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: (via Media Culture WebCT site):

Bertolt Brecht, “The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication”
Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle
Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
Potter, “Not the Same: Race, Repetition, and Difference,” “From Soul to Hip-Hop”
Théberge: "Plugged In: Pop Music and Technology"
DJ Markski’s History of Turntablism

FILMS AND MEDIA OBJECTS:

Roundhay Garden Scene (1888)
Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze (1894)
Panorama of Ealing from a Moving Tram (1900)
Nanook of the North (1922)
Early Baird Television Recordings (1928-1931)
Ghosts Before Breakfast
Night Mail (1936)
Craig Baldwin, Sonic Outlaws (1995)
The Strangerhood (2006)
South Park: Make Love, not Warcraft (2006)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week I — Tuesday: Introduction to course. Thursday: Reading & discussion, Borges, “The Garden of Forking Paths” (WebCT); Manovich, “New Media from Borges to HTML” (handout).

Week II — Tuesday: Voices in the Machine: Early recorded sound and radio. Reading: Bertolt Brecht, “The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication”; Listenings: Earliest Recorded Sound (1879); Tesla invents Radio - 1898; Historical Voices, 1895-1942; Futurist Noise Machines of 1914; Crazy Blues (1920); "Race" and "Hillbilly" Records - 1920-1955; Lord Haw Haw's Nazi Propaganda (1940); All Germany hears the Führer on Radio; Amos 'n' Andy (1946).

Week III — Tuesday: Seeing is Believing: The ideology of vision from photography to early cinema. Readings: “Early Film History and Multi-Media: An Archaeology of Possible Futures?” by Thomas Elsaesser (in Chun and Keenan). Thursday screening: Early Edison films: 1889-91: Early Edison Camera Tests 1891 (Monkey-shines, no. 1; Dickson Greeting); Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze (1894); other early Edison shorts.


Week VII - From Babbage's Engine to Eniac and Univac -- a lumbering monster slouches towards being. Texts: “As We May Think,” by Vannevar Bush;"Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” by Alan Turing (WebCT texts); WebCT readings/viewing under "Computer History" #1-10.

Week VIII – Tuesday: Birth of the Internet – Hypertext and hyperspace -- from ARPANET to INTERNET -- protocols of transmission and retrieval, from FTP to Gopher to http to XML -- the dream of the archive. Readings: Borges, "The Library of Babel" (WebCT links) WebCT: Computer History #9, 13, 16; Engelbart's 1968 demo of the mouse/menu interface (all WebCT).

Week IX – Tuesday: New Media Aesthetics of the Object: Dadaism, Surrealism, and Punk. Reading: “An art history lesson in brief ”by Simon Reynolds; listenings: Italian Futurists, Luigi

**Week X** – The headless text and the cut-up method: Readings from *L’Encyclopédie Ancephale*; Listenings: William S. Burroughs, “Early cut up tape” (c. 1965); lecture given by WSB at the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics (1976). Thursday screening: *Naked Lunch*.


**Week XIII** – Music in the Age of Electronic sampling and reproduction. Readings/listenings: Digging in the Crates: Bongo Rock; Akai Digital Sampler (1984); Hip Hop Samples Itself; A Sample of Hip-hop sampling; Revenge of the Turntablists; File Sharing: An Unstoppable Trend; “1,700 Bands, Rocking as the CD Industry Reels” (all under Historical Sounds); Dj Markski’s History of Turntablism; Potter, “Not the Same: Race, Repetition, and Difference” (under Texts and Documents).

**Week XIV** Final seminars.