HON 206: **In Search of Reality**: Dr. B. McGrane

**Media, Self and Society** Office: Roosevelt #216

SPRING 2024 Phone: 714-997-6564

Office Hours: TBA mcgrane@chapman.edu

SYLLABUS

(THIS IS MY ‘TRADITIONAL’ IN-PERSON CLASSROOM SYLLABUS ARRANGED BY BOOKS & TOPICS. ONCE WE ARE “INSIDE” CANVAS FOR A WHILE, THINGS MAY SHIFT A BIT)

Required Texts: (All are ‘inexpensive’ paperbacks. Many used copies on internet)

1. E. M. Forster – “The Machine Stops” (Short Story on our Canvas)
2. Bernard McGrane - **The Un-TV and the 10 MPH Car**. 1994, Small Press. (Entire Book on our Canvas)
3. Inge Bell and Team Bell - **This Book Is Not Required**. Revised, Third, or Fourth Ed. 1998/ 2004/2011, Pine Forge. (Entire Book is on Canvas)
4. Bernard McGrane and John Gunderson– **Watching Television is Not Required: Thinking About Media and Thinking About Thinking**. 2010, Routledge (Entire Book is on Canvas)
5. Marie Winn - **The Plug-In Drug, Television, Computers and Family Life**. 25th Anniversary Ed. 1977/2002, Penguin Books (**Not** on Canvas)
6. Jerry Mander - **Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television**. 1978, Quill William Morrow & Co. (**Not** on Canvas)
7. Jaron Lanier – **Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts, Right Now,** 2018. Picador, Henry Holt and Company. (**Not** on Canvas)
8. Bill McKibben - **The Age of Missing Information**. 1992, Random House.(**Not** on Canvas)
9. Vance Packard – **The Hidden Persuaders**. 1957/2007. (**Not** on Canvas)
10. Nicolaus Carr—**The Shallows: What the Internet is doing to our Brains**, 2010/2020 (**Not** on Canvas)
11. Colin McGinn- **The Power of Movies: How Screen and Mind Interact**, 2007. (**Not** on Canvas)
12. Possibles: (Both on Canvas); Adam Gazzaley-**The Distracted Mind—Ancient Brains in a High-Tech World,** 2016**;** Anton Barba-Kay-**A Web of Our Own Making—The Nature of Digital Formation,** 2023**.**

**Required Films/Documentaries we will possibly be watching (mostly in class**):

**Major Full-Length Films**: The Matrix, The Truman Show, Network, The Social Network,

**Documentaries**: Ivory Tower, The Social Dilemma, Tik Tok, Boom, Adam Gazzaley’s PBS’s The Distracted Mind, NOVA: From A to Z (Print & Writing), Consuming Kids, Killing Us Softly, John Berger’s BBC “Ways of Seeing”, Brainwashed: Sex-Camera-Power, Dreamworlds, The Mask You Live In, Tough Guise, The Ad and the Id, The Ad and the Ego, Advertising & The American Dream (From Madmen), Outfoxed, The Brainwashing of My Dad (About losing her Father to Talk Radio and Fox News), Control Room (Al Jazeera TV), The United States of Conspiracy (Alex Jones); American Insurrection.

Recommended:

a.. Shoshana Zuboff – **The Age of Surveillance Capitalism**. 2019, Hachette Book Group

b. Adam Alter – **Irresistible, The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked.** 2017. Penguin

