ECE/AMST 2980; S&TS/INFO 2921; HIST 2920

Inventing an Information Society

Spring 2010

Thurston 203   Professor Ronald Kline
MWF, 10:10-11:00   Rhodes Hall 394
                                      rrk1@cornell.edu
                                      Office Hours: W, 1:30-3:30,
                                      or by appointment

Required Texts

Paul Starr, The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

Susan Douglas, Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination (New York: Random House, 1999).

Cecelia Tichi, Electronic Hearth: Creating an American Television Culture (Oxford Univ. Press, 1991).

Martin Campbell-Kelly and William Aspray, Computer: A History of the Information Machine, 2nd. ed. (Colorado: Westview Press, 2004).

Fred Turner, From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Course Work (Grading)

Weekly reading responses and participation in discussion (25%)

Three essays, based on readings and lectures (25% each).

Course Schedule

(There is a Discussion Section every Friday, unless otherwise noted.)

Week 1   Jan. 25-29   Introduction; Pre-electrical Communication
                            Systems & Media

          Reading: Starr, Introduction, chaps. 3-4.

Week 2   Feb. 1-5   Wiring the World in the 19th Century: The
                              Telegraph

          Reading: Starr, chap. 5 and pp. 212-215.

Week 3   Feb. 8-12   Creating the Telephone and AT&T

          Reading: Starr, pp. 191-212.

Week 4   Feb. 15-19   From Wireless to Radio Broadcasting

          Reading: Starr, pp. 215-230, chaps. 10-11.

Week 5   Feb. 22-26   Listening to the Radio

          Reading: Douglas, introduction, chaps. 1-6.

Week 6   Mar. 1-5   Mechanical v. Electronic Television; Creating
                              a Television Culture

          Reading: Tichi, chaps. 1-3, 5, 6, 8.

Week 7   Mar. 8-12   Reinventing Radio after World War II

          Reading: Douglas, chaps. 7-10.

Week 8   Mar. 15-19   Computers and Electronics in World War II

          Reading: Campbell-Kelly and Aspray, chaps. 1-3.

Mar. 22-26   Spring Break

Week 9   Mar. 29-Apr. 3   Inventing Electronic Computers

       Reading: Campbell-Kelly and Aspray, chaps. 4-5, 7.

Week 10   Apr. 5-9   Early Software Industry; Rise of IBM

       Reading: Campbell-Kelly and Aspray, chaps. 6, 8

Week 11   Apr. 12-16   Social Meanings of Computers;
                                Microelectronics and Silicon Valley

       Reading: Turner, chaps. 1-2.

Week 12   Apr. 19-23   From Minis to Laptops

       Reading: Campbell-Kelly and Aspray, chaps. 9-11.

Week 13   Apr. 26-30   New Forms of Communications; Theories of an
                                Information Society

       Reading: Turner, chaps. 4-6.

Week 14   May 3-7   (Re)Inventing the Internet

       Reading: Campbell-Kelly and Aspray, chap. 12; Turner, chaps.
       7-8.