

On the Phone:

**Telephone &
Mobile
Communication
Technology**
MCC-UE-1036

M, W 11-12:15
GCASL 369

Prof. Mara Mills
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239 Greene St. 8th Fl.

Office Hours:
Mondays 12:30-1:30
Wed. 4:30-5:30



“Telephone Family Booth”

Camera, computer, music player, game console, global positioning system: Are mobiles still phones? 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 photography. Along the way, we will consider telephony in a variety of social contexts: national and transnational telephone cultures; gendered phoning; mobile surveillance; electronics, environment, and labor; the relationship of communication technology to public, private, and virtual space; the appropriation of the medium for the purposes of art and activism.

In addition, this course will explore the classroom as a space for rethinking communication and social relations. Students will be asked to participate actively in designing and leading a class discussion.

Course Requirements:

Seminar Attendance and Participation	15%
Presentation/Pedagogical Experiment	30%
Midterm Examination <i>In class, March 8</i>	25%
Take Home Final Exam (Short Essays) <i>Due Friday May 12</i>	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

A Note on Participation:

Your participation grade is based on attendance, discussion, readiness (bringing readings/notes to class), and attentiveness. As one of our pedagogical experiments, laptops and other electronic devices will not be allowed during Wednesday sessions.

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:

Rich Ling and Jonathan Donner, *Mobile Communication* (Polity, 2010).

Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe and Misa Matsuda, eds., *Personal, Portable, Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life* (MIT Press, 2005).

via NYU ebrary: <http://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu:2067/lib/nyulibrary/detail.action?docID=10173528>

Other Course Readings Will Be Available Through NYU Classes

Course Outline

Unit 1: THEORY

January 23 Course Introduction: What are Phones? How Should We Study Them?

The Chairs Are Where the People Go, Chs. 1, 7, 9, 13

January 25 Theorizing Technology and Communication

Ling and Donner, Introduction (Ch. 1)

John Durham Peters, "Media as Conversation, Conversation as Media"

January 30 To What Ends? Friendship & Learning Communities

Michel Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life"

Ellen Rooney, "A Semi-Private Room"

February 1 Design: Always On?

Donald Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things* (excerpt)

Sherry Turkle, "Always-On/Always-On-You: The Tethered Self"

February 6 Mobilities

Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm"

Stephen Greenblatt, "A Mobility Studies Manifesto"

Unit 2: HISTORY

February 8 Telecommunication

Gabriele Balbi and Richard John, "Point-to-Point: Telecommunications Networks from the Optical Telegraph to the Mobile Telephone"

Ling and Donner, Chs. 2-3

February 13 Voice

In class: Scanner, *The Human Voice* (1998) Monologue by Jean Cocteau
<http://www.ubu.com/sound/scanner.html>

Amanda Weidman, "Voice," *Keywords in Sound*

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

Lana Rakow, "The Telephone and Women's Talk," in: *Gender on the Line: Women, The Telephone, and Community Life*

February 15 Convergence and Multitasking

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

Naomi Baron, "Adjusting the Volume: Technology and Multitasking in Discourse Control"

February 20 No Class: President's Day Holiday

February 22 Infrastructure/Labor/Environment

Nicole Starosielski, *The Undersea Network* (excerpt)

Eula Biss, "Time and Distance Overcome"
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=102235226#102237046>

Toby Miller and Marwan Kraidy, "Mobile Telephony," in: *Global Media Studies*

Unit 3: Themes in Telephone and Mobile Media Studies

February 27 Intimacy

Hidenori Tomita, "Keitai and the Intimate Stranger," in: *Personal, Portable, Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life*

Kira Hall, "Lip Service on the Fantasy Lines," in *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*

March 1 **Privacy, Surveillance, Sousveillance**

In class: *The Apology Line* (Allan Bridge, 1980)
http://www.thisamericanlife.org/Radio_Episode.aspx?sched=1053
Segment 29:14 – 39:10

Franz Kafka, "My Neighbor," in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Glatzer, pp. 424-5.

K. Mohrman and Mia Fischer, "Black Deaths Matter? Sousveillance and the Invisibility of Black Life"

Lee Humphreys, "Who's watching whom? A study of interactive technology and surveillance"

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>

March 6 **Asynchronicity**

In class: *The Answering Machine Solution*, listen to tracks

Rich Ling, "Texting and the Growth of Asynchronous Discourse" (excerpt)

Alone Together, Ch. 10 (excerpt)

David Morton, "The Message on the Answering Machine: Recording and Interpersonal Communication" (excerpt)

March 8 **MIDTERM**

Week of March 13 **Spring Break**

March 20 **Tele-cocooning and Selective Sociality**

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

Ichiyo Habuchi, "Accelerating Reflexivity," in: *Personal, Portable, Pedestrian*

March 22 **Micro- and macro-coordination**

Ling and Donner, Ch. 4

Howard Rheingold, "Mobile Media and Political Collective Action"

March 27 **Interactivity**

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

Robert Whitman, *Children and Communication* (1971)
<http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/children-and-communication/>

Joybubbles, *Stories and Stuff*:
<http://audio.textfiles.com/shows/storiesandstuff/>

John Carey, "Interactive media," *International Encyclopedia of Communications*

Peter Lunenfeld, "In Search of the Telephone Opera: From Communications to Art," *Afterimage* 25 (August 1997): 8-10.

April 3 Appropriation

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)

Molly Steenson and Jonathan Donner, "Beyond the Personal and Private: Modes of Mobile Phone Sharing in Urban India"

Cara Wallis and Jack Linchuan Qiu, "Shanzhaiji and the transformation of local mediascape in Shenzhen," https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259258818_Shanzhaiji_and_the_transformation_of_local_mediascape_in_Shenzhen

April 5 Presentations

April 10 Sound: Ringtones

Christian Licoppe, "What Does Answering the Phone Mean? A Sociology of the Phone Ring and Musical Ringtones," *Cultural Sociology* (2011)

Sumanth Gopinath, *The Ringtone Dialectic* (excerpt)

Alexander G. Weheliye, "Rhythms of Relation: Black Popular Music and Mobile Technologies"

April 12 Presentations

April 17 Image: Mobile Screens

Larissa Hjorth, "Stories of the Mobile: Women, Micro-Narratives, and Mobile Novels in Japan"

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*

Jill Walker Rettberg, *Seeing Ourselves Through Technology: How We Use Selfies, Blogs and Wearable Devices to See and Shape Ourselves* (excerpt)

April 19 Presentations

April 24 Location: Navigation, Mobilization, Play

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

Jane McGonigal, "Supergaming: Ubiquitous Play and Performance for Massively Scaled Community"

Mary Flanagan, "Artists' Locative Games," in *Critical Play: Radical Game Design*

April 26 Presentations

May 1 Mobile Communication: Current Debates

Ling and Donner, Chs. 5-6

May 3 Presentations

May 8 Presentations

Ubiquitous & Wearable Computing

Mark Weiser, "The world is not a desktop" and "Designing calm technology"

Marc Tuters and Kazys Varnelis. "Beyond Locative Media: Giving Shape to the Internet of Things." *Leonardo* 39, no. 4 (2006): 357-363.

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.