to human consciousness? Some analyses.

Discussion of Walter Ong, chapter 4, ‘Writing restructures consciousness’.

Week IV – 12th – 16th

Monday 12th October *The Phaedrus*. Overview. Discussion of speeches 1 and 2.

For week V, all students to watch *Her* (Spike Jonz, 2013) at home.

Thursday 15th October *The Phaedrus*. Discussion of the Palinode, the third speech and of the techniques of rhetoric. Why read a dialogue like *The Phaedrus* as part of a degree in communications?

Week V – 19th – 23rd

Monday 19th October

Further discussion of the *Phaedrus*. In-class reading of the last sixth of the dialogue, examining the place of writing. Also, extra reading: E. Havelock, “The Greek legacy”. Introduction to *The Phaedrus*.

How does the use of writing differ between ancient Mediterranean and global digital societies?

Essay on the functions of the digital emoji to be handed in.

Thursday 22nd October

Theme 3: From scroll to codex

Writing and faith: the evolution of manuscript cultures. Readings: **Eco**, "A Mediaeval library" and **James Burke** and **Robert Ornstein** "Communication and Faith in the Middle Ages".

Extra: **William Dalrymple**, "The monastery of Mount Iviron, Mount Athos, Greece".

Week VI – 26th – 30th

Theme 4: The Gutenberg Revolution

Monday 26th October

How did the medium of print change society?

Mumford "The invention of printing", on Bb, from C&H, pp.74-77

Eisenstein "Aspects of the printing revolution", on Bb, from C&H, pp.78-86.

Thursday 29th October

Reading: **Walter Ong** chapter 5, 'Print, space and closure'.

Extra readings: **Thompson**, "The trade in news", C&H, pp.95-100 and **Graff** "Early modern literacies", on Bb, from C&H, pp.86-95.

Week VII – 2nd – 6th

Monday 2nd November

Theme 5: The four 'c's: time-space compression, capitalism, consumption and

community.

Standage "Telegraphy – the Victorian Internet", C&H, pp.105-111

Carey "Time, space and the telegraph", C&H, pp.125-131.

Thursday 5th November

Readings: **Benedict Anderson** (1983) *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso) extracts. Focus: chapter 2, "Cultural roots", section 'Apprehensions of Time', pp.28-40 and chapter 3, "The Origins of national consciousness", pp.41-48.

Week VIII – 9th- 13th

Monday 09th November

Further discussion of **Benedict Anderson** (1983) *Imagined Communities* and of the relationship between language, print and media.

Wednesday 11th to Sunday 15th November, BREAK (no classes)

Week VIII (bis) – 16th- 20th

Monday 16th November

Theme 6: Mass society & communication: image, sound, and speed.

Williams "Dreamworlds of Mass Consumption" and **Lieven De Cauter** "The Panoramic Ecstasy".

Thursday 20th November

Main viewing: documentary *The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon* available on YouTube.
Reading: **Walter Benjamin**, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Re-production", on Bb.
Optional: **Chapman** (2005) chapter 05, 'The business and ideology of mass-culture',

pp.143-179

November 16th, Mid-semester grades due

Week IX – 23rd – 27th

Monday 23 November

Fowles, “Mass media and the star-system” (in C&H, pp.175-182) and extracts from **Virginia Danielson**’s “The Voice of Egypt” (Bb).

Thursday 26th November

Tim Dant (2002) “Pictures of the Past: Benjamin and Barthes on photography and history” in EJCS, vol.5 (1), pp.5-25.

For class on Monday 30th November, all students to have watched Wim Wenders’ film *Les Ailes du Désir* at home.

Week X - 30th – 4th

Monday 30th November

Discussion of *Les Ailes du désir / Wings of Desire*. Also: discussion of themes for final essay.

Theme 7: Image, fragmentation, convergence and global communities

Thursday 03rd December. Reading: **Mazzucato** (2018) “The State behind the iPhone”.

December

Week XI – 7th – 11th

Monday 7th December

Readings on digital platforms: **Soar** (2011) “It knows”, **Burt** (2010) “Always on”, and **Lanchester** (2017) “You are the product”. If time, **J. van Loon**, “New media and networked (dis)embodiment”. Discussion of final exam.

16th to 22nd December: Final examinations.

Examination for CM2004, Thursday 17th December at 17h30.

