

History 4381-010:
Global History of Media and Communications

Spring 2016, Tuesday & Thursday, 8:00 – 9:15 a.m.
Academic Building, Room A225

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I. Course Description

Today's historical primary sources were once someone's communications media. Oral epics, government edicts, sacred scripture, books, newspapers, telegrams, films, radio and television programs, websites, and tweets were all meant by their creators to convey meaning to their audiences. Today when we talk about the importance of "media literacy," we mean that in order to analyze and assess the messages that come to us (especially through news, advertising, and commercial entertainment), we must be aware of the circumstances of their production, transmission, reception, and cultural context. That is exactly what historians do when we analyze primary sources. Doing history is practicing media literacy. In this class we will link those skills to become more self-aware of both how we approach historical sources and how we approach, consume, and create present-day media messages in our everyday lives.

In this class, we will examine the dominant mode of communication in five eras of history from ancient to contemporary (oral, manuscript, print, electronic, and digital), and discuss how their emergence and development affected historical events including how it affected how states were run, how power was wielded, how people sought and understood knowledge, and how differences in communication cultures affected trade, religion, and war. Focusing on events outside the United States and those that place the U.S. in a comparative or global context, we will apply both communications theories and historical methods toward analyzing primary sources from oral tradition to social media.

II. Student Learning Objectives

- Build a foundation of factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends) about world history and media studies.
- Develop an awareness of the complexity of elements important to members of other cultures in relation to their history, values, politics, economy, or beliefs and practices.
- Gain a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity, in areas such as the arts, religion, social interaction, and persuasive and creative media.
- Analyze, interpret, and express ideas through different forms of communication (including oral, written, and visual).

III. Texts Required for Purchase

- McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994 [orig. 1964].
- Conlan, Thomas D. *In Little Need of Divine Intervention: Takezaki Suenaga's Scrolls of the Mongol Invasions of Japan*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002.
- Nunns, Alex, and Nadia Idle, eds. *Tweets from Tabrir*. OR Books, 2011.

(Other required material will be distributed in class or made available on Blackboard.)

IV. Course Requirements

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the material in several different ways that will be assessed throughout the semester. Grades will be assessed as follows:

1. Participation	30%
2. Quizzes	15%
3. Short Written Assignments	15%
4. Oral History Assignment	15%
5. Pecha Kucha Presentation	15%
6. Take-Home Final Exam	15%

1. Participation. Oral communication is an important skill, that we will be practicing during class meetings. Students are responsible for keeping current with all reading and viewing assignments. These will form much of the basis for participation in class discussion, so solid preparation for class is essential to your performance. Participation also may include active engagement with in-class workshop activities using materials handed out during class. During lectures, participation may consist of listening attentively, taking notes, and asking questions. Simply showing up to class without engaging with the material is not participation.

2. Quizzes. The instructor may distribute quizzes at any time during the semester. The formats will vary, and they may cover lecture materials as well as reading or viewing assignments.

3. Short Written Assignments. Written communication is another important skill, so we will do several writing assignments periodically through the semester, including worksheets or reflection papers. Some are designed to spur discussion, others are exercises in articulating what you have learned from a particular activity or experience as part of the class. This is a CONNECTED! class, which means that we will be engaging in the community, so the experiences we will write about include going to Fort Concho, conducting oral history, and attending campus events/performances.

4. Oral History Assignment. During the first half of the semester, students will participate in the department's "War Stories" Project by conducting an oral interview, creating a transcription of all or part of the interview. We will then write about the process of oral history in the context of using oral historical sources. The interview, the transcription, and the writing will each be evaluated.

5. Pecha Kucha Presentation. During the second half of the semester, students will prepare and give a Pecha Kucha presentation about a topic each selects, using images (for instance, paintings, photographs, or film stills). A pecha kucha presentation consists of twenty images that are on a screen for twenty seconds each, as the presenter discusses the images (6 min 40 sec total).

6. Take-Home Final Exam. The final exam will be written, open-note. The purpose is not to memorize facts about what happened in history, but to understand the material, think about historical sources and events in new ways, and communicate that in writing. Thus, the best preparation for the final is to take good notes during class and on the readings and videos throughout the semester.

V. Academic Integrity

Academic work is built on trust. Plagiarism (failure to properly cite a source or presenting another individual's work as your own) and cheating on any assignments (receiving unauthorized aid) will result in the student failing the course and may lead to other disciplinary actions. For clarification on academic misconduct, discuss the issue with the course instructor. Students are responsible for understanding the Academic Honor Code, which is contained in both print and web versions of the Student Handbook. You may view the university's honor code at the following website: http://www.angelo.edu/forms/pdf/Honor_Code.pdf

VI. Course Policies

1. **Attendance:** Regular attendance is necessary to achieve the student learning objectives for this course. Thus, although attendance is not graded, it is required. It is the policy of the History Department that missing more than 20 percent of the course (6 absences in a 75-minute Tues-Thurs course) will result in a reduction of one full letter grade when calculating the final course grade.

- Each subsequent absence *after* the missing 20% of the course will result in an additional reduction of 3% of the final grade.
- Aside from religious holy days, there are NO “excused” absences in this course.
- It is the student’s responsibility to stay current with coursework missed during an absence.
- Students who arrive five (5) minutes after class begins will be marked absent.

