Introduction: This course deals with the relationship between media, culture and the study of cities. The aims of this course are two-fold. The first is to look at a number of recent works in cultural theory which offer conceptual tools for the analysis of media and cultural artefacts grounded in the analysis of cities. This is the case, in particular, for the “circulation” and “relational” models taken up at different points in the class. The second aim is to look at different media or cultural forms and the manner in which the study thereof has been shaped by the recent wave of theorizing about cities.

Readings and secondary materials: The readings will be posted to the course section available on Web-CT. This course will be making limited use of Web-CT. I will be posting any Powerpoint slides used in class, links to interesting other materials and so on. While the class is not primarily about monitoring current developments in urban media, I would like us to note and discuss these as they occur, and Web-CT is an efficient way of disseminating links to news reports on such developments or interesting new scholarship.

The most regular use of the Web-CT listserv will be for the reading “highlights” – see below under “Marking and Assignments”.

Marking and Assignments

Attendance and participation: 20%. This mark is self-explanatory, but its principal purpose is to provide incentives for active participation in the class. The quality of participation is as important as the quantity. Regular attendance is expected.

Reading “highlights” exercise: 20%. For each week’s class, you are required to choose one of the readings and write a paragraph (150-250 words) highlighting what, for you, is the most interesting or important idea or concept in that reading. The paragraph should briefly summarize the idea and give some sense of why you think it is important. These paragraphs should be sent in emails distributed to the class through the Web-CT “Discussion” tool by 6pm each Wednesday before the next day’s class. This exercise is meant to provide some basis for the class discussion. You are required to do 10 of these exercises, beginning with the week of September 9th (which means that you may skip a couple of weeks.)

Team-Based Urban Site Analysis: (30%) The purpose of it is to present an analysis of a particular site within Montreal in terms of its place within media flows and cultural processes.

This exercise will be undertaken in groups of 3-4. You should have arrived at the composition of your
group by the end of September. Each group should choose a given space within Montreal. The space may be as small as an individual building and no larger than a city block or street corner. Your analysis should provide an inventory of media-related activity occurring within and upon this space. This inventory should include information on as many as possible of the following features of the site: ownership of media, rhythms and frequency of usage, range of dissemination of media “messages”, range and variety of connections to other places, forms of content and textuality produced or disseminated at this space, and so on. You are encouraged to be creative and playful.

Please note that, while it is expected that most of you will look at a site in its present condition, you are welcome and encouraged to undertake the historical analysis of a site. That is, you may choose a moment in history and reconstruct the mediated character of the space at that moment, or trace the development of a site over a length of time which you have chosen.

The output of this exercise will be a presentation in the last class, which should last approximately 20 minutes. This presentation should include significant audio visual materials.

Final Essay: 30% Students are required to submit a final paper of approximately 20 pages on an issue raised by the readings or discussions in the class. While it should include examples or case studies, you are invited to prepare papers which are theoretical in character. The choice of topics is up to you, but these must be approved by me. This paper is due on December 10th.

Plagiarism and Student Conduct
Students should be familiar with McGill University’s student policies and student responsibilities. Special attention should be paid to the policies on plagiarism. McGill policy and student responsibilities can be found online at http://ww2.mcgill.ca/students-handbook/.

Schedule of topics and readings

September 2: Introduction and Overview

September 9. Media Theories of the City


September 16: Circulation


September 23 The 'Word City'


September 30 Night and the City


October 7 Public Space and Spectacle


October 14 Streets, Markets and Festivals


October 21 The “Creative City” Paradigm


And these texts, which you can download yourself.


Imagine a Toronto . . . Strategies for a Creative City

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**October 28 Ruins, Depatisation and Waste**


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**November 4: Surrealism, Situationism**


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**November 11: Cinema and the City**


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**November 18: class cancelled (professor away)**

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**November 25: Site analysis team presentations**