

Radio in American Culture AMST 135b
T, F 12:00-1:30
Lown 203



Spring 2007
Prof. Tona Hangen
Brown 322A, x6-3527
OH: T, W 10-1 and by appt

This course provides an in-depth study of the history and culture of radio broadcasting in America. We will cover the development of the technology of broadcasting, the radio industry, the network system, and discuss the content and cultural impact of a wide variety of radio genres from 1920 to the present, including news, talk radio, drama, comedy, soap opera, advertising, religious programming, documentary, Top-40 music, and more. This course will help you place radio in the context of cultural studies, media studies, and history of communication. Students will gain an understanding of radio's role in the American past and present as an institution, as a business practice, and as a major force in American popular culture.

Grading and Course Requirements

Your grade depends on your active presence and prepared, passionate participation in class meetings and discussions. This course makes extensive use of WebCT for posting of assignments, audiofiles, and for facilitating thoughtful scholarship about radio outside of the classroom. Each student is automatically enrolled in the class email list, which I will use for announcements and "housekeeping" emails. A short but well-conceived (200-300 word) response, question, comment, or posting is due from each student by 11 am every Tuesday morning (except where specified in the syllabus). These assignments will be submitted through the course's WebCT "Assignments" feature. This is a total of eleven postings, with an additional assessment for your comments on your classmates' posts and your general contribution to the quality of our online discussions.

You will write three focused, short essays (about 4 pages each) based on a program, audio file or other primary radio source, and you will also write one 1000-word book review of one of the texts used for this course. More information on each of these writing assignments will be posted to WebCT and made available separately from this syllabus. There will be a midterm exam and a final exam. I will expect you to know and follow the policies on academic honesty outlined in the Brandeis student handbook. Plagiarism or cheating has no place at Brandeis and will be reported to the Student Judicial system.

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|------------------------------------|-----|
| Class Attendance and Participation | 10% |
| Online Postings/ Discussion | 20% |
| Essay #1 | 10% |
| Essay #2 | 10% |
| Essay #3 | 10% |
| Book Review | 10% |
| Midterm | 15% |
| Final Exam | 15% |

Note: If you are a student with a documented disability on record with Brandeis University, and you wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

Required Reading List (available in bookstore and on reserve, not on WebCT)

Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922-1952* (RV)
Jesse Walker, *Rebels on the Air: An Alternative History of Radio in America* (ROA)
Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination*
Garrison Keillor, *WLT: A Radio Romance*
Alan Eisenstock, *Sports Talk: A Journey Inside the World of Sports Talk Radio*
Howard Dorgan, *Airwaves of Zion: Radio and Religion in Appalachia*
Melvin Patrick Ely, *The Adventures of Amos 'n' Andy: A Social History of an American Phenomenon*

Recommended Reading List (available in excerpt on WebCT, in the library or for purchase from online booksellers if you're a radio junkie like myself) – in order of use in the semester

Michele Hilmes and Jason Loviglio, *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*
Daniel Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind*
Susan Smulyan, *Selling Radio: The Commercialization on American Broadcasting 1920-1934*
Robert Brown, *Manipulating the Ether: The Power of Broadcast Radio in Thirties America*
Kathy Newman, *Radio Active: Advertising and Consumer Activism 1935-1947* (note: this text is not owned by Brandeis)
Robert Allen, *Speaking of Soap Operas*
Douglas Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the UN 1920-1940*
Gerd Horton, *Radio Goes to War: the Cultural Politics of Propaganda During World War II*
Barbara Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938-1948*
Brian Ward, *Radio and the Struggle for Civil Rights in the South*
Gene Fowler, *Border Radio: Quacks, Yodelers, Pitchmen, Psychics, and Other Amazing Broadcasters of the American Airwaves*
Ralph Engelman, *Public Radio and Television in America*
Linda Wertheimer, *Listening to America: 25 Years in the Life of a Nation, As Heard on National Public Radio*



