

Media Studies 160
Midterm

PART I

Chapter 2: The Internet and New Technologies

The Internet: The Internet has completely revamped American culture in nearly every possible way— from the way we interact, define social boundaries, gather information, communicate, view movies and videos to the simplicity of buying goods and services. We currently live in a culture that urges us to rely on a computer—to be plugged in—to acquire all the necessary tools for survival in an information-centered world. To understand the cultural significance of such an institution, we must comprehend the historical events and patterns in its evolution. From ARPAnet, the military-government project that connected military and academic researchers, to the development of e-mail over the same ARPAnet network, to the creation of Internet servers, to our modern understanding of the World Wide Web, the Internet has a distinct past that is congruent with its goals for today. It began as a tool for sophisticated governmental processing, and developed into an “information highway” for anyone that has something to say—true, false, right, wrong, liberal or conservative. As college students, we must sift through incredible amounts of information and make a decision as far as credibility of the author. In other cases, we are nearly forced to keep up with our peers (and our technologically-savvy culture) by submitting to social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace and participating in the user-generated content breakthrough of “blogging.” It is suggested that 28% of all Internet users are college students (Anderson, 1999), a remarkable percentage. Clearly the World Wide Web has an immense power over college students because it is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. Because of this accessibility and online-oriented lifestyle, Anderson says, “developmental issues among college students” are common. If we don’t understand the dynamic of the Internet and everything under its umbrella, we will fail to adapt to the increasingly blurring lines between the Internet and reality.

ARPAnet...

- (a) is just a fancy name given to a search engine.**
- (b) is the next generation of HTML (HyperText Markup Language).**
- (c) is the name of a central government internet server.**
- (d) is the name given to the “original” internet, devised by the Defense Department.**

Chapter 3: Sound Recording and Popular Music

Digital Transformation: Similar to the way the Internet has redefined the typical college student’s lifestyle, so has a new era of digital music. From the wax cylinder phonograph and the flat disk to the age of analog recording (audiotapes) to the digital lifestyle (compact disks (CDs) and digital video disks (DVDs)) and finally to MP3s, the way we consume music has changed dramatically over the course of two centuries. However, the shift from analog to digital recording is the most important (although it would not have been possible without the previous steps mentioned above) and instrumental shift in the way we manage and listen to both old and new hits. Developed in the 1970s, digital

recording involves music being played back via a laser beam rather than rather by needle or magnetic tape. The most instrumental part of this shift came in 1992 with the development of the MP3 file format, enabling music to be played via a computer and as early as the mid-1990s, an age of music swapping, piracy and in essence, counterfeiting, began. What this did was open up the Internet as a source to obtain MP3 formatted songs and even entire albums or discographies, causing an uproar amongst record labels and the music industry in general. However, the fact that this online activity was widespread left the door open for larger technological changes related to the way we consume and relate to our music. If we were able to download and play this music via our desktop computer, what good was this if we could only listen at our desk? The on-the-go lifestyle became visible to the middle-class consumer, as home-stereo systems, portable devices and cell phones were developed in order to adapt to the MP3 craze. But really, these technological advancements would not have been possible with the digital transformation and availability of the Internet (Gene Muster, music industry analyst notes, "Our best guess is that for every legal song download there are 75 illegal downloads."). The Supreme Court has intervened. Steve Jobs' Apple giant perhaps is experiencing some success in expanding available downloads in the iTunes store to movies, TV shows and audiobooks, but in reality, no one has found the capability of shutting down all forms of P2P (peer-to-peer) file sharing over the Internet, further suggesting that there is no conceivable way to censor the web. As far as us as college students, why pay one-dollar at the iTunes store for a song, when you can find entire albums for free via P2P hosted sites? The answer may be in an article in *Digital Studio Magazine*. It appears as though the RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America) and MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America) are targeting college campuses by sending out letters "demanding that the institutions assist in the crackdown on filesharing."

