
COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL COMMUNICATION in Spring 2021 (CM2004)

Course Code	CM2004	Professor(s)	Justin Mcguinness
Prerequisites	None	Office Number	G-402
Class Schedule	F: 16:55-18:15 in C-104 T: 12:10-13:30 in C-104	Office Hours	Mondays period 5, (15h20-16h40) by prior appointment
Credits	4	Email	jmcguinness@aup.edu
Semester	Spring 2021	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, the aim is for students to think about how communications tools are used in different cultural contexts, to think about technologies and mediation. Is technology the ultimate determining factor or should we think in terms of a dialectic between the human and the technical? As the digital age takes shape, how have theorists attempted to go further in theorizing 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

This course can be used to fulfill the [INDICATE THE REQUIREMENT(S) FULFILLED BY THE COURSE] requirement and as such has the following learning outcomes:

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, in particular, how the role of technologies in shaping communication have been theorized;
- **Theoretical foundations and recent developments in communications studies.** Students will become aware of theoretical positions on communications history. 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.

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**:

- 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

VISITS: There will be at least one out-of-class visit (dates and time to be announced). We will visit either a major Paris museum (the Louvre or the Institut du Monde arabe) **or** the Passages de Paris (walk).

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 / the nation-state and Canada, the first post-national state? / Case study: the spread of learned Latin and French.

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 / Amazon, Microsoft, Google and FaceBook / the capsular city / digital present and futures.

CM / HI 2004 (spring 2020) COURSE OUTLINE:

NB The articles mentioned for a given date are those to be discussed in class on that day. Much of the material is available on Bb in the course materials file. Students are also required to read the whole of *Phaedrus* and chapters from Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy*.

Week I

Tuesday 19th January Course overview: what have been the main shifts in mediated communication? how does media change take place? Different areas covered in the course: communication theory; interrelation between media, content and social forms; inventions, figures and events. How does CM2004 fit into the major in Communications?

Discussion of review article by **T.J. Clark**, "Lucky Hunter Gatherers"

Theme 1: Primary orality

Friday 22nd January Theme: Communication, ritual and material culture.

Discussion of **Marshack's** "The art and symbols of ice-age man". To view at home, extracts from *The Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (Werner Herzog)

Week II (primary orality continued)

Tuesday 26th January Discussion of two chapters from William Dalrymple's

***Nine Lives*, namely ‘The Dancer of Kanur’ and ‘The Singer of Epics’.**

Friday 29th January Main text for discussion: Gleick “Drums that talk”

Brief introduction to Walter Ong chapter 3, “Some psychodynamics of orality”.

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

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

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

Tuesday 2nd February. Discussion of Walter Ong chapter 3, “Some psychodynamics of orality”.

Friday 5th February. Ascher and Ascher “Civilisation without writing”. Then the question of scripts ... What is writing? Discussion of Boone, “Writing and recording knowledge”.

Week IV (literacy and its impact continued)

What did writing do to human consciousness? Some analyses.

Tuesday 9th February. Reading: Ong, chapter 4, ‘Writing restructures consciousness’. Also, extra reading: E. Havelock, “The Greek legacy”. Introduction to *Phaedrus*.

Friday 12th February. NO CLASS – mini-break. For week V, all students to watch *Her* (Spike Jonz, 2013) at home.

FIRST SHORT BREAK Saturday 5th February to Wednesday 10th February.

Week V (literacy and its impact continued)

Media and socio-cultural change: how was writing viewed in ancient Greece?

Tuesday 16th February. Discussion of *Her* and *Phaedrus*. Short exam on *Phaedrus* and *Her*.

Friday 19th February. Further discussion of the *Phaedrus*.

SECOND SHORT BREAK Wednesday 24th February to Sunday 28th February.

Week VI

Tuesday 23rd February. Further discussion of *Phaedrus*, notably the last sixth of the dialogue, on the place of writing in society, as envisaged by Socrates. How has writing's use changed in the digital age.

Friday 26th February. NO CLASS. Listening exercise to do at home.

Week VII

Theme 3: From scroll to codex

Tuesday 2nd March. What place did writing and reading assume in monotheist societies. 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".

Theme 4: The Gutenberg Revolution

How did the medium of print change society?

Friday 5th March Sub-theme: Impact of print. Reflexive essay on listening exercise due.

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.

Week VIII

Theme 4: The Gutenberg Revolution (continued)

Tuesday 9th March

Reading: **Walter Ong** chapter 5, ‘Print, space and closure’. How do you read? What? Where? In what languages and forms? 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.

