

 **Assignments** **Assigned readings**


The primary text for this class is Andrew Murphie & John Potts, *Culture & Technology*. A copy of this book is on reserve at the Run Run Shaw Library (alternatively, Amazon.com can deliver it in a few days). As noted in the weekly schedule (found in "Course Documents"), there are also a few readings from other sources. PDF files of all reading materials may be found in the relevant listing of the weekly schedule.

All readings listed in the weekly schedule are **required** unless otherwise indicated. As lectures, discussions, and class presentations will draw significantly on these readings, it is important for you to keep up with the material on a weekly basis.

 **Short critical response**

Your assignment is to write a brief analytical essay/thought piece (@500-750 words/2-3 pages) on a topic related to the film *Metropolis*. In your essay, you are expected to express your opinion concerning the topic; however, an *analysis* involves more than personal opinion. In order to make the specific points of your argument convincing, you should refer to relevant reading materials and notes (be sure to cite appropriately), and you should describe key scenes from the film in some detail. You can address the film from **one** of the following perspectives:

1. How is technology portrayed in *Metropolis*? Is it portrayed favorably, unfavorably, or both? Why do you think it is portrayed this way?
2. In what ways might you argue that Hong Kong has some similarities to the city of Metropolis, with regard to the ways in which technologies are understood and used by its residents and institutions? (If you are more familiar with another large city, you may substitute that city for Hong Kong in your discussion.)

DUE IN TUTORIALS, WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 29-OCTOBER 3. **Media diary and analysis**

[diary.html](#) (10.725 Kb)

[diarysample2.doc](#) (59.5 Kb)

For a period of seven days, you are to compile a detailed diary of your use of media technologies, and the media themselves (including television, computer-based media, movies, radio, telephone, video games, newspapers, magazines, and audio and video recordings). Of course, the phenomenon of convergence means that you may access more than one media form through the same technology.

You can begin your seven-day diary on any date before October 13. That is, in order to give yourself enough time to analyze your "data", you should have a complete diary by no later than October 19.

Your diary should include media use outside of school *and* media use that's part of your coursework (e.g., a film viewed for a class, using computer software to write an essay or design a project, etc.)

In the **diary**, you are to list, as precisely as possible, each instance of media use, the medium used, the specific media "text" used (e.g., personal blog, recorded music, a movie, a TV show, *Apple Daily*, various cell phone activities, etc.), and notes on the circumstances and patterns of use which will assist you in writing the analytical essay. A (Microsoft Word) template of the diary is attached above, as is a sample diary that includes a few representative entries.

In the **analysis**, you are to write a summary of your findings based on your diary. That is, you are to summarize, explain, and evaluate your use of the media. While this assignment is by definition autobiographical and is based on personal observations, you are expected to incorporate within your analysis ideas, concepts, and issues introduced in assigned readings, lectures and discussions. The *analysis* portion of the assignment should be about 4-5 pages in length (@1000-1250 words).

As a means of organizing your essay, it is highly recommended that you use the categories of media use described by Len Ang (in her essay, "The Nature of the Audience") in connection with her description of "uses and gratifications" analysis.

There are a couple of logical ways to structure your analytical essay:

1. You can describe your use of each medium individually (i.e., a section of the essay devoted to a description of your use of TV, a section on computer-based media use, etc.).
2. Or you can describe your "typical" media day (i.e., how you usually use the media in the morning, afternoon and evening).