The principal difference between analog recording and digital recording lies in the fact that...

- (a) digital recorders translate sound waves into computer-like on/off impulses.
- (b) analog recorders use magnetization.
- (c) digital recorders use magnetization.
- (d) both (a) and (b)

Chapter 4: Popular Radio

Federal Communications Commission (FCC): The FCC replaced the Federal Radio Commission (FRC) as the radio regulatory agency in 1934. In that era, the FCC aimed at ridding the radio market from network monopolies (namely NBC and CBS), as the radio giants were forcing affiliates to air programs they did not want on the air. This led to the creation of ABC. Already, the FCC had incredible power and force in the radio industry and the content generated. The Fairness Doctrine of 1949 was the driving host behind the institution of talk radio. The idea behind the doctrine was that, in order to receive a FCC broadcasting license, a station must "devote reasonable attention to the coverage of controversial issues of public importance" and also had to provide "reasonable, although not necessarily equal" opportunities to express opposing sides. Although later repealed, the FCC had a view for what radio should be: a dialogue between those that care about similar issues. Perhaps the FCC's creation of the Fairness Doctrine was the precedent

that stations needed for stations to create radio telephone lines for listeners to call in requesting songs on FM stations or to voice an opinion on AM talk radio. Maybe the FCC's goal was broader, to create "democracy of the airwaves" by setting a standard that radio was not only going to appeal to the American people, but that our society could impact programming and that programming could impact us. Marshall McLuhan from his book *Understanding Media* says, "Radio affects most people intimately, person-to-person, offering a world of unspoken communication between writer-speaker and listener. That is the immediate aspect of radio. A private experience." While that "experience" is said to be private here, the FCC serves as an intermediary between the general public and radio networks if there are "general complaints, complaints of obscene, profane and indecent broadcasts or slamming complaints." To file these complaints is easy via the web at www.fcc.gov. Amy Goodman, co-host of *Democracy Now!* said that "we have a huge responsibility to keep the airwaves open for what is the majority—representing the voices that are locked out of the mainstream media." Along with the Internet and the digital music transformation, censoring the radio waves is a challenge to conform to a diverse population. However, unlike the Internet and music piracy, the FCC is able, to some degree, to draw societal boundaries related to the media we consume.

The Fairness Doctrine...

- (a) was a way to ensure that everyone could have a voice on radio.**
- (b) was not an FCC rule.**
- (c) was an FCC rule that was designed to minimize any possible restrictions on free speech caused by limited access to broadcasting outlets.**
- (d) both (a) and (b)**

Chapter 5: Television

Ratings and Shares: A television rating measures the percentage of households tuned to a program in the local or national market being sampled. The major organization tracking viewing of television programs across the country has been the A. C. Nielsen Market Research Company since the 1950s. Before 1970, however, numbers were only estimated according to the mass number of households tuned into a particular program. But by the 1970s and beyond, ratings became fine-tuned, and these details were published not only to the American public, but also to those that relied on that data—advertisers and the networks themselves. Advertisers enjoyed this information because they could target advertisements to a specific group of people. Networks, conversely, just relied on this information to ensure that there was substantial viewership, at least enough to continue airtime for particular shows. Shares, on the other hand, are statistical measurements of the percentage of homes tuned into a particular show compared with those using their televisions at the time of a sample. This differentiation allows the minimization of potential error when taking a rating, because a rating does not allow for those houses that rarely (or never) watch television. Ratings and shares allow us, as a media-consuming culture, to see what is important to us as a society. In some ways, watching a simple sitcom is democratic. Television audiences have a voice in producers' decisions because producers air shows that have a strong rating and share. In addition, we can see how prime time distribution is divided among the major networks (ABC,

