

**COMM 397SC:
Sidewalks and Screens
Fall 2019**

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Department of Communication*

Meetings: Tues/Thurs 1:00-2:15 Skinner Room 201

Office Hours: Tues: 10:00-noon or by appointment

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* I will respond to emails within 48 hours of receiving them. I will try to respond faster during the lead-up to assignment deadlines and presentations. Feel free to send a follow-up email if you do not hear back after 48 hours.

Course Description

This course introduces you to the ways media technologies shape, and are shaped by, the built environment. Central themes will include the historical entanglement of various technologies, media industries, communicative practices and the modern city. Our approach will cover a wide historical and geographical span, thereby acquainting you with a variety of meanings and practices associated with urban life and the media. We will collectively investigate how power dynamics (including but not limited to economics, politics, labor, class, gender, race, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation) frame the mediated urban environment.

Course Objectives

This course offers a conceptual understanding of the relationship among media technologies, communicative practices, and the urban environment. You are expected to both read in-depth and across different time periods of urbanization, and come to class prepared to discuss the connections and divergences between the readings, themes, and class discussions.

By the end of the class you should be able to:

- Demonstrate a historically informed understanding of the co-construction of media and urban life.
- Examine how various media technologies, industries, and representations shape perceptions of urban problems and solidarities.

- Define the contribution of media technologies as material objects and infrastructures to the problems and solutions of urban inequalities.
- Assess what is theoretically at stake in making the city central to studying communication.

Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this course. All course material will be available via Moodle in PDF format.

Evaluation

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed two excused absences for the semester (“excused” means you should contact me before class begins in order for them to count). More than that (or any unexcused absences) will affect your grade. Three or more excused or unexcused absences means you will fail the course. Make sure you email me before you miss any class.

Participation

Participation - attending classes, participating in discussions, having assigned readings done *ahead* of class, and assignments done on time – is crucial in such a discussion-based class and with a dense reading load. You should feel that the class is a safe environment to voice opinions, try out new ideas, and comment on readings and events. I realize that not everyone will be able to participate in each class, but please make an effort to participate as often as you can.

Daily Questions

Come to each class with one question written on a piece of paper. It should be an honest question sparked by the readings – something you really want to figure out the answer to. If there are any examples that inspire your question, please note those down too. We will use these questions to help direct our discussions and I will collect them at the beginning of class. I will also use these to keep track of attendance for the course.

Assignments

Throughout the semester you will undertake one deep research project that is broken into several steps. In a nutshell, you will conduct ethnographic research on an urban site and technology of your choice over the course of the semester. You will develop 1) a research proposal, 2) conduct weekly observations (20 hours total), and 3) write two analytical papers. My hope is that by spending a whole semester on a single topic, you will not only become an expert on a particular area of urban communication research, but also craft a paper that demonstrates sustained reflection on a topic you care about. We will talk about all the elements of this project frequently in class.

Due Dates

- Research proposal (300-500 words): Sept 17
- Reflection essay (1500 words) + fieldnotes: Oct 17
- Final research paper (no more than 4000 words): Dec 17

Evaluation Rubric

- Attendance and class participation: 10%
- Response questions: 15%
- Research proposal: 15%
- Reflection essay + fieldnotes: 20%
- Final paper: 40%

Grading Scale

Percentage Total	Grade
93-100%	A
90-92%	A-
87-89%	B+
83-86%	B
80-82%	B-
77-79%	C+
73-76%	C
70-72%	C-
67-69%	D+
63-66%	D
60-62%	D-
59% or below	F
Incomplete	INC

I am always happy to discuss grades. I have two requests though. First, wait 48 hours between getting your grade and contacting me. This will give you time to go over the assignment and review the comments you have received. Second, bring specific questions when you come to chat. Where exactly do your expectations diverge from the grade? What comments or questions are you having trouble wrapping your head around? This will help us start a productive discussion.

Submitting Assignments

Unless otherwise instructed, please submit all assignments via email. Please include your name and the assignment title in the file name.

Late Policy

Unless prior permission has been granted, no late work is accepted. Please prepare in advance so that you will not encounter technical difficulties that may prevent submission of a given assignment. I may grant extensions on assignments if you provide three days' notice and can send me evidence that you are working on an idea that requires more time.

Do not ask for an extension if you have not started writing yet. Late assignments will be docked a half grade (+/-) per day (i.e. after 10 days, you cannot earn a grade higher than F).

How to Read?

