

# New Media

**JAMS 660, Fall 2011**

**Prof. Michael Z. Newman**

**Johnston Hall 127 | 229-1133 | [mznewman@uwm.edu](mailto:mznewman@uwm.edu) | [@mznewman](https://twitter.com/mznewman)**

**Office hours: TR 9:45-10:45 or by appointment**

**Class meetings: TR 11-12:15, Merrill Hall 347**

This course considers the emergence of new media technologies in historical and social contexts. It begins with the assumption that the term new media must be understood to include all media as emergent phenomena; any medium was new once. Our understanding of new media as a term describing recent and contemporary digital and networked technologies should benefit from an understanding of the long history of new technologies of communication.

The course also considers how existing media change to adapt to innovations in technology, such that an old medium like television can be approached as a form of new media when it develops new technologies such as digital sets and recording devices. We will approach new media as a way of understanding both emergent and developing technologies.

One special focus of the course will be on television as new media in all of the senses above. But in addition to television, we will consider writing and print, the telegraph and telephone, radio, and computer technologies including contemporary online cultures and the convergence of media technologies and experiences. In the final weeks of the course we will consider how corporate control over digital new media may be a threat to freedom of cultural expression and experience.

## **Readings:**

Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture* (required)

Tim Wu, *The Master Switch* (required)

Daniel Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind* (recommended)

Other chapters and articles.

Books are for sale at the UWM Bookstore.

All readings will be available on library reserve.

## **Assignments:**

**-Reading responses:** minimum 250 words, submitted by email before class on the readings for that day. You are required to do at least ten reading responses

during the semester. You will get credit for up to five responses before the first exam, and up to five responses between the first and the second exam. Late reading responses will not be accepted under any circumstances. The instructor may respond to your responses, but not always, and may discuss them with the class. If you get no reply within a day or two, you may assume that your response was satisfactory. 10%

**-First project:** for this project you are to analyze a recently “obsolete” media technology such as audio or video cassette, corded landline telephone, or film camera, using a medium of expression that is new to you, such as graphic design, audio, video, or web publishing. The assignment is to answer the question: Is this still a useful object? In addition to the analysis, you are also to write a few hundred words reflecting on your use of unfamiliar technology to express yourself. You are encouraged to be creative in this assignment in terms of the tools you use, and you are encouraged as well to share your work with the class. No length is specified because of the flexibility of the format. 10%

**-Final project:** research paper of at least 3500 words. For this project you are also going to write a bibliographical essay of minimum 750 words and give a 10-minute presentation. Bibliographical essay, 5%; presentation, 5%, research paper, 20%.

**-Two exams,** both take-home, both essay format. The second exam will not cover the same material as the first. Both exams will include questions on readings we have not discussed in class (you will be asked to relate this new reading to class discussions). Each exam, 20%.

**-Participation.** 10%

### **Course policies:**

I prefer to discuss issues of substance face-to-face during my office hours, not before or after class, and not by email. You don't need an appointment to come see me during office hours, but if you can't make the regular time you may make an appointment to talk to me face-to-face at another time.

Attendance is mandatory. You may miss two classes during the semester without penalty. Every subsequent absence will cost you 5% of your final grade. Six or more absences will result in an automatic F. Students who frequently arrive to class late will be marked absent when arriving late at the instructor's discretion. I do not need to know your excuses for missing class up to two absences, and letting me know about them is unnecessary, but if something serious comes up like an injury or illness, please let me know. Only serious medical and family emergencies will even be considered as excuses for absences beyond two.

Participation will be graded less on frequency than on quality, but I expect everyone to participate regularly. If you are usually quiet in class, I might give you 0/10 on participation, especially if I suspect you have not done the reading and are not engaging with class discussion. There's an easy way to avoid giving me the impression that you haven't done the reading: participate!

You must complete all of the major assignments to get credit for this course. The major assignments are the two exams and the two papers. I will not grade your final paper if you have not completed the bibliographical essay, so it is effectively a major assignment as well.

Students are invited to use social media such as Twitter as a way of extending our class discussions, but this is not a course requirement. If participants use such media in an effective and meaningful way, it could factor into the participation grade.

I encourage you to use electronic devices in class if they help you engage in our discussions. Please do not use these devices in class for other purposes. If I suspect that you are using them this way, I will ask you to stop bringing them, and your participation grade will suffer.

No extra credit assignments will be given for any reason. Please do not ask for extra credit.

Plagiarism will result in failing the class and might also lead to suspension or expulsion. Please make sure you know what plagiarism is and never do it.

