Communication, Institutions and Power
Worlds of Flows and Immobile Worlds
Spring, 2020 Tuesday / Thursday 3:30 – 4:50

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Office Hours: Office hours are by email.

Communication encompasses the multiple circuits emerging from the movement and circulation of goods, messages and people.
(Armand Mattelhart, 1996: xiv)

TAs
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Course Description
This course occurs in an unprecedented pedagogical environment at UCSD. In principle, it is an introductory lecture course focusing broadly on “communication, institutions and power” but this term, owing to the COVID pandemic we now confront, the course will occur online. Substantively, this course examines the role of communication in shaping the development of modern society with a focus on institutions and relations of power. Broadly speaking, communication refers to the systems of connection by which goods, information, and people circulate from one point to another. In this course, we will explore the institutions (markets, firms, and states) that mediate these connections; the infrastructures (Internet, broadcasting airwaves, container ships, etc.) that carry them; and the conflicts between different groups seeking access to, and profit from the conveyance of goods, messages, and people. Ultimately, “Communication, Institutions and Power” explores the interplay of changes in the systems of connection for material things, meanings, and people, and the institutions, technologies, and power relations underlying those systems. The course is intended to be an historically grounded, theoretically rigorous -- and best of all -- topically interesting engagement with communication as a force shaping the modern world.

Course Format and Requirements
Our course this term will consist of one weekly lecture on the course topic and readings assigned for the week in question as per the course schedule (pp. 2-5 below). Certain weeks have 2 related themes while others are grouped into a single theme. In principle, the lectures will be uploaded to Canvas on Tuesday mornings along with PowerPoint slides from lectures. At this time, readings will be accessible on the UCSD library electronic reserves along with links on this syllabus or accessible as indicated. The primary assignment for the course will be three short (2-3 page) response papers roughly after weeks 3, 5, and 9 that will focus on material from those particular weeks. TAs may also elect to assign additional work. Evaluations for the course will be determined from the response papers (3 papers x 20% each or 60%), and from work assigned by TAs in your individual sections (40%). Note: In principle all courses taken for credit toward the Communication major or minor must be taken for a letter grade but due to circumstances this quarter, courses taken during Spring 2020 can be taken Pass/No Pass and still count toward the major.
Academic Integrity
Students are expected to honor the University’s policy of academic integrity. All written work must be your own. Authors of sources whose text or ideas are used in papers must be cited clearly and correctly. If you are uncertain how to cite written sources, see the TA. Plagiarism of any kind on written work will not be tolerated. If you have any questions about plagiarism or academic integrity in general please review the UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship at: http://www-senate.ucsd.edu/manual/appendices/app2.htm

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 Overview: Communication, Institutions and Power

1a Introduction and Course Overview
1b Communication, Institutions and Power


Part 1 ‘Mobility and the World of Flows’

Week 2 Communication as ‘Revolution’: Goods, Information, and People on the Move

2a Situating the Present: Communication in a Historical Mirror


2b Conquering Space: Communication Revolution and Forging a Nation of Meat-Eaters


Week 3 Worlds of Flows: China, the State and the Movement of People and Goods

3a From Farms to Factories: The Great Migration and Forging the Workshop of the World

Fan, Lixin (2011). Last Train Home (Gui tu lie che). Watch the Entire Film in Kanopy with VPN https://ucsd.kanopy.com/video/last-train-home or watch the film from the “Course Reserves” website


3b Made in China: Tracking the Spatial Circuits of Goods from China to the U.S.


Week 4 Media: Democracy, the Public Sphere, and the Institutional Landscape for Conveying Information

Guest Speaker: Dan Hallin, UCSD Department of Communication


Week 5 Surveillance: New Media Tracking our Every Move

Guest Speaker: Kelly Gates, UCSD Department of Communication


Part 2
Mobility Meets Immobility: The World of Friction

Week 6  Disease: The Mobile Pathways of Pathogens and the Immobile Politics of Lockdown


Week 7  (Im) Mobility: The Institution of Confinement and the Prison Industrial Complex

7a  Lockup: The Racial Dimensions of Criminal Justice and Incarceration


7b  Wrongful Conviction: The Death Penalty and the New Politics of Innocence


Week 8  Limits of Globalism: The Ideological Underpinnings of a Partitioned World

8a / b  Clashing Civilizations? The Ideology of Fracture


Week 9  ‘Build That Wall’: Immobility, Immigrants and the ‘Paranoid Style’ of Politics

9a  Entry Prohibited: Historical Roots of Friction at State Borders


9b  ‘Illegals’: The Mexican Border


Week 10  Flows and Barriers: Communication in the Age of Fracture


Other Readings


In the 1870s African Americans began moving North and West in great numbers. In the 1890s, the number of African Americans moving to the Northeast and the Midwest was double that of the previous decade. In 1910, it doubled again. https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/african7.html


Ip, Greg (2017). “We are Not the World: The Old Division between Left and Right is Giving Way to a Battle between Patriots and Globalists.” _Wall Street Journal_.


These power struggles, in turn, influence how institutions govern, how access to communication infrastructure is allocated, and the configuration of routes by which commodities, messages, and people reach their destinations.