CBS, NBC and FOX). Currently, ABC and CBS each have five programs in the top 10 (www.nielsenmedia.com), while FOX has one and NBC doesn't appear. In addition, the ratings show us what is important to us, as a society. Reality television appears to be the thing to watch right now (Dancing With The Stars, Desperate Housewives) followed by crime dramas (CSI, NCIS, CSI: Miami, Criminal Minds). Ratings also suggest a historical perspective; based on the ratings, it seems like the days of the situation, half-hour comedy are coming to an end. Friends was the last such show to be an annual top-rated such comedy (2002) and prior to that Seinfeld (1998) and Home Improvement (1994) (www.nielsenmedia.com). Today, reality shows such as American Idol (2005-2007) and crime dramas such as CSI (2003-2004) have peaked interest. The years 2005 and 2006 marked the first time a half-hour comedy series did not rate among the season's top ten programs. As far as reality television, this relatively new concept has become a big hit for much of the same reason that game shows have historically been popular. As a society, we love bitter competition and we keep watching because we hope our favorites will win. Ratings are just a number, but we can draw cultural conclusions from them.

A key difference between a "rating" and a "share" in regards to a particular television program is...

- (a) a rating is a statistical estimate expressed as a percentage of households tuned to a program in the local or national market being sampled, while a share is a statistical estimate of the percentage of homes tuned to a program compared with those actually using their sets at the time of a sample.**
- (b) a rating is simply a critic's rating on a 1-10 scale, while a share is a statistical estimate expressed as a percentage of households tuned to a program in the local or national market being sampled.**
- (c) a rating is a statistical estimate of the percentage of homes tuned to a program compared with those actually using their sets at the time of the sample, while a share is a statistical estimate expressed as a percentage of households tuned to a program in the local or national market being sampled.**
- (d) they are fundamentally the same thing.**

Chapter 6: Cable

A la carte programming: Its relevance is simple; cable companies suggest that we are on our way to an a la carte programming system, a first in the cable era. At its most basic level, this new programming option would allow cable television subscribers to choose individual channels they'd like to watch, rather than subscribe to a package in which a majority of channels go unwatched. The argument lies in the fact that cable companies are paid a flat rate for those stations that they include in their packages. Even the stations that receive poor ratings are compensated just by nature of existence. Pay-per-view (PPV) options would continue to be available, in addition to all premium channels (e.g., Discovery Channel, ESPN, Comedy Central, etc.) that you see on expanded basic services. Most want this programming (54% compared to 43%), contrary to what the cable industry had been say for decades: that most customers would rather play a flat fee for their cable. What this would do, it seems, is create a situation in which channels would be democratized. If you want a channel, you pay for the channel and you receive it. If you don't want the channel, you don't pay for the channel and you don't receive it.

With this system, channels and networks (channel refers to the individual channel—e.g., ESPN2; network is the ownership body of these channels—e.g. Disney owns ESPN, ESPN2, ESPN News and ESPN Classic.) are made available based on their ability to succeed and finance themselves—and this is based on the people’s reception to the programs in which the networks and channels air. Currently, with bundled packages, it is very difficult to make an argument for the democracy of cable or television in general. If you want ESPN, you also receive a host of other channels, some of which you find offensive. According to an article on CNET news in 2005, the FCC made it clear that a la carte programming was on its way due to rising cable prices and the customer demand for not only lower prices, but also some control over what they watch. But, three years later, advancements in this regard are few and far between. This illustrates that the FCC, the governing body of all things media, even has had trouble negotiating with the network giants. Contrary to other basic services offered in our society, the television networks have a giant monopoly. It seems as though the customer’s preferences often are left behind, and because of the power of the networks and cable companies (there are only a couple), the FCC and those companies wishing to develop a la carte programming find it difficult to negotiate with the cable giants.

What was the single most influential aspect of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 in relation to cable television?