Listening List – Bookmark these sites for free old-time radio programs


Old Time Radio <http://www.old-time.com/>
Radio Lovers <http://radiolovers.com/>
Radio Days <http://www.otr.com/index.shtml>
YesterdayUSA Radio <http://www.yesterdayusa.com/>
Internet Archive of OTR <http://www.archive.org/details/oldtimeradio>
1930s On the Air from UVA <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~1930s/RADIO/radiofr.html>


Other good web resources:

History of Broadcasting Links <http://www.midcoast.com/~lizmcl/links.html>
Online Radio Directory for Journalists <http://www.journalismnet.com/radio/>
Museum of Broadcast Communications, Chicago <http://www.museum.tv/home.php>
Vintage Radio Script Library <http://www.genericradio.com/>
Old Time Radio Researchers group <http://www.otterprojectonline.info/>
RUSC (\$7.50/mo membership) <http://www.rusc.com/>

Syllabus and Summary of Due Dates

| # | Date | Topic | Reading/ Listening | What's Due | Notes |
|---|--|---|---|------------|-------|
| 1 | 1/16 Tues | Introductions | | | |
| 2 | 1/19 Fri | No class <i>Prof Hangen is out of town</i> | However, please listen to one "Little Orphan Annie" program, and one "This American Life" program, and read ahead for Tuesday | | |
| 3 | 1/23 Tues  | Marconi, Wireless and Telegraph | Leila Brosnan, "Words Fail Me: Virginia Woolf and the Wireless," <i>VW and the Arts</i> , 134-41, and ROA, Ch. 2 "The First Broadcasters" | Posting #1 | |
| 4 | 1/26 Fri | Approaches to Media History | Hilmes "Rethinking Radio" and excerpt, Czitrom, <i>Media and the American Mind</i> , pp. 165-196. | | |
| 5 | 1/29 Tues | The Physics of Radio and Reception | RV, Ch 2 "How Far Can You Hear?" and Don Wallace, "Antenna of the Universe," <i>Harpers May 2006</i> | Posting #2 | |
| 6 | 2/2 Fri  | 1920s Radio, Rise of Networks, Radio Legislation and the FRC/FCC | RV Ch 4 "Eavesdropping on America" and excerpt, Susan Smulyan, <i>Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting, 1920-1934</i> , pp. 11-64 | | |
| 7 | 2/6 Tues | 1930s Radio | RV Ch 6-7 "Under Cover of Daytime" and "the Disciplined Audience: Radio by Night" See also "America in the 1930s" website on WebCT | Posting #3 | |
| 8 | 2/9 Fri | Audiences and Listeners: Reception Theory, Counting "ears" and Getting at Zeitgeist | Susan Douglas, <i>Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination</i> , and Fiske and Lazarsfeld, "The Columbia Office of Radio Research," <i>Hollywood Quarterly</i> 1945 | Essay #1 | |

| # | Date | Topic | Reading/ Listening | What's Due | Notes |
|----|--|---|---|------------------|-------|
| 9 | 2/13 Tues | Radio and National Identity – Race and Ethnicity on Radio | Alexander Russo, "A Dark(ened) Figure on the Airwaves: Race, Nation and the Green Hornet" and RV Ch. 3 "Who We Are, Who We Are Not" | Posting #4 | |
| 10 | 2/16 Fri | From Vaudeville to Radio | Listen to 3-4 Amos 'n' Andy radio programs, (various online sources), read Melvin Patrick Ely, <i>The Adventures of Amos 'n' Andy: A Social History of an American Phenomenon</i> | | |
| | 2/19-2/23 | Brandeis Break | | | |
| 11 | 2/27 Tues  | Radio News | Listen to Hindenberg disaster and recording of the War of the Worlds (WebCT); excerpt, Robert Brown, "Manipulating the Ether," pp. 131-158 | Posting #5 | |
| 12 | 3/2 Fri | Radio Advertising | Excerpt, Kathy Newman, <i>Radio Active</i> , pp. 17-51; listen to 8-10 Radio Ads online (links on WebCT) | | |
| 13 | 3/6 Tues | Midterm Exam | | No posting today | |
| 14 | 3/9 Fri | Religion by Radio | Hangen, "Man of the Hour," and Howard Dorgan, <i>Airwaves of Zion: Radio and Religion in Appalachia</i> | Essay #2 | |
| 15 | 3/13 Tues | Soaps, Serials and Washboard Weepers: Radio and the Female Consumer | Robert Allen, <i>Speaking of Soap Operas</i> and Hanna Rosin, "Life Lessons: How Soap Operas Can Change the World," <i>New Yrkr</i> 5 June 06 | Posting #6 | |
| 16 | 3/16 Fri | The Fireside Chat | Excerpt, Douglas Craig, <i>Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940</i> and Elvin T. Lim, "The Lion and the Lamb: De-Mythologizing FDR's Fireside Chats," <i>Rhetoric and Public Affairs</i> Fall 2003. | | |