c. **Watch Out for Children: A Mother’s Statement to Advertisers**

d. Mortimer Adler – **How to Read a Book** – (Powerful aids for your reading

1. Natalie Goldstein – **Writing Down the Bones** and writing skills.)
2. Frederick Pohl – **The Space Merchants; The Merchant Wars** (Sci.Fi.)
3. Herbert Gans – **Deciding What’s News**
4. Wilson B. Key – **Subliminal Seduction**
5. Todd Gitlan – **Inside Prime Time; The Whole World Is Watching; Watching Television**
6. Gaye Gitlan – **Making News**
7. Will Wright – **Six-guns and Society**
8. Guy Debord – **Society of the Spectacle**
9. M. Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno – **Dialectics of Enlightenment**
10. Stanley Clavell – **The World Viewed-An Ontology of the Film**
11. Donna W. Cross – **Mediaspeak**
12. Marianne Wex – **Let’s Take Back Our Space**
13. R. Manoff and M. Schudson – **Reading the News**
14. James Monaco – **How to Read a Film**
15. Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Michael Cantor – **Media, Audience and Social Structure; The Great American Values Test**
16. Richard Collins and James Curan – **Media, Culture and Society**
17. Michael Parenti – **Inventing Reality**
18. Jacques Ellul – **Propaganda, The Formation of Men’s Attitudes**
19. Mark Crispin Miller – **Boxed In, The Culture of TV**
20. Helen Baeher and Gillian Dyer – **Boxed In: Women and Television**
21. Jean Baudrillard – Selected Writings
22. Neil Postman – **Amusing Ourselves to Death**
23. George Gilder – **Life After Television**
24. George Trow – **Within the Context of No Context**
25. Jerry Mander – **In the Absence of the Sacred – the Failure of Technology and the Survival of the Indian Nations**
26. Joshua Meyrowitz – **No Sense of Place, The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior**. 1985, Oxford University Press.
27. Editors Eric McLuhan and Frank Zingrove - **The Essential McLuhan**. 1995, Basic Books.
28. David Foster Wallace - “Television and U.S. Fiction” essay; **The Infinite Jest** (novel).
29. Judith Williamson – **Decoding Advertisements**. 1978, Marion Boyars.
30. Michael Schudson – **Advertising: The Uneasy Persuasion**. 1986, Basic Books
31. Thomas de Zengotita – **Mediated: How the Media Shapes Your World And The Way You Live In It,** 2005, Bloomsbury

Course Statement:

“People who like to avoid shocking discoveries, who prefer to believe that society is just what they were taught in Sunday School, who like the safety of the rules and maxims of what Alfred Schutz has called ‘the world-taken-for-granted,’ should **stay away** from sociology.” (Peter Berger, in Invitation to Sociology.)

“Mass education, in many respects, has become *another* mass medium.” (C. Wright Mills, in The Power Elite.)

“To believe that the world is only as you think it is, is stupid…The world is a mysterious place.” (Don Juan in Journey to Ixtlan.)

“Every person in our time lives in two worlds. One is the natural, flesh-and-blood world that has been the environment of human beings since the origins of Homo sapiens…The other world in which most human beings live today is the mass media world.” (Ben Bagdikian in Media Monopoly, 2005: xii)

“Advertising is legalized lying.” H. G. Wells

This course will be a critical exploration – on both the “objective” and the “personal” level – of the phenomenon conventionally labeled “mass media;” an examination of the origin, history and functions of “mass media” and its pervasive effects on our social life. What social conditions brought about the phenomena of “mass media”? How do the media, in turn, shape the texture of our experience of social reality and social history? How much of our version of reality has been shaped, molded and tailored by the media? It is not until an event, principle, movement, institution, etc. *crosses the media threshold or media membrane* that it takes on a solid, legitimate, and confirmed **reality** for us today. Is the function of mass media to inform, educate, entertain, and enlighten or rather to deform and endarken, to train us to become more and more unaware of how we actually live our lives, more and more actively ignorant? How does the mass media mix with and permeate the texture of our intimate experience of who we are, of how we experience our personal and social identities? We hope to develop a keen media awareness that will help us all more sanely live *with* the media in this world, instead of living *in* the world of the media. This ‘balanced media awareness’ was well described by a recent reviewer of Anna Lembke’s 2023, **Dopamine Nation**, “We’re living in a time of unprecedented access to high-reward, high-dopamine stimuli: drugs, food, news, gambling, shopping, gaming, texting, sexting, Facebooking, TikToking, Instagraming, You tubing, tweeting….The increased numbers, variety, and potency is staggering. The smartphone is the modern-day hypodermic needle, delivering digital dopamine 24/7 for a wired generation. As such we’ve all become vulnerable to compulsive overconsumption.”

