

New Methods for New Media

There is no subfield of Political Science that does not attend to the problem of mediation. Whether it is the age old democratic debate over representation or the emergence of new forms of silicon life each of us engages a series of interfaces with media in both our fields of investigation and our methods of processing, reproducing, and presenting our work. As New Media further saturates our environment we require new ways of reflexively accounting for its involvement increasingly as a co-participant as much as a set of tools. To that end this class provides an opportunity to engage the problem of the medium in both theoretical and practical ways as regards the world we study and the methods we use.

For instance what do we mean when we distinguish almost instinctively between data, information, and knowledge? What are the material differences and attributes on which we base dichotomies like real vs. virtual, digital vs. analogue, haptic vs. representational, embodied vs. mediated? These question make all of us participant-observers and raise questions for how we understand our modes of inquiry and investigation as we ourselves produce knowledge.

The first third of the class reviews early communication and information theory that provoked the behavioral turn in the social science as well as the prescient thinkers of information networks that already saw a shift in human organization and communication decades before the vast series of tubes known as the internet. The second third of the class engages with research on the technologies of orality, literacy, sound reproduction as media we take for granted but need to understand in order to make sense of the digital turn in new media. The last and most substantial third of the class focuses on the loss of the analogue in the form of community, communication, and representation as social media, infinitely duplicatable information and images take on a life of their own. Substantial time will be spent thinking about the implication these mutations have on daily life and the political ramifications of those changes.

Core Concept List:

COMMUNICATION, SIGNAL TO NOISE, INFORMATION, DATA, MEDIUM, KNOWLEDGE, INTERFACE, VIRTUAL, HAPTIC, MEDIATED, NEW MEDIA, ORIGINAL, SIMULACRA, COPY, CYBERNETICS, MESSAGE, CONTROL, ORALITY, STEERING, PLASTICITY, EMBODIMENT, IMAGE, REPRESENTATION, EMPIRE, GLOBALIZATION, NETWORK, MESHWORK

Requirements and Assignments

Full participation is expected and all participants will give a critical presentation on one of the texts during the course. There are two options for the paper. You can write a 12 to 15 page paper the first draft of which will be due in the middle of the semester. I will then return the paper within a week with comments for substantial revisions. The final draft will be due at the end of the semester. The other option is the traditional 20 to 25 page paper using the themes and texts from the course.

Birth of The Information Society

Week 1

George Dyson, Darwin Among the Machines: The Evolution of Global Intelligence

Week 2

Michel Serres-Information Theory (Hermes: Birth of Science)

Norbert Wiener-Introducing Cybernetics

Week 3

Karl Deutsch-The Nerves of Government

Week 4

Marshall McLuhan- Understand Media

Week 5

Harold Innis- Empire and Communication

We Have Always Been Mediated: Language as the First Virtual Reality

Week 6

Walter Ong- Orality and Literacy



Week 7

Friedrich Kittler-Gramophone, Film, Typewriter

Week 8

James Berger, *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society*

What's New about New Media? Algorithms, Networks, Interfaces, Software

Week 9

Orit Halpern, *Beautiful Data: A History of Vision and Reason Since 1945*

Week 10

Matthew Fuller and Andrew Goffey, *Evil Media*

Week 11

Jussi Parikka, *Insect Media: An Archeology of Animals and Technology*

Week 12

Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska, *Life after New Media: Mediation as Vital Process*

Week 13

Siegfried Zielinski, *[...After the Media]: News from the Slow-Fading Twentieth Century*

Week 14

Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory*

Week 15

Felix Guattari, *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*

Week 16

Wark, Galloway, and Thacker-*Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation*