**Course Description**

This course is designed to provide students of communication with a historical perspective on the evolution of communication from the innovation of the printing press through broadcasting. It attempts to demonstrate the various ways in which particular modes of communication that have emerged during this time frame, and what the conditions of their emergence and adoption have been. Additionally, the course seeks to make sense of the various consequences that have followed from the introduction of communication technologies in order to better gauge their impact. For example, we examine the relationship between changes in communication technologies and social, political, and cultural change. We will also grapple with the implications of policy decisions governing the use of these communication technologies. In order to achieve these aims, we will focus, in short, on two major “communication revolutions” of human history—typography, electricity—by utilizing a variety of theoretical frameworks in an attempt to better understand their larger significance.

**Requirements and Grading**


Standage, Tom. *The Victorian Internet*. New York, Walker,

Additional readings posted on Blackboard

****Note: All students are required to bring the week’s current readings to class as part of their effective participation in the course.

20%  
**Attendance and participation:**

You are expected to arrive on time, having read the class’s assigned readings, and prepared to participate in discussions. This includes the quality with which you ask and answer questions and make relevant comments in class that demonstrate your efforts in understanding the reading materials. Each absence beyond three excused absences will result in a loss of 5% credit toward this part of your grade. If you have ten absences or more you will **NOT** receive a passing grade. Please be aware that absences are not an
acceptable excuse for not having done the required work. You are expected to find out from a classmate what you missed in the event that you are absent. If you have a special problem with attendance, please bring it to my attention as soon as possible.

It is important to me that you demonstrate your commitment to your participation in this class by arriving on time. I consider it a significant distraction for students to enter and exit at times other than the designated start and finish of the class. Thus, for each two times you are late, it will count as one absence. I also ask that you plan your schedule so that you will not need bathroom breaks in the middle of the class (with the exception of emergencies, of course).

10% Critical reading log
Before the class meeting for a total of 12 times of your choosing, you are required to post a response to the reading on the “Discussion” section of our Blackboard site. For those classes where we read the same author, you should respond only once for the entirety of the author’s work (e.g., only one response for Eisenstein or Standage). Each response should take the form of two paragraphs. In the first paragraph, you should concisely abstract what you think is the important point the author is making. (This may vary from person to person depending upon what you subjectively find to be the most interesting.) The second paragraph should include a thoughtful observation or critical question as a response from you, that is, your analysis or thoughts. Keep in mind, responses could also include your observations on various connections or points of departure among the authors that we read and the discussions that we have. More details will follow.

Please note also that the Critical Reading Log is a mandatory course requirement worth a full 10% of your final grade, the approximate value of a whole letter grade. An “A” student failing to fulfill this requirement will get a “B,” a “B” student will get a “C,” and so forth. I urge you to keep this in mind.

Please initial here to acknowledge that you are aware of this requirement: ___

20% Midterm exam: in class exam, scheduled for Monday, October 26.

20% Final exam: to be announced during final exam week

30% Progressive research paper
The class will culminate in a final research paper of 8-10 pages on the history of a communication technology. The paper is called “progressive” because you will work on it throughout the semester, turning in parts of it in stages. (Please note: all parts of this assignment are required. You will not be able to progress to the next stage without completing the previous parts.)

Part One (due October 12): One page description of the object you will study, why it is of interest to you, and how it pertains to the class.

Part Two (due November 13): Three to four pages outlining how your technology is informed by the course readings. In addition, you must include a bibliography including at least four sources you will use for your final paper, two of which must be “outside” sources. (It’s okay if you haven’t read them yet, but you should be looking.)
Part Three (due November 30): You and another member of the class will exchange rough drafts. You will be required to turn in a copy of your partner's draft, including your handwritten comments, and a one or two page summary of your ideas on their work and relation of it to the class or to your own work. Drafts should be at least five pages, and may also consist in part of an outline. (NOTE: This means that you and your partner will need to exchange drafts in time for each of you to complete this assignment on time. You can determine between yourselves how much time you will need.) (10%)

Part Four (due December 11): Your final paper (20%)

Evaluation Standards and Policies:

A = Excellent. Work is outstanding work in all respects. This work demonstrates comprehensive and solid understanding of course material, and presents thoughtful interpretations, well-focused and original insights, and well-reasoned commentary and analysis. Writing demonstrates impressive understanding of readings, discussions, themes and ideas. Includes skillful and precise use of source materials, illuminating examples and illustrations, and fluent expression, which is well organized and grammatically polished.

B = Good. This work demonstrates a thorough and accurate understanding of course material, presents a reasonable degree of insight and broad levels of analysis. Written work reflects competence, but is somewhat general or a bit vague, or otherwise lacking in precision, and stays at a general or predictable level of understanding. Although analytical, writing presents more description than analysis. Arguments are solid but not thoroughly original or polished. Source materials, examples, illustrations are used appropriately and articulation/writing is clear. Papers have been carefully proofread.

C = Adequate/fair. This work demonstrates somewhat fragmented understanding of readings, discussions, themes and ideas. Shows acquaintance with reading and ideas, but not intellectual engagement. Written work is choppy and arguments somewhat difficult to follow, examples are vague or irrelevant, and ideas are imprecise. Source materials may be used inadequately or inappropriately, and arguments lack concrete, specific examples and illustrations, are incomplete or expressing some significant errors or weaknesses. Writing/articulation veers toward underdeveloped ideas, off-topic sources or examples, personal anecdotes, creative writing etc., or may be loaded with typos and other technical errors.

