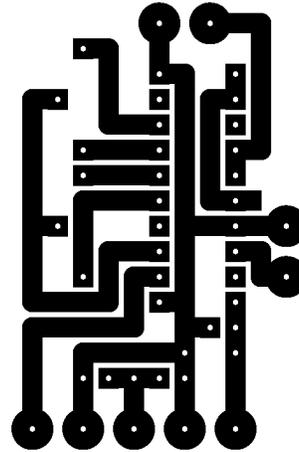


Media, Technology, and Performance

Anthropology 3691.10

Spring 2013

Instructor: Dr. Alexander S. Dent
Lecture Time: T & R 11:10am-12:25PM
Lecture Location: Monroe 353
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(Hortense Amsterdam House)
Office hours: T 1-3:00PM
Or by appointment



Introduction

Few would argue with the proposition that film, television, radio, and the Internet are playing an increasingly important role in our lives. But the arguments about whether that role is positive or negative are usually polarized. For some, media facilitate democratization, liberation, and learning. For others, they bring forth monopolization, control, and disempowerment. This course begins by wondering why media bear the weight of so much celebration and damnation? We will then proceed to investigate media and technology as culturally situated forms of communication. We will use the concept of performance to unravel how the genres associated with media both effect social change, and comment upon it. Sites of investigation will include the news-media, documentary and fictional films, computers, photocopiers, and piracy. How are these and other kinds of communicative events enacted in specific historical contexts? Once we have understood these ethnographic questions, we will be in a much better position to understand the interrelations of individual actors and the larger "mass culture" of which they are a part.

The *firm* prerequisite for this class is "Language in Culture and Society," (ANTH 1004). This class is designed to dialogue with the material studied in "Language, Culture, and Cognition" (ANTH 3601), and "The Ethnography of Speaking" (ANTH 3602), as well as other linguistic anthropology offerings.

Course Requirements

1) Class participation, and attendance – 20 % (12.5 attendance; 7.5 participation)

- a) Mandatory attendance at all lectures, films, and discussions. I will distribute a sign-up sheet at the beginning of each class. *If you fail to get your name onto that sign up sheet, you were not "here," so it is your job to remember to sign in. Signing in after-the-fact is not permitted.* I award ½ point for each class attended. Missing class, thus, means that not only are you missing out on the course content, which will be cumulative, but you are losing a half point. *Attendance is both mandatory, and crucial to your performance.*

*[Signing in for someone who is not present in order to cover for them will mean that both you **and** the other person do not receive credit for that particular class. If this happens more than once, it will be treated as a violation of academic integrity.]*

- b) Participate in lectures appropriately by asking clarifying questions, and taking part in discussions.
- c) Read the materials on the syllabus before the day assigned.

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d) Complete all assignments.

*If you need to miss a class or lecture for a **religious holiday**, you need to let me know within the first two weeks of class. Any other absences may only be excused if accompanied by a **doctor's note**.*

2) One 8-10 pp. paper -- 30%

Write an 8-10 pp. paper (any common 12 pt. font, double spaced) in which you address one of the themes from our weekly readings and lectures. For example, you might wish to consider whether or not the use of video technology has transformed Kayapo society, the usefulness of genre to thinking about mediation, the role of the audience, or the notion of technological anxieties. These are just examples, though, and you should feel completely free to generate your own topics. Consider asking me about your topics via email, or after class.

The paper should use social sciences notation. *Make sure to include specific page numbers with all citations.* You should concentrate on materials from the course, though you are also free to judiciously use sources from outside the course. The paper is intended to provide you with an opportunity to think about the course materials in original ways. I will provide a separate handout on the paper requirements, and will also discuss them in class. Please note the course policy on Academic Integrity, below.

Your paper – out of thirty points -- will be evaluated on:

- a clear thesis (6 pts.)
- coherent presentation of supporting evidence (6 pts.)
- relevance to the themes of the course (8 pts.)
- persuasiveness and originality of your argument (6 pts.)
- style, grammar, spelling, and the use of proper social sciences citation form (4 pts.)

Papers are due at the *beginning* of the class on 11/21. You will lose one-third of a letter grade for each day your paper is late past the deadline (so an A goes to an A-, an A- to a B+, and so forth). Extensions will not be granted.

