



ARTM 542

MEDIA CULTURE AND THEORY I

PROFESSOR RUSSELL A. POTTER

This course will examine the rise and commodification of mass media, beginning with the earliest mechanical and mechano-electrical media and continuing through emergence of computers, television, and digital recording and processing technology. Connections between critical theories and media production will be explored at every stage, as will the changes wrought by mass media in the shape of material culture, ideology, and economics. We will examine contemporary instances of new media in the context of theories of postmodernism, as well as reading some significant modernist texts which predate the digital age. We will listen to and view a variety of early experimental sound and picture recordings (Le Prince, Edison, Logie Baird), continuing through to recent works which take advantage of -- some might say, hijack -- new media technologies (hip-hop sampling, EBN, Negativland).

Online Texts: (Linked via our Media Culture Blog site):

Bertolt Brecht, "The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication"
Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
Water J. Ong, "Writing as Technology"

FILMS AND MEDIA OBJECTS:

Roundhay Garden Scene (1888)
Crystal Palace: The Edison Recordings (1888)
Dickson Experimental Sound Film (1894)
Panorama of Ealing from a Moving Tram (1900)
Early Baird Television Recordings (1928-1931)
Television Under the Swastika (2008)
Things to Come (1936)
The Strangerhood (2006)
South Park: *Make Love, not WarCraft* (2006)

WEEK 1 Introduction to the course.

WEEK 2 Writing as Technology.

WEEK 3 History of Sound Recording.

WEEK 4 Early film and the “Cinema of Attractions.”

WEEK 5 Later developments in film: sound and color / The birth (and rebirth ... and rebirth ...) of 3D.

WEEK 6 J.L. Baird and the Dawn of Television / The Rise of Television as a Medium, 1946-present.

WEEK 7 The evolution of the computer from Babbage to the Mouse.

WEEK 8 From ARPANET to the INTERNET, the WWW and beyond.

WEEK 9 History of Social Media.

WEEK 10 From MUD's to MMORPG's. In-class viewing, South Park: “Make Love, Not Warcraft.”

WEEK 11 Personal Media Devices.

WEEK 12 Surveillance and Security.

WEEK 13 Copyright and intellectual property in the digital era / Copyleft and new media licenses.

WEEK 14 Review and presentations.