- (a) Congress now allowed for a la carte programming, a huge benefit to consumers.**
- (b) Congress knocked down regulatory barriers to allow regional phone companies, long-distance carriers, and cable companies to enter one another’s markets.**
- (c) Congress now encouraged competition by virtue of the new rules.**
- (d) Both (b) and (c).**

Chapter 7: Movies

Hollywood: Hollywood, California is more than a location on a map. It is a symbol for what we consider entertainment. Our current understanding of what a movie is and everything that comes with a motion picture—the “narrative, genre and the author (or director)” —is dictated by Hollywood. By looking at Hollywood through a cultural lens, several elements of American cultural become visible. Firstly, we love stories. “We tell ourselves stories in order to live,” Joan Didion in *The White Album* in 1979. We enjoy being emotionally involved in the lives of characters onscreen. Secondly, as a culture, Americans are not hard to please as far as entertainment. Some Hollywood productions aim to simply shock, suggesting that as a society, we enjoy this stimulation but also points to some of our values. Film journalist Anthony Kaufmann said, “I think that American movies, to be honest, are just simple. You blow things up, you shoot people, you have sex and you have a movie. And I think it appeals to just the more base emotions of people anywhere.” Today, Hollywood had a large impact in the development of megaplexes, facilities with fourteen or more screens. It’s important to point out that these types of decisions (e.g., megaplexes) are not controlled by Hollywood as a location, but the few powerful companies that dominate the commercial film industry, which further suggested the movie as a powerful social institution. But in all actuality, what does Hollywood really mean? Or is it distorted? Hollywood is relevant because as consumers of not only movies, but now news that is considered entertainment

as well as information about these celebrities as if we are “involved” in their lives, we must be careful. Hollywood can provide a distorted perception of reality, especially when big business dominates every aspect of it. Pat Sajak, longtime host of Wheel of Fortune, delivered a speech at Hillsdale’s All-College Spring Convocation, held at the College Baptist Church about the disconnect between Hollywood and America. “How can you write about people fairly if they seem so out of touch with what you are used to in your everyday life? That might help explain why religion is rarely depicted as a natural part of life in the average sitcom or drama series, despite the fact that tens of millions of Americans say that it is important to them” (Sajak, 2002). Sajak would agree that, along with the Internet, music, radio, television and cable, as an entertainment-driven culture, we must consume movies with a watchful eye.

Megaplexes...

- (a) are large facilities with fourteen or more screens developed as early as 1950.**
- (b) are large facilities with fourteen or more screens developed less than 10 years ago.**
- (c) have impacted the dramatic downsizing of the five-thousand-seat movie palaces that reigned in the 40s.**
- (d) both (a) and (c)**

Lesson Plan
The Impact of the Internet

Objective: To explore and understand how the Internet influences our daily lives (as college students), to interpret how our current understanding is shaped by the development of the Internet as a social institution, and to determine the possibilities and hazards for the Internet moving forward.

Essential Questions:

- Over the course of a normal day as a college student, what would our lives be like without the technology of the Internet? How has Internet “lingo” been incorporated into our daily lives?
- If the Internet is regarded as something so “good” on one hand and so “bad” on another, will there ever be any middle ground? For instance, will the Internet ever be censored like nearly every other communicatory medium?
- Moving forward (and looking back), what are the possibilities for the Internet? What are the potential hazards?

Plan

1. **A Typical Day – 10 minutes**

- Objective: to demonstrate the immense influence the Internet has on college students’ daily lives.
- Ask students to divide a sheet of paper into two columns. Label the first column “Internet Uses” and label the second column “Internet Lingo.”
- Students will, under the first column, recall the day before and all the times they went on the Internet, and the specific sites they visited.
- Under the second column, note the technological lingo not necessarily used on the previous day, but in general (for example, “google it” or “browser”) over the course of daily life.
- Somewhere on the sheet, estimate how many hours per day spent online. The brainstorming session should be completed after *five or six* minutes.
- Take volunteers from the class to state specific sites visited from the day before. Following the taking of a few volunteers, ask for a few more to reveal their hours/day estimate to get an estimated time frame.
- Next, get volunteers to reveal some Internet lingo to the class, the objective being to imply that this lingo has been engrained in our vocabulary.
- Use document scanner to point web browser to http://www.pewinternet.org/trends/User_Demo_6.15.07.htm. Pay particular attention to the age group 18-29 and the “educational attainment” group. The discussion portion of this exercise should be completed after *four or five* minutes.