*The paper is due at the **start** of class. I deduct 1/3 of a grade for each day the paper is late. Thus, at 11:11am, the paper is a day late. By a third of a grade, I mean that if your paper was an A, but you turned it in to me on Wednesday morning, it automatically becomes an A-. If it was an A-, it becomes a B+. And so forth.*

3) Midterm Exam – 15% -- In-Class – 10/19

This exam will include short answer questions, short and long essay questions. I will discuss the exam in more detail in class. October 19th.

4) Final take-home assignment – 35% – Date-Time TBA

The open-book take-home exam will consist of essay questions. The exam is **cumulative** – which means to say that it covers the entire semester. The exam is intended to test your ability to *apply* course concepts (among them, “performance”) to the analysis of media and technology. All principles of Academic Integrity apply. Date and time TBA.

Grading scale for final grade:

A	93% or higher
A-	90-92%
B+	88-89%
B	83-7%
B-	80-82%

and so on

Academic Integrity

All students must practice academic integrity. This means doing your own work, and when you use *the words and ideas of others in any written work, you must*: 1) identify quotations with quotations marks; and 2) indicate the source of ideas that are not your own using social sciences notation form. If you have any questions at all about what this means, you should speak to the instructor. Plagiarism, and all breaches of academic integrity (for example, the sale of lecture-notes, or use of content from the internet as though it was your own), will be severely dealt with in accordance with the University's policies and procedures. For more information on The George Washington University's policies on academic integrity, consult: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

*The policy on academic integrity in this course is that if you are caught cheating on any assignment or exam, you will receive a zero for that assignment or exam. This infraction will then be reported to the University's Academic Integrity Council. You will be **clearly** notified by the instructor in person OR by email before the Council is notified.*

Reading

Both required and recommended reading will be available in the GW bookstore. Other chapters and articles will be available on Electronic Reserves in Blackboard. I will also hand out short readings in class from time to time that you are responsible for. You may notice that some of the readings are not terribly long. This is because many of them are extremely dense. I expect you to read ALL the material for this course, and I expect you to engage with it fully by asking yourself if you're sure you understand what you're reading as you proceed.

With respect to the issue of Electronic Reserves: Though printing out the Electronic Reserves can be time consuming and expensive, I recommend taking handwritten notes on your readings as you proceed through the course. Thus, I strongly recommend printing your readings. You're killing no more trees than you would be if you bought three or four more books, and the cost is lower. It helps to have printed references when you are writing papers or studying.

ALSO: you are responsible for in-class films, readings, and sound recordings, and will be expected to know them with the same degree of detail that you are expected to know the readings.

Required Books

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1999. *On Television*. New Press.

Orr, Julian. 1996. *Talking About Machines: An Ethnography of a Modern Job*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Suggested Book

Askew, Kelly, and Andrew Wilk. 2002. *The Anthropology of Media: A Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Section I – Approaching Media and Technology

Week 1 – Opening Salvo

T 1/15 -- Introduction

How do we normally think of technology and media?

Williams – two key words (distributed in class)

R 1/17 – Performance

What is a “performative” approach?

Reading:

Dent, Alexander. 2009. “What Counts as Country? Rural Performativity in the Twentieth Century.” Chapter one of *River of Tears: Country Music, Memory, and Modernity in Brazil*. (Duke)

Week 2 – Repositioning “Mediation” and Technology

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T 1/22 – How new IS all this, really?

Reading:

- Spence, Jonathan. 1983. "Building the Palace," pp. 1-23, and "The Second Picture: The Road to Emmaus," pp. 128-161, from *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*. New York: Penguin.
- Williams, Raymond. "The Technology and the Society." Pp. 27-41.

R 9/24 – Medias and Messages

Reading:

- Macluhan, Marshall. Excerpt from *The Medium is the Message*. Pp. 18-27
- Mead & Bateson, "On the Use of the Camera in Anthropology." Pp. 41-47
- Brady, Erika. "Save, Save the Lore!" Pp. 56-73 – These first three excerpts from *The Anthropology of Media*. Wilk & Askew, eds.

McLagan, Meg. "Spectacles of Difference: Cultural Activism and the Mass Mediation of Tibet." In *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*, Ginzberg, Larkin & Abu-Lughod, eds. Pp. 90-111.

Week 3 – Production = Consumption

T - 1/29 – Mechanical Reproduction

Reading:

- Benjamin, Walter. 1968. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books. Pp. 217-251.