While we will not read a whole book each week, I'd highly encourage you to take a look at this guide to develop your strategies for completing readings in the most efficient and effective way possible. Paul Edwards. "How to Read a Book"

<http://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf>

Electronic Devices

The use of electronic devices (phones, tablets, laptops, cameras, etc.) is permitted when the device is being used in relation to the course's work. All other uses are prohibited in the classroom and devices should be turned off before class starts. I know a lot of you will be reading and taking notes on your computers or phones, so if you need that to refer to during discussions, that is of course more than fine. If your devices appear to be distracting you or others, I reserve the right to revoke these privileges immediately and permanently.

Accommodation & Inclusive Learning

Your success in this class is important to me. We all learn differently and bring different strengths and needs to the class. If there are aspects of the course that prevent you from learning or make you feel excluded, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. There are also a range of resources on campus, including:

- Writing Center - <http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter>
- Learning Resource Center - <http://www.umass.edu/lrc>
- Center for Counseling and Psychological Health (CCPH) - <http://www.umass.edu/counseling>
- English as a Second Language (ESL) Program - <http://www.umass.edu/esl>

If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy

and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent (http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/).

Class Schedule:

1. Orientations

Tuesday, September 3: Introductions, syllabus review, what does everyone expect?

Thursday, September 5: What do we talk about when we talk about media technologies and urban life?

James Carey. 1988. "A Cultural Approach to Communication," In Carey, James W. 1988. *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Joel Garreau. 2000. "Home is Where the Phone is." *The Washington Post*. October 17.

Alexis C. Madrigal. 2012. "How Google Builds Its Maps – and What It Means for the Future of Everything." *The Atlantic*. September 6.

2. Communication and the City

Tuesday, September 10

Wolfgang Schivelbusch. 2014. "Panoramic Travel." In: *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 63-76.

Doreen Massey. 1992. *Space, Place, and Gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 185-190.

Thursday, September 12

Georg Simmel. 1971. "The Metropolis and Mental Life." Pp. 324–39 in *On Individuality and Social forms: Selected Writings*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Myria Georgiou. 2013. "Synergies of Power." In: Myria Georgiou. *Media and the City*. London: Polity Press, pp. 35-43.

***** RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE SEPTEMBER 17 (midnight) *****

3. Writing/Reading and the City

Tuesday, September 17

Lewis Mumford. 1997. "The Paper Dream City." In: Lewis Mumford. 1997. *The Culture of Cities*. London: Routledge, pp. 178-180.

Matthew Hull. 2012. "Writing of the Bureaucracy." In: Matthew Hull. 2012. *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 6-17.

Aldon Morris. 2018. "American Negro at Paris, 1900." In: *W.E.B. Du Bois's Data Portraits: Visualizing Black America: The Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, edited by W. E. B. Du Bois, Whitney Battle-Baptiste, and Britt Rusert, pp. 23-37.

Thursday, September 19

David M. Henkin. 1998. "Print in Public, Public in Print: The Rise of the Daily Paper." In: *City Reading: Written Words and Public Spaces in Antebellum New York*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 101-135.

Aurora Wallace. 2006. "A Height Deemed Appalling: Nineteenth-Century New York Newspaper Buildings." *Journalism History*. 31(4): 178-189.

4. Television and (Sub)Urbanism

Tuesday, September 24

Lynn Spiegel. 1992. "Home Theater." In: Lynn Spiegel. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Emily Walton. 2018. "Asian Americans in Small Town America." *Contexts*, 17(4), pp. 18-23.

Thursday, September 26

Mitchell Duneier. 1999. *Sidewalk*, pp. 334-347.

5. Publicizing Screens

Tuesday, October 1

Documentary Screening: "This Space Available" by Gwenaëlle Gobé.

Thursday, October 3

Anna McCarthy. 2001. "Shaping Public and Private Space with TV Screens." In: Anna McCarthy. 2001. *Ambient Television: Visual Culture and Public Space*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 117-153

6. Mediated Mobility

Tuesday, October 8

Tali Hatuka and Eran Toch. 2013. "The Emergence of Portable Private-Personal Territory: Smartphones, Social Conduct, and Public Spaces." *Urban Studies*, pp. 1-17

Michael Bull. 2004. "Automobility and the Power of Sound." *Theory, Culture and Society*. (21) 4: 243-259.

Thursday, October 10

Jeffrey Lane. 2018. *The Digital Street*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.[Selections]

Forrest Stuart. 2019. "Code of the Tweet: Urban Gang Violence in the Social Media Age." *Social Problems*. Pp 1-17.