D = Unsatisfactory. This work demonstrates a serious lack or error in understanding, and fails to express acquaintance with readings, discussions, themes, and ideas, in short, the most rudimentary aspects of the course. Written work is choppy, fractured and unclear. Arguments follow little logical development, or work presents little discernable argument whatsoever. Sources may be used entirely inappropriately or not at all, and writing/articulation appears deficient.

F = Failed/Unacceptable. This work does not demonstrate understanding of topics, ideas, and readings. This also includes the grade for work not submitted or attempted, or work that has been plagiarized.
**FOR ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS, please follow this format:** in the upper left corner, include your name, course name, date, and assignment heading or paper title (no title pages). Type all work, double space, number all pages using a header in the upper right hand corner, and STAPLE multiple pages. Follow a formal style manual for guidelines on citations, quotations, etc. Make sure you edit/proofread your paper before submitting it. Your grade will partly be based on your ability to follow the norms and conventions of writing using Standard English styles and conventions. Also please see the forthcoming handout: “Content, Style & Form.”

**Recommended style manuals:**


**LATE PAPERS will result in a drop in a letter grade.** You may email your paper ONLY in the event of an emergency that precludes you from coming to class.

**PLAGIARISM is not tolerated and will result in failing the assignment and possibly the course.**

Here is how the University defines plagiarism:

*Plagiarism:* Knowingly copying another's work or ideas and calling them one's own or not giving proper credit or citation. This includes but is not limited to reading or hearing another's work or ideas and using them as one's own; quoting, paraphrasing, or condensing another's work without giving proper credit; purchasing or receiving another's work and using, handling, or submitting it as one's own work.

Please note that all materials used in the construction of your written work (notes, outlines, rough drafts, etc.) should be saved until you have received a passing grade from me.

**University Policies:**

Academic regulations and procedures are governed by University policy. Academic dishonesty cases will be handled in accordance with the University's policies. For more information on this serious breach of conduct, see:

http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html

If you have a disability that could affect your performance in this class or that requires an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please see me as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements. The Affirmative Action Office has asked that you be made aware of the following:

Michigan Tech complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office, at 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head or the Affirmative Action Office, at 487-3310.

For more information on these policies, see:
Readings due for the date indicated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>8/31</strong></td>
<td>Introduction/course overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Theoretical considerations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deibert: “Medium Theory, Ecological Holism, and the Study of World Order Transformation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recommended: Chandler, “Technological or Media Determinism”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/tecdet/tecdet.html">http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/tecdet/tecdet.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/4</strong></td>
<td>Starr: “Introduction: The Political Origins of Modern Communications”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/9</strong></td>
<td><strong>Transition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Innis: “The Bias of Communications &amp; Monopolies of Power”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/11</strong></td>
<td>Ginzburg: selections from The Cheese and the Worms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/14</strong></td>
<td><strong>Print revolution</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mumford, “The Invention of Print” (C&amp;H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/16 – 18</strong></td>
<td>Eisenstein: “Some Conjectures about the Impact of Printing on Western Society and Thought”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/21</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rise of mass media</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thompson: “Media &amp; Development in Modern Societies”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/23</strong></td>
<td>Anderson: “The Origins of National Consciousness”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/25</strong></td>
<td><strong>Public sphere</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Habermas: “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/28</strong></td>
<td>Thompson: revisit pp. 69-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/30</strong></td>
<td><strong>Postal service</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lloyd: “The Role of Communications in the Democratic Experience”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10/2</strong></td>
<td>Starr: “America’s First Information Revolution”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10/5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Electricity and the wired world</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nye: “What was electricity?”

Marvin: “Dazzling the Multitude”

********** DUE 10/12: RESEARCH PAPER IDEA **********************

10/9-10/19 Electrical impulses – the telegraph
Standage: *The Victorian Internet*

10/21 Carey: “Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph”

10/23 Schudson: “The New Journalism” (C&H)

10/26 MIDTERM

10/28 Electrical voice transmission – the telephone
Fischer: “The Telephone in America”

10/30 Fischer: “Educating the Public”

11/2 Image technologies & the emergence of mass society
Sontag: “On Photography” (C&H)
Keller: “Early Photojournalism” (C&H)

11/4 Williams: “Dream Worlds of Consumption” (C&H)

11/6 Leiss et al: “Advertising, Consumers, and Culture”

11/9 The moving image and rise of Hollywood
Czitrom: “Early Motion Pictures” (C&H)

11/11 Fowles: “Mass Media and the Star System” (C&H)

********** DUE 11/13: RESEARCH PAPER NOTES/BIBLIOGRAPHY *************

11/13 Sussman: “‘Personality’ and the Making of Twentieth-Century Culture”

11/16 Radio & the invention of broadcasting
Douglas: “Early Radio” (C&H)

11/18 Sterling & Kittross: “The Golden Age of Programming” (C&H)

11/20 Nachman: “Radio and Race” (C&H)

********** DUE 11/30: RESEARCH PAPER DRAFT AND PEER REVIEW **************

11/30-12/2 Communications policy and the public interest
Lloyd: “From Roosevelt to Roosevelt: Wireless and Radio (1900-1934)
12/4  *Television and the new American pastime*
   Boddy: “The Beginnings of American Television”

12/7  Spigel: “Make Room for TV” (C&H)

12/9  Bodroghkozy: “The Sixties Counterculture on TV” (C&H)

12/11  Stephens: “Television Transforms the News” (C&H)

************* DUE 12/11: FINAL RESEARCH PAPER *************

12/14  *Final exam due*