In reference to the great historical, tectonic transformations from the oral age to the print age to the electronic age we will inquire into how the medium of Gutenberg’s typographic print and the ‘*book*’ influenced our foundational frames of reference towards “education,” “knowledge,” “truth,” and “reality”? We will ask, is TV and the Internet a neutral technology –perhaps like the electric light bulb – or is it more of a hyper-hypnotic force and technique of social control, a la Orwell’s 1984? Etc.

What does the **practice** called “watching television” (or “reading a book, “or “listening to the radio,” or “surfing the web,” or “checking social media”) actually, phenomenologically consist of? Does “news reporting” simply “report” how things are, or does it perhaps function more to promote an ontology of the social world and a disguised form of further entertainment, further distraction? Can we justifiably say that the primary role of the media is to serve as a delivery system for advertisers and consumerism as a way of life? How has advertising affected, infected, and infested our view of ourselves? How has the media impacted our experience of political democracy? Etc.

###### An Optimistic Calendar AND ROAD MAP: Readings

*You are absolutely responsible for everything that occurs in class whether you are present or not. Many instructions only given orally in class.(Find 2 classmates to connect with if you miss a class.) This syllabus is a guide for an educational journey, not a legal document. Please relate to it accordingly*. *If we are in an in-person class environment*, ***all electronic devices must be turned off and put away during class.***

INTRODUCTIONS / FIRST DAY-LAST DAY/ LISTENING PRACTICE / WRITING PRACTICE / GRADES/ FORM VS CONTENT

Week 1 (JAN 30) Required Readings: 1st, THIS ENTIRE SYLLABUS (closely), then, Bell, This Book Is Not Required, (on Canvas) Cpts. **Grades**, Support Your Local Teacher, An Academic Question, Questions of Academic Integrity, Everybody Hates to Write, Media Me

E. M. Forster – “The Machine Stops” (On Canvas);

McGrane – The Un-TV and the 10 MPH Car, Prologue, Intro., Ch. 1;

McGrane and Gunderson, Watching Television Is Not Required, Preface, Preview, Cpts 1, 2

FORM VS CONTENT-- EDUCATION VS SCHOOLING: IVORY TOWER (Film).

Week 2 (FEB 6) Required Readings: Continue with the required readings above in Week 1. (1st, THIS ENTIRE SYLLABUS, then, Bell, This Book Is Not Required, Cpts. **Grades**, Support Your Local Teacher, An Academic Question, Questions of Academic Integrity, Everybody Hates to Write, Media Me

E. M. Forster – “The Machine Stops” (On Canvas);

McGrane – The Un-TV and the 10 MPH Car, Prologue, Intro., Cpts. 1;

McGrane and Gunderson, Watching Television Is Not Required, Preface, Preview, Cpts 1, 2)

MEDIA, ADVERTISING, CHILDHOOD

An orienting philosophical quote: “In 1964…McLuhan published UNDERSTANDING MEDIA: THE EXTENSIONS OF MAN [and presented a prophecy, namely] …the dissolution of the liner mind…the ‘electric media’…were breaking the tyranny of text over our thoughts and senses. Our isolated, fragmented selves, locked for centuries in the private reading of printed pages, were becoming whole again, merging into the global equivalent of a tribal village.” Carr, **The Shallows**, p1

Week 3 (FEB 13) Required Readings: Marshall McLuhan, Playboy Interview.

Vance Packard, The Hidden Persuaders, entire.

Marie Winn, The Plug-in Drug, entire.

McGrane and Gunderson – Watching Television is Not Required, cpts 6, 7, 8. (Along with Winn’s book I strongly recommend looking at the pamphlet Watch Out for Children, A Mother’s Statement to Advertisers (On Canvas);

An orienting philosophical quote: “For most of history, the normal path of human thought was anything but linear. To read a book was to practice an unnatural process of thought, one that demanded sustained, unbroken attention to a single, static object.” Carr, **The Shallows**, p.64

Week 4 (FEB 20) Required Readings: Continue same as week 2: Marshall McLuhan, Playboy Interview.

