

Comm225: U.S. Broadcast History and Theory



Instructor: Bill Kirkpatrick
Office: 303 Higley, 587-8512
Office Hours: Tuesday, 11:30-12:30; Wednesday, 1:00-2:00; or by appointment
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Course Summary

Radio and television are major aspects of contemporary culture, politics, and everyday life, yet we rarely pause to think about them critically. This course provides you with that opportunity. Organized chronologically, the course offers a broad overview of significant broadcast programs, the institutions that created them, and the social conditions within which they were produced and viewed.

In addition to this history, there is a theoretical dimension to the course, an approach that helps us understand the complicated economic and cultural role of radio and television within U.S. society. This approach integrates the analysis of media texts, their social contexts, their industrial contexts, and audience readings of these texts. Lectures, discussions, screenings, and readings will explain this approach and illustrate its application to broadcast history. You will also prepare and conduct an oral history drawing on personal interviews and primary research. Don't worry: it'll be fun.

Finally, there is a production component. Working in groups, you will produce an original ten-minute radio drama.

Required Text

Michele Hilmes, *Only Connect: A Cultural History of Broadcasting in the United States* (2d. edition)--available at the book store.

Assignments

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Late assignments will be penalized ½ grade per day (e.g. B+ to B).

Midterm 1:	Feb. 23	15%
Midterm 2:	Apr. 6	15%
Radio Drama:	Mar. 11	15%
Primary Sources Exercise:	Feb. 16	05%
Oral History Project:	May. 4	25%
Final Exam	May 8, 2:00-4:00	15%
Participation:		10%

Policies and Expectations

Attendance: Your attendance and participation are integral to the success of the course as well as your own personal achievement. I will be taking attendance daily, and missing class or failing to participate constructively will definitely impact your class participation grade.

Lateness: Be in your seat and ready to begin class at the scheduled start time. I am much more strict about lateness than absenteeism: I would rather you not come to class at all than interrupt your classmates by showing up late. ***Under no circumstances should you interrupt a screening: if you are late and a screening has begun, turn around and go away.***

Preparation: Always bring that day's readings to class with you. The syllabus will always state clearly what you should read prior to each class, which assignments you should hand in, and what else you must do or bring for a given day. Late assignments will be penalized by a half-grade for each 24 hours of lateness (e.g. from B+ to B). If you know that you will have difficulty completing an assignment on time, let me know before the deadline and I will try to work with you if possible.

Written Work: All written work must be typed (double-spaced), spellchecked, and proofread. Failure to run your work through a spellchecker (one more time before printing is a good idea) will automatically result in a 5% deduction from your grade for that assignment. Multiple-page documents ***must be stapled***—I will not accept unstapled work (please note that paper clips and dog-ears are *not* staples). I also will not accept assignments by email under any circumstances—you must hand in a hard copy of the assignment on the due date in order to avoid a late penalty.

Grades: All assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade. The calculation of your grade will be based on a 1,000-point scale, and the weight of each assignment is listed above. If you are concerned about your grade, come talk to me as early as possible.

In-Class Behavior: You may not eat in class unless you bring enough for everyone (beverages are okay). You may not use computers in class without prior approval. Your cell phone or PDA must be turned off and put away during class. Points will be deducted from your participation grade if your phone rings, or if I notice you using your cell phone or PDA during class. If you absolutely need to have your phone on during class, talk to me at the beginning of the semester.

Email Policy: I will regularly use email to send out announcements, changes in the syllabus, reminders about tests or due dates, etc. It is your responsibility to check your email regularly to keep up-to-date with these announcements. I will use the email address you have listed with the university; therefore, please make sure that this is indeed the correct address. I promise to answer all email from students within 24 hours (36 hours on weekends) and will hold you responsible for any announcements made via email within 24 hours of the announced change (36 hours on weekends). I will not accept assignments via email under any circumstances.

Accessibility and Special Accommodations: It is important that the course be accessible to all students. If you need any alternative accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or evaluation procedures in order for you to be able to participate fully in the course, or if there are any external issues that may affect your work in this course, please contact me privately as soon as possible to discuss your specific needs. I rely on the Academic Support & Enrichment Center in 102 Doane to verify the need for reasonable accommodations based on documentation on file in that office.

Academic Honesty: You may not turn in substantially similar work to two classes without the express consent of *both* instructors. All sources in your written work must be properly cited; if you have any doubts about correct citation while writing your paper, contact the Writing Center or any of the many paper and online guides to academic citation. Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated, and students found to have committed plagiarism, ***regardless of whether or not the plagiarism was committed intentionally and knowingly***, will face severe grade penalties and will also be reported to the university to face further academic discipline. You are encouraged to use the resources available in the library system and the Writing Center to guide your research.