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CM 2004 Assessment structure

Grades will be awarded on the basis of six basic elements. (Homework to be handwritten or typed on A4 paper, in TNR font, size 11, spacing 1,5)

1. Assignments related to readings or class activities – 60% of grade.

1.1 Presentation of reading to class. 20%. **From week 3 onwards**

1.2 Reflective essay on written communication, theme ‘The functions of the emoji’. Three sides of A4 paper minimum, to be written at home. 10%. **Due on Monday 19th October.**

1.3 Reflective essay, subject TBA. 20%. **Due on Thursday 29th October.**

1.4 Exam on the second third of the course. 10%. **Thursday 26th November** (format: short answers to questions on texts studied in weeks 7 to 9).

2. Final essay and examination – 40% of grade.

2.1 **First** draft of essay to be handed in on **Friday 11th December** (30% of grade).

Final draft of essay to be handed in on **Wednesday 16th December**

2.2 Short written exam (10%) to be held in final exam period on **Thursday 17th December at 17h30.**

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KEY DATES

Presentation of reading to class. From week III onwards.

Short exam on *Phaedrus* and *Her*. Monday 30th September.

Take-home reflective essay due: Thursday 17th October.

Exam on second third of course: Thursday 26th November.

Last day of classes: Friday 11th December.

Final essay (first draft): due Friday 11th December.

Rewrite of final essay due: Wednesday 16th December.

Final examination: Thursday 17th December.

Thursday 10th December

Final class. Readings to be announced.

December 11th, last day of classes.

December 12th - 15th, reading days

Textbooks

This course doesn't have any textbook.

Attendance Policy

Students studying at The American University of Paris are expected to attend ALL scheduled classes, and in case of absence, should contact their professors to explain the situation. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any specific attendance policy that a faculty member might have set in the course syllabus. The French Department, for example, has its own attendance policy, and students are responsible for compliance. Academic Affairs will excuse an absence for students' participation in study trips related to their courses.

Attendance at all exams is mandatory.

IN ALL CASES OF MISSED COURSE MEETINGS, THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNICATION WITH THE PROFESSOR, AND FOR ARRANGING TO MAKE UP MISSED WORK, RESTS SOLELY WITH THE STUDENT.

Whether an absence is excused or not is ALWAYS up to the discretion of the professor or the department. Unexcused absences can result in a low or failing participation grade. In the case of excessive absences, it is up to the professor or the department to decide if the student will receive an "F" for the course. An instructor may recommend that a student withdraw, if absences have made it impossible to continue in the course at a satisfactory level.

Students must be mindful of this policy when making their travel arrangements, and especially during the Drop/Add and Exam Periods.

Grading Policy

ASSIGNMENTS & DEADLINES: The course involves a large amount of reading. Your understanding of the texts will be monitored in a number of ways, including:

GRADING POLICY: Below is a list of grades and the sort of performance expected to achieve each grade. These standards are followed in all courses in the Department of Global Communications. They are held to reflect lecturers' common sense vision of what constitutes student work at each level.

A Almost always in class on time. Fully prepared to participate in class. Has done all the relevant reading and sometimes more. Outstanding performance in tests and examinations. Writes clearly and concisely.

B Almost always in class on time. Frequently participates in both class discussion and group work. Tries hard in examinations and writes well.

C Average effort. Sometimes late. Not always ready to participate but pays attention. On the whole has read the required texts.

D Generally unprepared and this is reflected by an unwillingness to participate in class discussion. Uses class time for other activities. Generally uninterested in course material.

F No evidence of preparation for class. Often late or absent. Fails to hand in assignments on time. Misses more than three classes without proof of a legitimate reason.

1. Assignments related to readings or class activities – 60% of grade.

1.1 Presentation of reading to class. 20%. **From week 3 onwards**

1.2 Reflective essay on written communication, theme 'The functions of the emoji'. Three sides of A4 paper minimum, to be written at home. 10%. **Due on Monday 19th October.**

1.3 Reflective essay, subject TBA. 20%. **Due on Thursday 29th October.**

1.4 Exam on the second third of the course. 10%. **Thursday 26th November** (format: short answers to questions on texts studied in weeks 7 to 9).

2. Final essay and examination – 40% of grade.

2.1 **First** draft of essay to be handed in on **Friday 11th December** (30% of grade).

Final draft of essay to be handed in on **Wednesday 16th December**

2.2 Short written exam (10%) to be held in final exam period on **Thursday 17th December at 17h30.**

Formats and submission of work:

Work may be submitted on Teams or on paper in class.

Submissions can be handwritten or typed on A4 paper, in TNR font, size 11, spacing 1,5.

KEY DATES

Presentation of reading to class. From week III onwards.

Essay written at home due: Monday 19th October.

Reflective essay, subject TBA. Thursday 29th October.

Exam on second third of course: Thursday 26th November.

Final essay (first draft): due Friday 11th December.

Rewrite of final essay due: Wednesday 16th December.

Final exam: Thursday 17th December.

Other