In writing your essay, pay attention as well to the *contexts* of your media use, the "environmental" factors that may affect the ways in which you use the media. A few specifics:

- Look for *patterns* and *habits* in your media use. For example, do you usually listen to the radio or music on a mobile device while you're getting ready to come to school? Do you usually watch TV with your family after dinner?
- Also, though, look for *breaks* in these patterns. Do you tend to use media differently on weekends compared to weekdays? What if your TV set, your stereo, or your personal computer breaks down? What if you lose your cell phone? How does this disrupt your media habits?
- Consider also the relationship in your experience between *individual* media use and *communal* media use. That is, while you typically (though not always) may use a computer or an iPod all by yourself, you may watch TV by yourself some of the time and with other people some of the time. How are these circumstances different from each other?
- Consider also situations in which you may use more than one medium at a time. For example, I'm writing this document using a Web authoring program, and I'm simultaneously listening to a Webcast of a baseball game. More accurately, the baseball game is background noise most of the time, as I'm concentrating more on my writing. It's also quite common, for another example, for people to watch TV while at the same time talking with family/friends, having a phone conversation, messaging friends, reading a magazine, or listening to music. Does this apply to you?

The cumulative goal of the diary/analysis assignment is to set up a situation in which you are compelled to consider and self-consciously evaluate the ways in which you use media technologies in your everyday life and, more importantly, *why*. **DUE IN TUTORIALS, WEEK OF OCTOBER 27-31.**



Cultural determinist analysis

[cultdetFAQ.doc](#) (48 Kb)

In this assignment, you are to analyze a specific technology, technology-related phenomenon, the work of an artist or artists that is concerned at least in part with the theme of "culture and technology," or a film that is concerned with this theme. You should incorporate into your analysis concepts associated with the "cultural determinist" methodology that will be discussed in class. A list of appropriate topics, artists, and films will be provided, but you are welcome to suggest alternatives. This assignment has two parts:

1. **Oral presentation.**

This exercise will be conducted during tutorial sessions. Students will work in teams of two or more; you will sign up for a specific topic and date. *A sign-up sheet for each tutorial section will be provided by your tutorial leader.*

In your oral presentation, you are to provide your classmates with an introductory description of the technology/phenomenon/artist, illustrated through links to web sites, video clips, and other audiovisual material. That is, make it *interesting*; you should not simply prepare a presentation to be read aloud (that's *boring*).

Each team member should make a substantial contribution to the oral presentation (that is, if you don't say much, you'll get a bad grade). **PRESENTATIONS BEGIN IN TUTORIALS IN WEEK OF NOVEMBER 3-7.**

1. **Analytical essay.**

Based in part on the material located for the oral presentation, each team member is responsible for constructing an *individual* essay that explores the topic in more detail and provides the heart of your cultural determinist analysis.

This essay may be submitted in written form (about 1500 words, typed, double-spaced, and spell-checked). Alternatively, you may submit the assignment in the form of a Web site. The Web-based version is envisioned primarily as an online essay (about 1000 words, spell-checked) with hyperlinks, although you are expected to pay attention as well to elements of graphic design and layout. However, the primary criterion for grading will be the quality of the essay itself.

The Web-based version of this assignment will be most appropriate for students who already have a working knowledge of and some experience with hypertext. No matter which approach to the assignment you select, the Web site and the more linear written essay should include approximately the same material:

- i. a description of the topic; and
- ii. an analytical essay elaborating on the implications of the technology/phenomenon/artist.

If you select the Web option, your hypertext project should also include links to other relevant WWW sites (corporate, magazine/newspaper articles, art projects, scholarly essays/reviews, other critiques/commentaries, related technologies/projects, etc). In the conventional written version, you are also expected to annotate your work (citing sources of ideas and direct quotes, suggestions for further reading and Web surfing).

Analytical essay in English (written or Web-based). **DUE DECEMBER 8.**

For additional guidelines relating to both parts of the cultural determinism project, see the FAQ for cultural determinism assignment that we've developed in relation to the project (attached above). Additional questions and answers will be added to the FAQ as the need arises.

Note: In all written and oral work for this class, when using direct quotes from or the ideas of other authors, please make sure that you cite these sources appropriately. **Any work that is plagiarized will be penalized, up to and including failure in the class.** If you are unsure about the circumstances under which you are expected to cite a source, read [this](#) or [this](#), and talk to the instructor and/or your tutorial leader!

Weighting of assignments



Short critical response	15%
Media diary and analysis	20%
Oral presentation	20%
Analytical essay	35%
Attendance/participation	10%