R 1/31 – "Jazz"

Reading:

- Adorno, Theodor. 1989. "Perennial Fashion: Jazz." In *Critical Theory and Society*. Bronner and Kellner, eds. New York: Routledge. Pp. 199-209.

Adorno. 1938. "On the Fetish Character in Music, and the Regression in Listening." In *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*. New York: Continuum. Pp. 270-299.

Week 4 – Cultural Uses of Media

T 2/5 – Liberation, or Captivity?

Reading:

- Turner, Terry. 2002. "Representation, Politics, and Cultural Imagination in Indigenous Media." In *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*, Ginzberg, Larkin & Abu-Lughod, eds. Pp. 75-89.

Film:

The Kayapo: Out of the Forest – directed by Michael Beckham, narrated by Terence Turner

R 2/7 – Redemptive Video

- Boyer, Dominic. "Turner's Anthropology of Media and Its Legacies." *Critique of Anthropology* 26(1) 47-60.

Section II – Framing Concepts

Week 5 -- Genre

T 10/3 – Elementary Speech Genres

Reading:

- Bakhtin – "The Problem of Speech Genres" In *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press. Pp. 60-102.

R 10/5 – Using Speech Genres

Reading:

- Bauman & Briggs. 1992. "Genre, Intertextuality and Social Power." In *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*

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2(2): 131-173

Hanks, William. 1987. "Discourse Genres in a Theory of Practice." In *American Ethnologist*. 14(4):668-692.

Week 6 – Orientations TO...

T 10/10 –Publics

Reading:

Warner, Michael. 2002. "Publics and Counterpublics." *Public Culture* 14(1): 49-90.

R 10/12 –Audiences

Reading:

Kulick and Willson. "Rambo's Wife Saves the Day: Subjugating the Gaze and Subverting the Narrative in a Papua New Guinean Swamp." In *The Anthropology of Media*. Malden Mills: Blackwell. Pp. 270-285.

Spitulnik, Debra. "Mobile Machines and Fluid Audiences: Rethinking Reception Through Zambian Radio Culture." In *Media Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 337-354.

Week 7 – Mid-Term Week

T 10/17 – Review Session

R 10/19 – In-Class Midterm Exam

Section III – Forms of Mediation

Week 8

T 10/24 –The Return of "Performance"

R 10/26 – Radio

Reading:

Begin reading Goffman, Erving. "Radio Talk", in: *Forms of Talk*, pp. 197-327.

Week 9

T 10/31 – Radio, continued

Reading:

Finish reading Goffman, Erving. "Radio Talk", in: *Forms of Talk*, pp. 197-327.

R 11/2 – More Radio

Reading:

Spitulnik "The Social Circulation of Media Discourse and the Mediation of Communities." *ER*
Shoaps, Robin. 1999. "The Many Voices of Rush Limbaugh: The Use of Transposition in Constructing a Rhetoric of Common Sense." *Text* 19(3):399-437. **ER**

Week 10 – Television & News

T 11/7 –

Bourdieu, Pierre. *On Television*.

R 11/9 –

Bourdieu, *On Television*, continued.

Week 11

T 11/14 – The Public Sphere

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Reading:

Craig Calhoun. 1992. "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere." In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge:MA – MIT Press. Pp. 1-48.

Section IV– Technological Practices

R 11/16 – Object Relations I – Jukeboxes and Records

Reading:

Fox "The Jukebox of History:" In *Popular Music*. 11(1): 53-72.

Waxer, Lise. 2002. "Life in the Vinyl Museum: *Salsotecas* and Record Collectors." Chapter three of *The City of Musical Memory*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press. Pp. 111-152

Week 12

T 11/21 – Object Relations II - Vinyl

Paper due at the beginning of class.

Film: High Fidelity

R 11/23 – Thanksgiving Break

Week 13 –Machines

T 11/28

Reading:

Begin Orr, Pp. 1-77.

R 11/30

Reading:

Finish Orr, Pp. 78-162

Week 14 – Digital Environments

T 12/5

Reading:

Kirschenblatt-Gimblett. 1996.

Kelty, Chris. ND. "What is the Internet?" (book manuscript chapter – NOT for circulation)

R 12/7—Digital environments continued

Review

FINAL TAKEHOME EXAM: Date and Time TBA, according to the GWU official schedule.