### **Schedule:**

*Please attend class having done the readings for that day, and whenever possible please bring the readings with you and have them out and ready for reference during our discussion.*

#### *Week 1 General Principles*

9.6 Course Introduction

9.8 Baym, "Making New Media Make Sense"

#### *Week 2 Theorizing Medium & Technology*

9.13 Ong, "Writing Restructures Consciousness"

9.15 McLuhan, "Playboy interview" (this reading is freely available online, follow the link from D2L or just Google "McLuhan Playboy interview")

#### *Week 3 Telegraph*

9.20 Carey, "Technology as Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph"  
9.22 Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind*, pages 3-29 ("Lightning Lines' and the Birth of Modern Communication, 1838-1900")

#### *Week 4 Telephone*

9.27 Fischer, *America Calling*, pages 33-59 ("The Telephone in America")  
9.29 Fischer, *America Calling*, pages 222-254 ("Personal Calls, Personal Meanings")

**First project due: 9.30 (Friday, 9 a.m.)**

#### *Week 5 Radio*

10.4 Boddy, *New Media and Popular Imagination*, pages 1-6 & 16-43  
("Introduction," "Wireless Nation: Defining Radio as a Domestic Technology")  
10.6 Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind*, pages 60-90 ("The Ethereal Hearth: American Radio From Wireless through Broadcasting, 1892-1940")

#### *Week 6 Exam/Television I*

**10.11 take-home exam #1; no class (note: exam will include question on Czitrom other than assigned chapters)**

10.13 Williams, *Television*, pages 1-25 & 77-120 ("The Technology and the Society," "Programming: Distribution and Flow")

#### *Week 7 TV in the Home*

10.18 Spigel, *Make Room For TV*, pages 1-10 & 36-72 ("Introduction," "The Family Circle")  
10.20 Spigel, *Make Room For TV*, pages 99-135 ("The Home Theater")

#### *Week 8 Digital Television*

10.25 Kompare, "Publishing Flow: DVD Box Sets and the Reconceptation of Television"  
10.27 Boddy, *New Media and Popular Imagination*, pages 100-107 & 123-135  
("Redefining the Home Screen: The Case of the Digital Video Recorder," "How God Watches Television: Early Responses to Digital Television")

*Week 9 Conferences -- recommending you use this time to read ahead for weeks 10-12!*

11.1 conferences with instructor re final project  
11.3 conferences with instructor re final project

#### *Weeks 10-12 The Internet & Corporate Control*

11.8 Wu, *The Master Switch*, pages 3-156  
11.10 Wu, *The Master Switch*, 157-204

#### *Week 11*

11.15 Wu, *The Master Switch*, pages 205-319  
11.17 Lessig, *Free Culture*, pages xxiii-xvi & 1-173

*Week 12*

11.22 Lessig, *Free Culture*, pages 177-306

*Week 13 Exam/Presentations*

**11.29 take-home exam #2; no class (note: exam will include question on Murphy, *How Television Invented New Media*, on reserve)**

12.1 presentations

**Bibliographic essay due: 12.2 (Friday, 9 a.m.)**

*Week 14 Presentations*

12.6 presentations

12.8 presentations

*Week 15 Presentations*

12.13 presentations

**Final Project due: 12.19 (Monday, 9 a.m.)**

**Readings:**

Nancy Baym, "Making New Media Make Sense," *Personal Connections in the Digital Age* (Polity, 2010), 22-49.

William Boddy, *New Media and Popular Imagination: Launching Radio, Television, and Digital Media in the United States* (Oxford, 2004).

James W. Carey, "Technology as Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph," *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Routledge, 1992), 201-230.

Daniel J. Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan* (North Carolina, 1982).

Claude S. Fischer, "Personal Calls, Personal Meanings," *America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940* (California, 1992).

Derek Kompare, "Publishing Flow: DVD Box Sets and the Reconceptation of Television," *Television & New Media* 7 (2006), 335-360.

Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: The Nature and Future of Creativity* (Penguin, 2005).

Marshall McLuhan, "The Playboy Interview: Marshall McLuhan," *Playboy Magazine*, March 1969. Reprinted in *The Essential McLuhan* (Basic, 1996).

Sheila C. Murphy, "This is Intelligent Television: The Emerging Technologies of Video Games, Computers, and the Medium of Television," in *How Television Invented New Media* (Rutgers, 2011).

Walter J. Ong, "Writing Restructures Consciousness," in *Orality and Literacy*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2002).

Lynn Spigel, *Make Way for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago, 1992).

Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (Routledge, 2003).

Tim Wu, *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires* (Knopf, 2010).