From Tablets to Tablets: A Long History of Technology and Communication
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Course Description: The invention of new communication technologies is often accompanied by a swell of hope. Enthusiasts expect people to become more connected, new ideas to become more accessible, and information to be shared more rapidly and in more fixed forms than ever before. While there are always nay-sayers, who warn against the effects of such inventions, the narrative linking new communication technologies and progress is so strong that these detractors are most commonly painted as luddites, and the narrative itself is used to justify and promote yet newer media as well as new configurations of state and media relations.

In this class, we will examine some of the most significant transformations in forms of communication and the ways in which communication technologies are and were produced—from orality to writing, from tablet to scroll to codex, manuscript to print, hand-press to steam-press, print to radio, radio to tv, and tv to streaming and other forms of new media. We will ask some basic questions: How were these technologies made? How were these technologies used? How did contemporaries perceive them and the transformations they did or did not work? We will also ask some bigger questions: why do certain communication technologies emerge and get adopted when and where they do? Conversely, why are some communication technologies resisted at some times and in some places? What impacts do communication technologies have on the societies in which the appear? Do they alter the course of events? Do they change the way in which we think? If so, then how? Is the history of communication substitutive or additive? How is the digital age in which we live similar to or different from those that came before?

Procedures: Please come to class having done all of the reading for each week and having thought about the weekly questions. Class time will typically be divided into three parts. First, we will do an exercise with books and other textual objects from the Kislak Center. Second, I will give a brief introduction to the week's topic. Finally, we will discuss our readings in relation to the materials we examined from the Penn Collection.

Assignments: The class will be centered around one large project. Each of you will choose a single textual object from the special collections library to study throughout the semester. You will write short papers (3 pages) on themes that we discuss (form and mode of production, censorship and property, collection and preservation, and reading and reception) as they relate to your chosen textual object. At the end of the semester, in lieu of a final exam, you will rework these shorter papers with the help of my feedback, tie them together with an introduction, and add a conclusion that discusses some of the bigger implications that can be drawn out from your study (what your object can tell us about technological determinism, how new forms of communication do or do not shape events around them, or how new forms of communication transform the way we think). The final week of class will be devoted to presenting your textual objects to your classmates.

Week 1, Tuesday, August 30: Questioning Our Own Assumptions
Reading: No Reading

Week 2, Tuesday, September 6: What is the History of the Book? The History of Communication?
Reading:
1. Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?," in *Daedalus* 111, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 65-83.
2. D. F. McKenzie, "The Book as an expressive form," in McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 9-30.
3. Roger Chartier, "Laborers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader," in *Diacritics* 22, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 49-61.

4. Leah Price, "From the History of a Book to a "History of the Book," in *Representations* 108, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 120-138.

Week 3, Tuesday, September 13: The Invention of Communication Technology?
MEET AT PENN MUSEUM
Reading:
1. Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message," in Sue Thornham, Caroline Bassett, and Paul Marris, eds. *Media Studies: A Reader* (Edinburgh, 2009).
2. Jack Goody and Ian Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5, no. 3 (April 1963): 304-345
3. John Halverson, "Goody and the Implosion of the Literacy Thesis," in *Man* 27, no. 2 (June 1992): 301-317.
4. Ajay Skaria, "Writing, Orality, and Power in the Dangs, Western India, 1800s-1920s," in Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty, eds., *Subaltern Studies IX* (Delhi, 1996): 13-58.
5. Zeynep Tufekci, "Why Twitter's Oral Culture Irritates Bill Keller (and why this is an important issue)" *Technosociology Blog*, 19 May 2011. https://technosociology.org/?p=431.

Week 4, Tuesday, September 20: Changes in Material Form
Reading:
1. Peter Stallybrass, "Books and Scrolls. Navigating the Bible," in Jennifer Andersen and Elizabeth Sauer, eds., *Books and Readers in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia, 2002): 42-79.
2. Paul Saenger, "Reading in the Later Middle Ages," in Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, eds., *A History of Reading in the West*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst, 1999): 120-148.
3. Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, "The Book: Its Visual Appearance," in Febvre and Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800* (Paris, 1958): 77-108.
4. Richard Brody, Robert Cashill, George Feltenstein, Lorenzo Fiuzzi, Lauren Carroll Harris, David Hudson, Olivia Humphrey, Dina Iordanova, Ramon Lobato, Amanda Lotz, Jeffery Masino, David McIntosh, Jonathan Turell and David Wilentz, "Disc to Stream: A Critical Symposium on the Changing World of Home Video," in *Cinéaste* 43, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 30-40.

Week 5, Tuesday, September 27: Changing Modes of Production
Reading:
1. Harold Love, "Early Modern Print Culture: Assessing the Models," in *Parergon* 20, no. 1 (January 2003): 45-64.
2. Elizabeth Eisenstein, "Defining the Initial Shift: Some features of print culture," in David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, eds., *The Book History Reader,* 2nd edition, 232-254.
3. Anthony Grafton, "The Importance of Being Printed," in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 11, no. 2 (Autumn 1980): 265-286.
4. Geoffrey Roper, "The History of the Book in the Muslim World," in Michael F. Suarez, S.J. and H. R. Woudhuysen, eds., *The Book: A Global History* (Oxford, 2013), 524-552.
5. J.S. Edgren, "The History of the Book in China," in Michael F. Suarez, S.J. and H. R. Woudhuysen, eds., *The Book: A Global History* (Oxford, 2013), 273-292.