2. **“Good” vs. “Bad” Internet (YouTube videos) and discussion – 15 minutes**

- Objective: to differentiate between good and bad uses of the Internet, but more importantly, to suggest that the good and the bad coexist and that there really isn't middle ground.
- First, play "good" internet video (1 minute). Use document scanner to point web browser to <http://youtube.com/watch?v=9JvVUUmQyBU>.
- Second, play "bad" internet video (1 minute). Use document scanner to point web browser to <http://youtube.com/watch?v=pNXWbSNDT5Q>.
- Divide blackboard in half, labeling one half "good use" and the other "bad use." Begin the class brainstorming session by using and writing specific examples from the clips (e.g., good because it preserves history; bad because it is free of supervision or censorship). Take volunteers until you have at least 10 examples on each side or until *eight* minutes is up.
- At this point, you should have some clearly defined "good" aspects of the Internet as we know it and some "bad" aspects. Ask the class if they can see any "middle ground"—in other words, are there parts of Internet use that could be good and bad simultaneously (e.g., online shopping yields convenience, but the possibility of credit card fraud or identity theft is always there)? Or is the debate cut and dry?
- Culminating question: what do we think of the censorship issue? Do we like that the internet is unique in regards to other means of communication (television, radio, etc.) that are monitored by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)? Even if we don't like it, is it possible to censor or supervise material? Did our Founding Fathers have the ideals of the Internet in mind when they suggested that all citizens are democratically entitled to freedom of press and speech? The above two bullets should be completed in *five* minutes.

3. Discussion with background – 10 minutes

- Objective: to provide a historical perspective of the evolution of the Internet to provide a framework for where we might be going as far as developments in the online industry.
- Use textbook (p. 44) to display timeline on document camera.
- Briefly describe the significance of the following. For less obscure terms, ask class to provide information. How important would you consider these terms in the evolution of the Internet?
 - o (late 1960s) ARPAnet: the U.S. Department of Defense enabled military and academic researchers to communicate on a distributed network system.
 - o (1971) Email: Developed to send messages over ARPAnet; specifically, electronic messages are sent from computer to computer on a network.
 - o (1985) Fiber-Optic Cable: Bundles of fiber are developed, which in turn were able to transmit digital messages via pulses of light, allowing broadcast channels, telephone signals and other data to go on the Internet.
 - o (1985) AOL: The online industry's most successful ISP (internet service provider) over the next decade, AOL's prominence paved the way for other ISP's to gain footing in the industry.

- (1993) Web Browsers: The Internet becomes navigable with a user-friendly graphic layout.
- (1995) Amazon.com: The online shopping source is launched, redefining American consumer culture.
- (1999) Blogging: Blogs are user-generated content on the Internet, typically in journal-like form.
- (2001) Instant Messaging: Redefining the way we interact.
- (2003) Social Networking: MySpace launched in 2003, Facebook in 2004.

4. **Web Design** – *10 minutes*

- Objective: to use the mini lecture/discussion in (3) to effectively interpret the patterns and evolution of the internet to suggest a website or feature of the Internet that would benefit a college student.
- Assignment: To create a website, or feature of the Internet, that effectively incorporates multiple “good” aspects of the Internet (as discussed in (2) above), but also minimizes potential “bad” aspects. The website should be innovative and useful to a technologically savvy college student. This should be completed, hand-written, in *seven to eight* minutes.
- Following this, take volunteers to share their innovations for the remainder of the class session. Ask them to share the idea behind the website, the “good” aspects and how a college student would benefit.

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