Friday 12th March.

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.

Week IX

Tuesday 16th March.

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.

Possible museum visit (Cité de l’architecture or Cité de l’immigration).

Essay on the experience of reading due.

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

Friday 19th March. What were the predecessors of the photograph? How was it developed?

What was its impact? **Tim Dant** (2002) "Pictures of the Past: Benjamin and Barthes on photography and history" in EJCS, vol.5 (1), pp.5-25.

Week X (Mass society & communication: image, sound, and speed, continued).

Tuesday 23rd March. Main viewing: documentary *The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon* available on YouTube. **Main reading:** **Fowles**, "Mass media and the star-system" (in C&H, pp.175-182) and extracts from **Virginia Danielson's** "The Voice of Egypt" (Bb).

Also, discussion of essay on reading.

Friday 26th March. Reading: **Walter Benjamin**, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", on Bb. **Optional reading:** **Chapman** (2005) chapter 05, 'The business and ideology of mass-culture', pp.143-179

Week XI (Mass Society and communication, continued)

Tuesday 30th March The transformation of urban space and new forms of communication. Texts for discussion: **Williams** "Dreamworlds of Mass Consumption" and **Lieven De Cauter** "The Panoramic Ecstasy".

Friday 2nd April For discussion: extracts from Stanford Kwinter's *Requiem for the City* at the end of the Millennium.

Week XII (Mass society and communication continued)

Tuesday 6th April. Faculty retreat. NO CLASS

Friday 9th April. In-class film-viewing if possible.

Week XIII Theme 7: Image, fragmentation, convergence and global communities

Tuesday 13th April. In-class film-viewing if possible.

Friday 16th April. Reading: Discussion of film viewed in-class

Week XIV (Image, fragmentation, convergence and global communities)

Tuesday 20th April. Reading: **J. van Loon**, “New media and networked (dis)embodiment”.

Friday 23rd April. Reading: **Mazzucato** (2018) “The State behind the iPhone”.

Week XV (Image, fragmentation, convergence and global communities)

Tuesday 27th April. Readings on digital platforms: **Soar** (2011) “It knows”, **Burt** (2010) “Always on”, and **Lanchester** (2017) “You are the product”.

Friday 30th April. Discussion of final exam.

Final examination: Tuesday 11th May at 18h30 in C-104 Attendance is compulsory.

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CM 2004 Assessment structure

Grades will be awarded on the basis of **seven 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. 10%. **From week 4 onwards**

1.2 Brief exam on the *Phaedrus* and *Her*. 10%. **Tuesday 16th February.**

1.3 Reflective essay on a radio discussion, listened to at home: three sides of A4 paper minimum, to be written at home. 10%. **Due on Friday 5th March.**

1.4 Essay on memories, places and practices of reading due. 20%. **Tuesday 16th March.**

1.5 Short quizzes, 10%. **Throughout the semester.**

2. Final examination – 40% of grade.

Essay to be sent in on **Monday 04 May** (20% of grade)

Written exam (20%) to be held in final exam period **Thursday 07 May**.

(Homework to be handwritten or typed on A4 paper, in TNR font, size 11, spacing 1,5)

KEY DATES

Presentation of reading to class. From week IV onwards.

Short exam on *Phaedrus* and *Her*. Tuesday 16th February.

Take-home reflective essay due: Friday 5th March.

Essay on reading due: Tuesday 16th March.

Final essay (first draft): due Monday 27th April.

Rewrite of final essay due: due Monday 04th May.

Textbooks

This course doesn't have any textbook.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is compulsory. Absences will be reflected in your performance in class tests. Explain your absences in a brief e-mail to **jmcguinness@aup.edu**. If you miss more than six class sessions without very good reasons, you will not pass the course.

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.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY STATEMENT: As an Anglophone university, The American University of Paris is strongly committed to effective English language mastery at the undergraduate level. Most courses require scholarly research and formal written and oral presentations in English, and AUP students are expected to strive to achieve excellence in these domains as part of their course work. To that end, professors include English proficiency among the criteria in student evaluation, often referring students to the university Writing Lab where they may obtain help on specific academic assignments. Proficiency in English is monitored at various points throughout the student's academic career, most notably during the admissions and advising processes, while the student is completing general education requirements, and during the accomplishment of degree program courses and senior theses.

Grading Policy

GRADING POLICY: There follow 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 grade 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.

ASSIGNMENTS & DEADLINES: The course involves a large amount of reading. Your understanding of the texts will be monitored on the basis of **seven** basic elements:

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

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Other