Daily Schedule

Readings should be completed by that day's class, and you should come prepared to discuss them. Those that are not from the textbook are marked as either on electronic reserve (e-res) or on Blackboard (BB).

Every single thing on this syllabus is subject to change, so check your email or Blackboard for announcements and keep on your toes.

Jan. 19	Introduction	<u>Screening:</u> <i>Empire of the Air pt. I</i>
Jan. 21	Theory/History/Theory	Hilmes, Chapter 1; Brian Winston, "How Are Media Born?" (BB) <u>Screening:</u> <i>Empire of the Air pt. II</i>
Jan. 26	NO CLASS: MLK OBSERVED	
Jan. 28	History vs. Historiography (Class cancelled for snow)	Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "The Power in the Story" (e-res)
Feb. 2	Before Broadcasting	Hilmes, Chapter 2 <u>Screening:</u> excerpts from <i>The Cheat, The Birth of a Nation</i>
Feb. 4	Early Broadcasting	Hilmes, Chapter 3 <u>Screening:</u> Early radio programs
Feb. 9	Network Radio Emerges	Hilmes, Chapter 4 <u>Screening:</u> Fireside chats; <i>On the Media</i> segment on Dr. Brinkley; <i>Jack Benny, Burns & Allen, Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy</i>
Feb. 11	Radio Days	Hilmes, Chapter 5 <u>Screening:</u> <i>Guiding Light, Ma Perkins, War of the Worlds</i>
Feb. 16	Understanding Sound	Butler, "Style and Sound" (BB) <u>Screening:</u> <i>Fibber McGee and Molly, The Lone Ranger</i>
Feb. 18	Broadcasting and World War II	Hilmes, Chapter 6 <u>Screening:</u> Fr. Coughlin, Edward R. Murrow, <i>Mary Marlin</i>
Feb. 23	Introduction to Garage Band	
Feb. 25	Midterm I	
Mar. 2	The Beginnings of Television	Hilmes, Chapter 7 <u>Screening:</u> <i>See It Now, Marty, I Led 3 Lives</i> , excerpts from early TV variety
Mar. 4	Radio's New Role	Douglas, <i>Listening In</i> , pp. 219-255 (e-res) <u>Screening:</u> <i>Rock 'n' Roll Invaders</i> , Elvis clips <u>Hand in:</u> Primary sources exercise
Mar. 9	The Classic Network System	Hilmes, Chapter 8, 176-207 <u>Screening:</u> <i>Nat King Cole</i> , film vs. television clips, <i>Dragnet</i>
Mar. 11	From the '50s to the '60s	No reading: Radio drama due <u>Screening:</u> <i>Gunsmoke, The Beverly Hillbillies, Ed Sullivan, 77 Sunset Strip</i>

SPRING BREAK, MAR. 14-MAR. 22

Mar. 23	New TV for New Audiences	Hilmes, Chapter 9 <u>Screening:</u> <i>Smother's Brothers, Mary Tyler Moore, I Spy</i> , more
Mar. 25	Post-Vietnam Shifts	Hilmes, Chapter 10 <u>Screening:</u> <i>M*A*S*H, Happy Days, Roots</i>
Mar. 30	Historiography	Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different" Thompson, "The Voice of the Past" (e-res) <u>Due:</u> Mini-oral history: your grandparents' memories of TV (not to hand in)
Apr. 1	The Neo-Network Period	Hilmes, Chapter 11, 279-317 <u>Screening:</u> <i>The Cosby Show, Married ... With Children, In Living Color</i>
Apr. 6	Midterm II	
Apr. 8	Postmodernism, Synergy	Levine, "Fractured Fairy Tales and Fragmented Markets" (e-res) <u>Screening:</u> <i>The Simpsons, Weddings of a Lifetime, Pop Star</i>
Apr. 13	NO CLASS—Oral History Interviews	
Apr. 15	NO CLASS—Oral History Interviews	
Apr. 20	Alternatives to the Mainstream	Hoynes, "Funding and the Politics of Programming" (e-res) <u>Screening:</u> <i>This American Life, Prairie Home Companion, Manor House</i>
Apr. 22	The Global Dimension	Hilmes, Chapter 11, 318-324
Apr. 27	Convergence and Policy	Hilmes, Chapter 12
Apr. 29	Convergence and Programming	Hilmes, Chapter 13 <u>Screening:</u> <i>Survivor, The Sopranos</i>
May 4	TV After TV	<u>Hand In:</u> Oral History Project
Final Exam		May 8, 2:00-4:00