***** REFLECTION ESSAY DUE OCTOBER 17 (midnight)*****

7. Ethnography Workshop

Thursday, October 17

Bring your fieldnotes to class and we will work in groups to analyze your preliminary findings so far.

8. Walking in the City

Tuesday, October 22

Michel de Certeau. 1988. "Walking in the City." In: *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 91-100.

Walter Benjamin. 1999. "The Flâneur." In: *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, edited by Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, pp. 35-66.

Thursday, October 24

David Serlin. 2006. "Disabling the *Flâneur*." *Journal of Visual Culture*, pp. 193-208.

Simone Browne. "Torches, Torture, and Totau: Lantern Laws in New York City." In: *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 76-83.

9. Splintering the City

Tuesday, October 29

Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin. 2001. "Introduction." In: *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities, and the Urban Condition*. London: Routledge, pp. 7-30.

Kevin M. Kruse. 2019. "What Does a Traffic Jam in Atlanta Have to Do with Segregation? Quite a Lot." *The New York Times*. Aug 14, pp. 1-4.

Thursday, October 31

Langdon Winner. 1980. "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" *Daedalus*. 109(1): 121-136.

Julius W. Wilson. 2011. "Being Poor, Black and American: The Impact of Political, Economic and Cultural Forces." *American Educator*, pp. 10-23.

Jessica Trounstein. 2016. "How racial segregation and political mismanagement led to Flint's shocking water crisis." *The Washington Post*.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/02/08/heres-the-political-history-that-led-to-flints-shocking-water-crisis/>

10. Changing the City

Tuesday, November 5

Vicky Mayer. 2017. *Almost Hollywood, Nearly New Orleans: The Lure of the Local Film Economy*, pp. 1-15.

Margaret O'Mara. 2017. "Silicon Dreams." In: *Making Cities Global The Transnational Turn in Urban History*. Edited by A. K. Sandoval-Strausz and Nancy H. Kwak, pp. 19-46.

Thursday, November 7

Liz Koslov. 2014. "Fighting for Retreat after Sandy: The Ocean Breeze Buyout Tent on Staten Island." *Metropolitiques*.
<https://www.metropolitiques.eu/Fighting-for-Retreat-after-Sandy.html>

Deen Freelon, Charlton D. McIlwain, and Meredith Clark. 2016. "Beyond the Hashtags: #Ferguson, #Blacklivesmatter, and the Online Struggle for Offline Justice." Center for Media & Social Impact, American University, pp. 75-85.

11. Narrating the City

Tuesday, November 12

Eric Klinenberg. 2002. "The Spectacular City: News Organizations and the Representation of Catastrophe." In: *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*. pp. 185-224.

Thursday, November 14

Lois Parshley. 2017. "Here Be Dragons: Finding Blank Spaces in a Well-Mapped World." *Virginia Quarterly Review*, pp. 112-125.

Shannon Mattern. 2017. "Mapping's Intelligent Agents." *Places Journal*.
<https://placesjournal.org/article/mappings-intelligent-agents/>

12. Networking the City

Tuesday, November 19

Shannon Mattern. 2013. Infrastructural Tourism. *Places Journal*.
<https://placesjournal.org/article/infrastructural-tourism/>

Nicole Starosielski. 2012. "Warning: Do Not Dig": Negotiating the Visibility of Critical Infrastructures." *Journal of Visual Culture*. 11(1): 38-57.

Thursday, November 22

Helga Tawil-Souri. 2015. "Cellular Borders: Dis/Connecting Phone Calls in Israel/Palestine." In: *Signal Traffic: Critical Studies of Media Infrastructures*, pp. 157-180.

13. Smart Cities

Tuesday, December 3

Orit Halpern, Jesse LeCavalier, Nerea Calvillo, and Wolfgang Pietsch. 2013. "Test-Bed Urbanism." *Public Culture*. 25(2): 272-306.

Andrew J. Hawkins. 2019. "Alphabet's Sidewalk Labs unveils its high-tech 'city-within-a-city' plan for Toronto." *The Verge*.
<https://www.theverge.com/2019/6/24/18715486/alphabet-sidewalk-labs-toronto-high-tech-city-within-a-city-plan>

Thursday, December 5

Bring a draft of your final paper to class and we will work in groups to offer each other feedback.

14. Review and Closing Thoughts

Tuesday, December 10

***** FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE DECEMBER 17 (midnight)*****