Camera, computer, music player, game console, global positioning system: Is a mobile phone still a telephone? This course examines the convergence of different technologies and cultures in telephony since the late nineteenth century. We will survey the technical development of the telephone, from its roots in telegraphy to the first radio and portable phones to the present era of mobile computing. We will trace the durability or disappearance of “telephonic principles” such as interaction and synchrony. We will also examine the telephone’s exchanges with the media of sound recording and cinema. Along the way, we will consider telephony in a variety of social contexts: national and transnational telephone cultures; genres of text messaging; queer and gendered phoning; the relationship of communication technology to public, private, and virtual space; the appropriation of the medium for the purposes of art and activism.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation
(Please bring a question about the assigned reading to each class session) 25%

Take-home Midterm
2 short essays based on course readings. Due via e-mail by midnight, October 12 25%

Mobile Presentation
Topic due October 25, 1-page outline due November 8, in-class presentation December 6 20%

Take-Home Final Essay Questions
Due via e-mail December 18 30%

*I will occasionally grant extensions if I am given advance notice and adequate reason. Otherwise, late work will be marked down one grade per week (or fraction thereof).

This course follows the standard Steinhardt Policies & Procedures for academic integrity and grading (including incompletes):
http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/procedures
http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/registration/standards#grading_policies

"Telephone Family Booth"
A Note on Participation:
Your participation grade is based on attendance, discussion, readiness (bringing readings/notes to class), and attentiveness. While laptops and phones are allowed in seminar—we will at times use them as instructional tools and aids to discussion—they should not pose a distraction to me, you, or the other students.

If you need specific accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible. I am available to discuss course accessibility in person, on the phone, or via email. To make arrangements for accommodations through NYU, contact the Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980).

Books to Purchase at the NYU Bookstore:


Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together*

Nicholson Baker, *Vox*

*Other Course Readings Will Be Available Through Blackboard*

Course Outline

September 4      Course Introduction: What is a Phone?

http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/artdok/volltexte/2012/2016/

September 6      Theorizing Technology and Communication

Ling and Donner, Introduction (Ch. 1)

Nancy Baym, “Making New Media Make Sense,” in: *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*

September 11     Telegraphy/Network/Infrastructure

Jill Lepore, “Universal Communication,” *A is for American: Letters and Other Characters in the Newly United States*


September 13     Telephone History. Orality.

Eula Biss, “Time and Distance Overcome”

September 18 Gender and the Telephone

Ellen Lupton, “The Voice with a Smile,” in: Mechanical Brides: Women and Machines from Home to Office


Optional:
Tracy Clark-Flory, “Blendr: Are Straight People Really This Boring?”
http://www.salon.com/2011/09/14/blendr/

September 20 Privacy and Intimacy


David Trotter, “The Person in the Phone Booth,” LRB (January 2010).
http://www.lrb.co.uk/v32/n02/david-trotter/the-person-in-the-phone-booth


September 25 Phone Sex

Vox

September 27 The Telephone and Sound Recording
8-10 p.m. Bobst LL148 Screening of Sorry, Wrong Number (Anatole Litvak, 1948)


The Answering Machine Solution, listen to tracks on BB

October 2 Telephonic Film


October 4 Phone Art


http://www.ubu.com/sound/scanner.html

Art by Telephone (1969) (read transcript)
http://www.ubu.com/sound/art_by_telephone.html

October 9 Phone Phreaks


Ron Rosenbaum, “Secrets of the Little Blue Box,” Esquire (October 1971)
Steven Levy, “Woz,” *Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution*

October 11  Wirelessness & Mobility


Tomoyuki Okada, “Youth Culture and the Shaping of Japanese Mobile Media: Personalization and the Keitai Internet as Multimedia,” in *Personal, Portable, Pedestrian*

October 16  Fall Break

October 18  Mobile Phones: History and Overview

Ling and Donner, Chs. 2-4

October 23  Global Forms and Politics of Mobile Communication

Ling and Donner, Chs. 5-6

October 25  Appropriating Mobile Technology

Adriana de Souza e Silva, Daniel M. Sutko, Fernando A. Salis, and Claudio de Souza e Silva, “Mobile phone appropriation in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil,” *New Media & Society* (May 2011)

October 30  Tethering

*Alone Together*, Chs. 8 & 9

Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller, “Mobile Phone Parenting: Reconfiguring Relationships between Filipina migrant mothers and their left-behind children,” *New Media and Society* (May 2011: Special Issue on Mobile Communication in the Global South)

November 1  Tele-cooconing and Selective Sociality

Misa Matsuda, “Mobile Communication and Selective Sociality,” in: *Personal, Portable, Pedestrian*

Ichioy Habuchi, “Accelerating Reflexivity,” in: *Personal, Portable, Pedestrian*

November 6  Texting and Autocorrect


*Alone Together*, Ch. 10

Autocorrect and Disability
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/18/opinion/language-of-autocorrect.html?_r=2

November 8  No Class (Prof. @ Sussex)

November 13  Attention and Anxiety

*Alone Together*, Ch. 13 & 14
November 15  ASA Conference—Class Cancelled

November 20  Ringtones


November 22  Thanksgiving

November 27  Mobile Screens

Gerard Goggin and Caroline Hamilton, “Reading after the Phone”

Daisuke Okabe, “Emergent social practices, situations and relations through everyday camera phone use,” In *Proceedings of the 2004 International Conference on Mobile Communication and Social Change*

November 29  iPhone

*Moving Data: The iPhone and the Future of Media* (Columbia UP, 2012), excerpts

December 4  Location

Adriana de Souza e Silva and Jordan Frith, “From Voice to Location,” and “Locational Privacy” in: *Mobile Interfaces in Public Spaces*

December 6  Presentations

December 11  Class Rescheduled for Friday

December 13  Micro- and macro-coordination

Richard Ling, “Mobile Telephony, Mobility, and the Coordination of Everyday Life”

Howard Rheingold, “Technologies of cooperation” and “Smart Mobs: The power of the mobile many,” in: *Smart Mobs*

December 14  Make-Up Class

Review & Looking Ahead: Ubiquitous & Wearable Computing

Howard Rheingold, “The Era of Sentient Things,” in: *Smart Mobs* (Ch. 4)

Mark Weiser, “The world is not a desktop” and “Designing calm technology”
Carl Sandburg, “Under a Telephone Pole”

I AM a copper wire slung in the air,  
Slim against the sun I make not even a clear line of shadow. 
Night and day I keep singing--humming and thrumming: 
It is love and war and money; it is the fighting and the 
tears, the work and want, 
Death and laughter of men and women passing through 
me, carrier of your speech, 
In the rain and the wet dripping, in the dawn and the 
shine drying, 

A copper wire.