Vance Packard, The Hidden Persuaders**,** (entire)

Marie Winn, The Plug-in Drug, entire

McGrane and Gunderson – Watching Television is Not Required, cpts 6, 7, 8

(Along with Winn’s book I strongly recommend looking at the pamphlet Watch Out for Children, A Mother’s Statement to Advertisers(On Canvas);

Week 5 (FEB 27) **EXAM #1 DUE FEB 27** (Paper and digital)

Required Readings: Mander, Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television, entire.

McKibben, The Age of Missing Information (entire)

Meyerowitz, No Sense of Place, The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior. (Selections on Canvas)

Wallace “Television and U.S. Fiction.” (Short Essay on Canvas)

McGrane and Gunderson, Watching Television Is Not Required, cpts 3-6

TELEVISION, NATURE, THE NATURAL WORLD

Week 6 (MARCH 5) Required Readings: Mander, Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television, entire.

McKibben, The Age of Missing Information (entire)

Meyerowitz, No Sense of Place, The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior. (Selections on Canvas)

Wallace “Television and U.S. Fiction.” (Short Essay on Canvas)

McGrane and Gunderson, Watching Television Is Not Required, cpts 3-6

**A THOUGHT FOR TODAY:**

The television, that insidious beast, that Medusa which freezes a billion people to stone every night, staring fixedly, that Siren which called and sang and promised so much and gave, after all, so little. -Ray Bradbury, science-fiction writer (22 Aug 1920-2012)

Week 7 (MARCH 12) Required: Mander, Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television, entire.

McKibben, The Age of Missing Information

Meyerowitz, No Sense of Place, The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior. (Selections on Canvas)

Wallace “Television and U.S. Fiction.” (Short Essay on Canvas)

McGrane and Gunderson, Watching Television Is Not Required, cpts 3-6

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*SPRING BREAK\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Week 8 (MARCH 26) Required Mander, Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television, entire.

McKibben, The Age of Missing Information

Meyerowitz, No Sense of Place, The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior. (Selections on Canvas)

Wallace “Television and U.S. Fiction.” (Short Essay on Canvas)

McGrane and Gunderson, Watching Television Is Not Required, cpts 3-6

Week 9 (APRIL 2)  **EXAM #2 DUE Oct 29**

Required Readings: Nicholas Carr, The Shallows: What the Internet is doing to our Brains (entire)

Jaron Lanier, Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts, Right Now (entire).

Week 10 (APRIL 9) Required: Required: Nicholas Carr, The Shallows: What the Internet is doing to our Brains (entire)

Jaron Lanier, Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts, Right Now (entire).

Carr, p 118, “…when we go online, we enter an environment that promotes cursory reading, hurried and distracted thinking, and superficial learning. It’s possible to think deeply while surfing the Net, just as it is possible to think shallowly while reading a book, but that’s not the type of thinking the technology encourages and rewards…With the exceptions of alphabets and number systems, the Net may well be the single most mind-altering technology that has ever come into general use.”

Week 11 (APRIL 16) Required: Nicholas Carr**,** The Shallows: What the Internet is doing to our Brains (entire)

Jaron Lanier, Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts, Right Now (entire).

20th/21st CENTURY ART-- FILM: MIND AND SCREEN

Week 12 (APRIL 23) Required Reading: Colin McGinn- The Power of Movies: How Screen and Mind Interact (entire); Matthew Walker-WhyWeSleep (pgs 3-10; 191-232) On Canvas.

Week 13 (APRIL 30) Required Reading: Colin McGinn- The Power of Movies: How Screen and Mind Interact (entire); Matthew Walker-WhyWeSleep (pgs 3-10; 191-232) On Canvas.

Week 14 (MAY 7) As Above. Required Reading: Colin McGinn- The Power of Movies: How Screen and Mind Interact (entire); Matthew Walker-WhyWeSleep (pgs 3-10; 191-232) On Canvas.

