

Comm: 549 Case Studies in Digital Entertainment

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Course Description: The convergence of digital technology and the television industry represents the most basic policy and planning challenge in the last 50 years for both media executives and policy planners. This course will take an in depth look at the foundations of the current U.S. media policy and then turn its focus on one of the most pressing issues for both policy planners and consumer advocates: **The Future of the Public Broadcasting System.** We will study how the PBS system might be reformed to better serve the public in the digital age. We will meet with the senior executives of PBS, the FCC and Senate staffers in charge of the PBS budget. We will begin the course by studying the economics of digital innovation. We will then survey the historical record of public and private broadcasting policy. Finally, the class will be divided in to two groups of students charged with developing a robust policy document for this crucial initiative. Each group will write a White Paper, and the best paper will be published and made available to the FCC, Senate & House Commerce Committees, the Commerce Department as well as regional state planning agencies. In addition the paper will be provided to key executives in the Television and advertising community. As the Case study is addressed, key personel from the television industry and the regulatory bodies will be made available to the student groups as a resource.

Career Relevance: Both in the U.S. and in every major country, the issues of digital media policy are at the top of the agenda in the IT world. Graduates, who hope to form policy initiatives either in government or in the commercial sector, will need to have the deep understanding of the political origins of modern communications. This course will be a deep research initiative, which will result in a published paper for peer review. Given the dearth of current published data on these subjects it is believed that the graduates of this course will have a unique capability in the Digital Media field.

Course Requirements: There are three requirements for the course:

1. **Class Participation.** Students are expected to participate in each of the weekly sessions by making informed critiques of the subjects studied. They will need to do the required reading for each class and be generally aware of current developments in the Digital Media Entertainment business.
2. **White Paper and Presentations.** The class will be divided into three teams of students who will work jointly on a case analysis and production of a White Paper and Presentation. Part of your grade will involve anonymous peer grading of your participation on your team. Each White Paper should be at least 50 pages in length, including an executive summary and a table of contents. The presentation will be 30minutes, plus time for question and answers.
3. **Take-home final exam.** There will be a take-home final examination that you will have one week to complete.

Grading: Requirements will be weighted as follows:

- Class Participation 10%
- White Paper 40%
- Presentation of White Paper 10%
- Peer grade (from White Paper team) 10%
- Take-home Final 30%

Course Material. There are four required books available at the USC bookstore:

Starr, Paul (2004) *The Creation Of The Media* New York: Basic Books

McChesney, Robert (2004) *The Problem of The Media* New York: Monthly Review Press

Lessig, Lawrence (2004) *Free Culture* New York: Penguin Books

Wolf, Michael (1999) *The Entertainment Economy*: Times Books

A brief announcement from the Office of Civil Rights: Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from the DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DPS is open Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.

Academic Integrity Statement

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's Academic Integrity code as detailed in the Campus Guide. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violation or pattern of violations of the Academic Integrity Code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication major or minor.

Class Schedule

Week 1. Introduction to the class-The Economics of Innovation

This first class will be a crash course on Innovation, using examples such as Digital Cameras, fiber optic cable and DVD's to track such vectors as Critical Price, Critical Mass, Displacement and Price Nears Zero.

The Readings: Starr, Paul (2004) *The Creation Of The Media* New York: Basic Books (p.1-82)

Week 2- History of Media Policy

The Readings: McChesney, Robert (2004) *The Problem of The Media* New York: Monthly Review Press (p.7-97)

Weeks 3- The Foundations of Modern Broadcasting Regulation

The Readings: Starr, Paul (2004) *The Creation Of The Media* New York: Basic Books (p.83-111)
McChesney, Robert (2004) *The Problem of The Media* New York: Monthly Review Press (p.98-137)

Screening: Ken Burns, *The Empire of The Air*

Week 4-Early Public Broadcasting

The Readings: Starr, Paul (2004) *The Creation Of The Media* New York: Basic Books (p.113-150)
McChesney, Robert (2004) *The Problem of The Media* New York: Monthly Review Press (p.138-174)

Week 5-The Beginning of Public TV

The Readings: Starr, Paul (2004) *The Creation Of The Media* New York: Basic Books (p.153-189)
McChesney, Robert (2004) *The Problem of The Media* New York: Monthly Review Press (p.175-209)

Weeks 6,7,8-White Paper Research

The first hour of each week will be spent discussing the readings. We will then move on to compare progress on the various interviews with resource people. Again 15 minutes at the beginning of hour will be a group report followed by extensive follow-up questions from the other members of the class and myself. By week 8, each group should be ready to begin writing the White Paper, with a complete outline ready for class critique.

The Resources:Public Broadcasting Executives, FCC Staff Members, Senate Commerce Committee Staff members, Public Policy think tank staffers, PBS producers and station managers.

The Readings: Starr, Paul (2004) *The Creation Of The Media* New York: Basic Books

Week 6 (p.191-266)

Week 7 (p.267-326)

Week 8 (p.327-346)

McChesney, Robert (2004) *The Problem of The Media* New York: Monthly Review Press

Week 6 (p.210-251)

Week 7 (p. 252-297)

Lessig, Lawrence (2004) *Free Culture* New York: Penguin Books

Week 7 (p.1-35)

Week 8 (p.36-84)

Screening: *Frontline: The Persuaders*- PBS

Week 9-Producing for PBS

Our guest this week will be David Fanning, Executive Producer for PBS's flagship show, *Frontline* (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/us/>). He will talk about the future of PBS and its independence.

The Readings: Starr, Paul (2004) *The Creation Of The Media* New York: Basic Books (p.347-384)
Lessig, Lawrence (2004) *Free Culture* New York: Penguin Books (P.85-134)

Week 10-Public Radio

Our Guest will be a prominent Public Radio executive, who will discuss the unique culture of NPR and how its organization has avoided some of the problems at PBS.

The Reading: Lessig, Lawrence (2004) *Free Culture* New York: Penguin Books (P.135-207)

Week 11-Managing PBS

Our Guest will be a senior executive from PBS. We will discuss the critical problems of reorganizing the Public Broadcasting System

The Reading: Lessig, Lawrence (2004) *Free Culture* New York: Penguin Books (P.208-290)

Week 12-The Reform Agenda

We will lay out the possibilities of reforming the complete PBS system. A first draft of each group's White Paper will be due at the end of class.

The Reading: Wolf, Michael (1999) *The Entertainment Economy*: Times Books, (p.3-81)

Week 13-Drafting Session

This will be a split class with each group being allocated 1:30 for work with the Professor on their draft White Paper.

The Reading: Wolf, Michael (1999) *The Entertainment Economy*: Times Books, (p.82-154)

Week 14-Final Presentations

Each group will present a 30 minute visual (PowerPoint) presentation of the highlights of their White Paper followed by a half hour of discussion and questions. The take home final exam will be handed out at the conclusion of this class.

Week 15- Take Home Final Exam Due