2. **Classroom Conduct:** Historical understanding in the profession as a whole, as well as in the classroom, comes through conversations between scholars. This requires respectful listening and engagement with each other, and active engagement of the material. Students who are uncomfortable or unclear on how to participate effectively in class should see the instructor.

3. **Communications Technology:** In this class, we will gain an awareness of how communications media function. There are some principles we know at the outset:

- Using electronic devices while an instructor or fellow student is speaking is disrespectful and distracting. Students who do so may be counted absent for the day, or asked to leave.
- Having good notes is more efficient for studying than is sifting through all the materials. Therefore, audio and video recording is NOT permitted in the classroom.
- The practice of taking notes on paper makes learning more efficient, and is a useful skill to master. Thus, students are expected to take notes on lectures and discussions by hand on paper unless one has accommodations from the Student Services Center to do otherwise.
- Hard copy reading is more efficient for learning than screen reading. Thus, students are expected to print out any readings that are on Blackboard (to facilitate highlighting and taking marginal notes) and bring them to class (to refer to in discussion).
- E-mail etiquette is expected in a professional setting. E-mails to the instructor should include an appropriate salutation and closing, descriptive subject line, and proper grammar and spelling.
- Professional conversations are more productive when all parties are calm. Thus, grades may only be discussed in person, at least 24 hours after they are handed back.

VII. University Policies

Disabilities Accommodation (OP 10.15): Persons with disabilities which may warrant academic accommodations must contact the Student Life Office (Room 112 University Center; (325) 942-2191 or (325) 942-2126 (TDD/FAX); or Student.Life@angelo.edu) in order to request such accommodations prior to any accommodations being implemented. You are encouraged to make this request early in the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Faculty members are not allowed to provide accommodation for a student’s disability needs without approval from the Office of Student Life.

Absences for Observance of Religious Holy Day (OP 10.19): Students who intend to be absent from class to observe a religious holy day (as defined in ASU OP 10.19) must inform the instructor in writing prior to the absence and make up any scheduled assignments within an appropriate timeframe determined by the professor. While the absence will not be penalized, failure to complete the make-up assignment satisfactorily and within the required timeframe will result in penalties consistent with other absences and assignments.

Disclaimer: By remaining in this class, students agree to abide by the guidelines outlined in this syllabus. The instructor reserves the right to amend the class schedule during the course of the semester to respond to changing needs and circumstances.

VIII. Class Schedule

Week 1 – Jan 19, 21

Introduction:

Due Thursday:

Shapin, “What Else Is New?” *New Yorker* (2007)

SWA #1: One-Day Media Diary

Week 2 – Jan 26, 28

Media and History

Due Tuesday

Tosh, “The Raw Materials,” *The Pursuit of History*, p. 71-75; “Using the Sources,” p. 98-112.

Rael, “How to Read a Primary Source”

McLuhan, Ch. 1 “Medium Is the Message,”

Due Thursday:

McLuhan, Ch. 14 “Money”

Waugh, “World History Guide: Material Culture – Objects”

Week 3 – Feb 2, 4

Oral:

Due Tuesday

McLuhan, Ch. 8 “The Spoken Word”

Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, selection #1

Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, selection

Due Thursday

In Search of the Trojan War – The Singer of Tales (55 min)

Week 4 – Feb 9, 11

Images and Symbols:

Due Tuesday

Schmandt-Besserat, “The Earliest Precursor to Writing”

Robinson, “The Origins of Writing”

Due Thursday

McLuhan, Ch. 12 “Clothing,” Ch. 13 “Housing,”

Victory Stela of Naram-Sim of Akkad (30 min)

Palette of Narmer: The Conquering King (30 min)

Week 5: Feb 16, 18

Literacy and Numeracy:

Due Tuesday

McLuhan, Ch. 9 “The Written Word,” Ch. 10 “Roads and Paper Routes,”

Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, selection #2

Logan, “Writing and the Alphabet Effect”

Due Thursday

McLuhan, Ch. 11 “Number”

Innis, “Media in Ancient Empires”

The Story of 1 – How a Single Digit Created Math and Changed the World (55 min)

Week 6: Feb 23, 25

The Word and the Way: Religion and Regionalism

Due Tuesday

Borubudur – Ancient Buddhist Stupa (30 mins)

Edicts of Ashoka

The Lost Libraries of Timbuktu (52 min)

Due Thursday

Samurai Japan (47 min)

Week 7: March 1, 3

Post-Classical Writing and Images: Mongol Invasions of Japan, Part I

Due Tuesday

Conlan, *In Little Need of Divine Intervention*, introduction and scrolls

Due Thursday

Conlan, *Little Need of Divine Intervention*, selected primary sources

Conlan podcast

Week 8: March 8, 10

Historians and Sources: Mongol Invasions of Japan, Part II

Due Tuesday

Conlan, *In Little Need of Divine Intervention*, selected primary sources, interpretive essay

Due Thursday

“War Stories” Oral History Assignment

Spring Break

Week 9: March 22, 24

Print

Week 10: March 29, 31
Photography, Telegraph & Telephone

Week 11: April 5, 7
Film and Broadcasting

Week 12: April 12, 14
Propaganda & Cultural Diplomacy: US/Japan WWII-Cold War, Part I

Week 13: April 19, 21
Popular Culture: US/Japan WWII-Cold War, II

Week 14: April 26, 28
Digital: Computers, Internet, Mobile Phones & Convergence Culture

Week 15: May 3, 5
Social Media & the Arab Spring

Final Exam: Due Tuesday, May 10, 10:00 a.m.