**FINAL EXAM DUE on the Scheduled Exam date**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, EXAM EXERCISES

Exams 1, 2, and 3 will be submitted both *as a hard copy* to the instructor and *in electronic form* to our Canvas site, Assignment/ Turnitin. The student is responsible to do this in order *to assure credit* for the essay. For all the in-class essays and other writings your name *will not go on the front as usual but rather on the back of the last page*.

(Warning: Safari really won't work with submissions to Turnitin.  The item (Word or pdf) will SEEM to upload, so a student is fooled.  But when the student--or teacher--goes to Turnitin later, the item is NOT there. *Chrome and Firefox DO work with TurnItin.)*

1. **Exam #1: Take Home Essay** *(25% of grade*): Formulate and integrate the central arguments of Packard and Winn (including references to Forster, McGrane and Gunderson, and the films we see). (2 to 3 typed pages)
2. **Exam #2: Take Home Essay** (*25% of grade*): Formulate and integrate the central arguments of Mander, McKibben and Meyerowitz (including references to Wallace and the films we see). (2 to 3 typed pages)
3. **Final Exam: Take Home Essay** (*25% of grade*): Formulate and integrate the central arguments of Carr, Lanier, McGinn and Walker (including references to the films we see). (2 to 3 typed pages)
4. **Course Projects** (25% of grade):

a) *Saturday Morning Ghetto*: A field work project involving watching children’s television, interviewing a preschooler about his/her experience of television watching, and doing an anthropological field trip to a toy store. **More information TBA.**

b) *Television Project*: Short paper comparing your experience seeing a show “live” vs. as it appears on TV. **More information on this TBA**.

c) Various other projects (analyzing ads, news, television watching, malls, etc.) will be assigned as we move along. **More information TBA.**

d) Oral reports will be regularly assigned. **More information TBA**

e) Various “*exploriments*” will be assigned from time to time. **More information TBA**

f) Any “extra-credit” papers, projects, experiments, film responses, etc., happily accepted.

1. To work on and improve your reading and writing skills, I recommend you use Writing Down the Bones by Natalie Goldberg and How to Read a Book by Mortimer Adler.

Course Integrity and Discipline

1. Anyone who disrupts the integrity of the class environment – for example through chattering or consistently coming late – will be dropped from the course.
2. Anyone who engages in plagiarism – presenting someone else’s written work as your own – will be dropped/failed from the course and possibly, the university.

**And Now A Word from Chapman:**

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*CHAPMAN GENERIC PORTION FOR ALL CHAPMAN SYLLABI\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

The Chapman University Academic Integrity Policy, Chapman University’s students with Disabilities Policy, and Equity and Diversity policy has been modified. The following is the revised text:

**Chapman University’s Academic Integrity Policy:**

Chapman University is a community of scholars which emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith.  Students are responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated anywhere in the university.

**Chapman University’s Students with Disabilities Policy:**

In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. The University, through the Disability Services Office, will work with the appropriate faculty member who is asked to provide the accommodations for a student in determining what accommodations are suitable based on the documentation and the individual student needs. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

**Equity and Diversity**

Chapman University is committed to ensuring equality and valuing diversity. Students and professors are reminded to show respect at all times as outlines in Chapman’s Harassment and Discrimination Policy: <http://tinyurl.com/CUHarassment-Discrimination>. Any violations of this policy should be discussed with the professor, the Dean of Students and/or otherwise reported in accordance with this policy.

**Learning Objectives**

Students will display the ability to state and support a thesis; apply knowledge of critical reasoning, accurately interpret philosophic, literary and scientific sources, and clearly communicate a balanced account in writing. They will further display an ability to construct and analyze complex arguments, and distinguish good reasoning from bad as well as demonstrate knowledge of some of the most important figures and theories in the History of Reflections on the media and also demonstrate knowledge about and skill in logical reasoning. Further they will demonstrate an ability to understand and critically evaluate philosophies from cultures and world views besides one’s own, and see our culture from outside perspectives

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*END OF GENERIC PORTION OF SYLLABUS\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY:

The greatest obstacle to discovering the shape of the earth, the continents, and the oceans was not ignorance but the illusion of knowledge. -Daniel J. Boorstin, historian, professor, attorney, and writer (1914-2004)

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