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:

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


*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

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


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”

Toby Miller and Marwan Kraidy, “Mobile Telephony,” in: Global Media Studies

Unit 3: Themes in Telephone and Mobile Media Studies

February 27 Intimacy


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)
Segment 29:14 – 39:10

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-coooning and Selective Sociality

Ichioy 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”


April 5  Presentations

April 10  Sound: Ringtones


Sumanth Gopinath, *The Ringtone Dialectic* (excerpt)


April 12  Presentations

April 17  Image: Mobile Screens


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*

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”


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.