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|----|---|--|---|------------|-------|
| 17 | 3/20 Tues | Wartime Radio: News | Nicholas Lemann, "The Murrow Doctrine," <i>New Yorker</i> 23 Jan 06; Murrow news clips; and excerpt, Gerd Horten, <i>Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda During World War II</i> | Posting #7 | |
| 18 | 3/23 Fri | Wartime Radio: Homefront/ Prime Time Genres | Barbara Savage, <i>Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938-1948</i> , WW2 homefront audio | | |
| 19 | 3/27 Tues | The Top-40 Music Industry and Radio | ROA Ch. 5 "Into the 70's" and Charles F. Ganzert, "Hot Clocks, Jingles and Top Tunes," <i>Popular Music and Society</i> Winter 1997. | Posting #8 | |
| 20 | 3/30 Fri | Behind the Scenes at WBRS 100.1: College Radio | Garrison Keillor, <i>WLT: A Radio Romance</i> and Samuel J. Sauls, "The Role of Alternative Programming in College Radio," <i>Studies in Popular Culture</i> Oct 1998. | Essay #3 | |
| | 4/2-4/10 | Brandeis Break | | | |
| 21 | 4/13 Fri  | Radio in the Civil Rights Movement | ROA Ch. 4 "The 60's", John Fiske, "Technostruggles: Black Liberation Radio," and excerpt, Brian Ward, <i>Radio and the Struggle for Civil Rights in the South</i> | | |
| 22 | 4/17 Tues | Border Radio | Gene Fowler, <i>Border Radio: Quacks, Yodelers, Pitchmen, Psychics, and Other Amazing Broadcasters of the American Airwaves</i> , and ROA Ch. 8 "American Pirates" | Posting #9 | |
| 23 | 4/20 Fri | Latino Radio and the Immigration Debate | Packet of news articles on May 2006 immigration marches | | |

| # | Date | Topic | Reading/ Listening | What's Due | Notes |
|----|-----------------------|--|--|--------------|-------|
| 24 | 4/24 Tues | Talk Radio: The New Wasteland? | Alan Eisenstock, <i>Sports Talk: A Journey Inside the World of Sports Talk Radio</i> and Susan Douglas, "Letting the Boys be Boys: Talk Radio, Male Hysteria, and Political Discourse in the 1980s" (RR) | Posting # 10 | |
| 25 | 4/27 Fri | (National) Public Radio: Send Money Now | Excerpts, Ralph Engelman, <i>Public Radio and Television in America</i> , and Linda Wertheimer, <i>Listening to America: 25 Years in the Life of a Nation, as Heard on National Public Radio</i> | Book Review | |
| 26 | 5/1 Tues (last class) | Podcasting, Satellite Radio, and Beyond – the Future of American Radio | ROA Ch 9-11 Elisia Cohen, "One Nation Under Radio: Digital and Public Memory After Sept 11," <i>New Media & Society</i> Oct 2004. | Posting # 11 | |
| | 5/4-5/11 | Final exams | | | |