

Theory Workshop #1

Technology

Comm 181F

San Jose State U

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This Workshop

These workshops are self-paced overviews and information references that provide critical knowledge to help you succeed in this course.

This workshop covers tips theories of technology that provide background for your course research project.

This workshop is based on material from:

Burett, R. and Marshal, P.D. (2003). *Web Theory: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge

Web, Internet, Webernet, Interweb...

The internet is the technical infrastructure such as servers, routers, computers, and fiberoptic cable (sorry, no tubes) where the computer code that creates the “web” exists.

The world wide web (WWW) is the graphical interface we use to be able to view and interact with websites and databases that for us make up the internet/web experience.

Technology

The introduction of the web, as with other technologies from the telegraph to television, shows us that there is an **ideology of technology**.

An ideology of technology creates a desire for the **cultural transformation promised by technology**. Moreover, that:



Our current technology seems normal, natural, and appropriate and eventually mundane and invisible.

Technology is needed to make society better.

Public debate from shifts from “whether or not” to “how” to integrate it into our daily lives.

We accept the speed of technological obsolescence and the need to acquire the latest, fastest, coolest, technology.

Technological Determinism describes the power of the ideology of technology over our culture.

The inevitability of technological change.

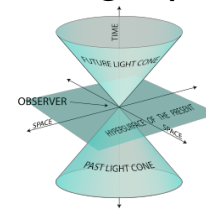
Creates a false dystopic/utopic dichotomy (apocalypse/nirvana).

Creates a generalized approach to the relationship between technology and society.

The problem with the technological determinism is that it is reductionist and can over simplify the complex relationships between technology, power, and culture.

Bias of Communication

Technology allowed the separation of transportation and communication - you no longer had to physically move through space to deliver information.



Innis argued that a medium of communication tended to be concerned with preservation of information **(time based)** or the capacity for wide distribution **(space based)**.

Bias of Communication

Time based/Oral cultures have a bias towards linking the present with the past (traditional, ritualistic) and focus on mediums such as oral storytelling, clay tablets, architecture. It favors stability.



Space based cultures have a bias towards expansion and change and focus on mediums such as paper and electronic communication technologies such as the web. It favors change.

McLuhan



McLuhan was a widely criticized and acclaimed academic (died in 1980) who helped conceptualize the nature of different communication mediums.

His main insight was the **“the medium was the message (not message).”** That is, the content of a new medium is filled with the forms of past medium and takes a period of time to establish its own recognizable content. Thus, early TV was filled with programs based on radio shows and stage-style productions.

More importantly, new medium has a way of reorganizing culture. Think of the impact of the mobile phone on how you function on an everyday basis.



McLuhan



The web is currently filled with content taken from radio, TV, movies, newspapers, magazines, etc.

Yet new content forms such as social networking sites, YouTube, online gaming, and Second Life are beginning to emerge. The hallmark of the web is not consumption, but **interactivity** (*okay, AND consumption*).



In some ways, the web gives us the illusion of oral time based culture and permanence in the context of expansive space based culture and constant change.



McLuhan

Another important concept of McLuhan's was the of the **“global village.”** While initially conceptualized to explain the impacts of TV and global satellites in creating a form of “collective consciousness,” it is extremely relevant when thinking about the communities that develop via the web that can span continents and cultures.

While this may sound odd, think of the way Facebook has expanded the bounds of personal/private space and altered what we regard as relationships.



Task

To earn credit you need to post a substantive 100+ word comment on this workshop's wiki page and complete the following tasks and bring them to class.

For the in class workshop think about how these concepts and ideas reflect, contradict, or interact with C1 and C2 in Castells, the Wired article, and your own experiences with technology.

1. Select examples (1 each) from the workshop, C1 and C2 in Castells, and the Wired article that focus on technology.
2. Write a sentence or two on how these examples relate to each other.
3. Write a few sentences on how these examples interact with your own experiences of technology.
4. Teams will discuss and compare their tasks and prepare a 10 minute presentation on the topic of the workshop. This is not just a reading of each student's task submission but a coherent discussion where the elements interact and support each other. One team will be chosen at random to present.
5. Turn in tasks sheets for credit.