Week 6, Tuesday, October 4: Studying Texts as Material Objects
Trip to the Penn Common Press: Printing exposition
Reading:
1. Selections from Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oxford, 1972).

2. Selections from Sarah Werner, *Studying Early Printed Books, 1450-1800* (Hoboken, 2019).
<u>Assignment: Pick Textual Object</u>

Week 7, Tuesday, October 11: Censorship and Property
Reading:
1. Adrian Johns, "The Invention of Piracy," in Johns, *Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates* (Chicago, 2009): 17-40.
2. Hannah Marcus, "Censorship," in Ann Blair, Paul Duguid, Anja-Silvia Goeing, and Anthony Grafton, eds., *Information: A History Companion* (Princeton, 2021), 366-369.
3. Moisés Naím and Philip Bennett, "The Anti-Information Age: How governments are reinventing censorship in the 21st Century, in *The Atlantic,* 16 February 2015.
4. Debora L. Spar, "The View from Partenia," in *Ruling the Waves: Cycles of Discovery, Chaos, and Wealth from the Compass to the Internet* (New York, 2001), 1-22.

Week 8, Tuesday, October 18: Authorship
Reading:
1. Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, eds., *The Book History Reader,* 2nd edition, 281-290.
2. Mark Rose, "Literary Property Determined," in David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, eds., *The Book History Reader,* 2nd edition, 308-317.
3. Martha Woodmansee, "Genius and Copyright," in *The Author, Art, and the Market: Rereading the History of Aesthetics* (New York, 1994): 35-56.
4. Robert J. Griffin, "Anonymity and Authorship," in *New Literary History* 30, no 4. (Autumn 1999), 877-895.
<u>Assignment: Write a 3- to 5-page paper on your textual object's form and the way in which it was produced.</u>

Week 9, Tuesday, October 25: Collecting, Archiving, and Preservation
Reading:
1. Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz, "Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance," in *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 171-185.
2. Roger Chartier, "Libraries without Walls," in *The Order of Books* (Stanford, 1992), 61-88.
3. Karen Attar, "Books in the Library," in Leslie Howsam, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book* (Cambridge, 2015), 17-35.
4. Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, "Introduction: Awareness of the Mechanism," in *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination* (Cambridge, MA, 2008), 1-24.

Week 10, Tuesday, November 1: Reading and Reception
Reading (about reading):
1. Robert Darnton, "First Steps toward a History of Reading," in *Australian Journal of French Studies* 23 (January 1986), 5-30.
2. Roger Chartier, "Communities of Readers," in *The Order of Books* (Stanford, 1992), 1-24.
3. Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, "'Studied for Action:' How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy," in *Past & Present* 129 (November 1990): 30-78.
4. Janice Radway, "Introduction: Writing *Reading the Romance*" and "The Readers and their Romances," in *Reading the Romance,* 2nd Edition (Chapel Hill, 1991), 1-18; 46-85.
<u>Assignment: Write a 3- to 5-page paper on your textual object's authorship and its relationship to censorship and property.</u>

Week 11, Tuesday, November 8: Technological Determinism and Its Opponents

Reading:

1. Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, "An Unacknowledged Revolution Revisited," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 1 (February 2002): 87-105.
2. Adrian Johns, "How to Acknowledge a Revolution," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 1 (February 2002): 106-125.
3. James R. Beniger, "Introduction," in *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society* (Cambridge, 1986), 1-27.
4. John B. Thompson, "The Media and Modernity and the Development of Modern Societies," in *The Media and Modernity* (Stanford, 1995), 44-80

Week 12, Tuesday, November 15: Do Books Make Revolutions?
Reading:

1. Robert Darnton, "Reading, Writing, and Publishing in Eighteenth-Century France: A Case Study in the Sociology of Literature," in *Daedalus* 100, no. 1 (1971), 214-256.
2. Roger Chartier, "Do Books Make Revolutions?" in *The Culture Origins of the French Revolution* (Durham, 1991), 68-91.
3. Manuel Castells, "An Introduction to the Information Age," in Sue Thornham, Caroline Bassett, and Paul Marris, eds. *Media Studies: A Reader* (Edinburgh, 2009), 152-162.

Assignment: Write a 3- to 5-page paper on your textual object's collection, preservation, reading, and reception.

Week 13, Tuesday, November 22: NO CLASS
Enjoy Thanksgiving Break!

Week 14, Tuesday, November 29: Communication and Cognition
Reading:

1. Walter Ong, "Orality and Literacy: Writing Restructures Consciousness," in David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, eds., *The Book History Reader,* 2nd edition, 134-146.
2. Neil Postman, "The Medium is the Metaphor," "Now… This," and "The Huxleyan Warning," in *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York, 1985)*, 3-15; 99-113; 155-163.
3. Nicholas Carr, "Hal and Me," "The Juggler's Brain," in *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* (New York, 2010), 5-16; 115-143.

Week 15, Tuesday, December 6: Presentations and Conclusions
Reading: No Reading

Final Assignment: Edit and rework your previous papers, write an introduction that ties them together, and add a conclusion that discusses the impact of your textual object in references to the larger themes of the course. Generally speaking, what can we learn from it about the history and nature of communication technology?