Course Description
Over the last decade or so, scholars in several disciplines have embarked on a series of media-archaeological excavations, sifting through the layers of early and obsolete practices and technologies of communication. The archaeological metaphor evokes both the desire to recover material traces of the past and the imperative to situate those traces in their social, cultural, and political contexts — while always watching our steps. This seminar will examine some of the most important contributions to the field of media archaeology and, most importantly, provide an ongoing research studio in which participants undertake archaeological projects of their own.

Course Objectives
The course has three objectives:

1. To become familiar with the major debates and methodological advances of an expanding field within media/communication studies.
2. To become knowledgeable about relevant archival resources at NYU and in the New York area more generally.
3. To utilize methodological skills and archival resources to complete a significant work of original research in media archaeology.

Course Requirements
You are expected to attend all seminars prepared to discuss the day’s readings in detail. There will be two short (5-7 pp.) essays in which you evaluate how authors formulate arguments and deploy textual and audiovisual evidence.

You will also be asked to report regularly on your own research as you progress towards the final paper (25-30 pp.). This paper will be a significant, original investigation into an early or obsolete media technology. Details of the paper will be discussed in class.

Participation will constitute 30% of the final grade; each short paper will constitute 15%; the final paper will constitute 40%. You should already be familiar with NYU’s policies and procedures concerning plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct. Violations will not be tolerated.

Required Readings (tentative)
Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge
Martin Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology
Thomas Hughes, Human-Built World
Friedrich Kittler, Gramophone/Film/Typewriter
Avital Ronell, The Telephone Book
Siegfried Zielinski, The Deep Time of Media
Lisa Gitelman, Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines
Ruben Gallo, Mexican Modernity
Lorraine Daston, “Type Specimens and Scientific Memory,” Critical Inquiry 31 (1)
Jonathan Sterne, Audible Pasts
Timothy Lenoir, ed. Inscribing Science
Jonathan Crary, Techniques of the Observer
Structure of the Course (tentative)

**Weeks 1-2**
Introductions, background

**Weeks 3-5**

**Weeks 6-7**
• Readings from recent work in media archaeology
• Meetings with librarians and archivists from NYU, Museum of the Moving Image, Edison National Historical Site, etc.
• Development of list of media artifacts for research (e.g., magic lanterns, photographic guns, pneumatic tubes, etc)
• Discussion of research plans and procedures

**Weeks 8-12**
• Class split into groups which immediately head to the archives as discussed in previous meetings.
• Each group comes each week prepared to report on progress, discuss problems, solicit advice, present draft dossiers.
• Professors lead group critiques.
• Continue to read and discuss recent works in media archaeology

**Weeks 13-15**
Presentation of final work. Final critiques. Final dossiers due at term’s end.

**Grading Rubric**
A — Excellent. Student exhibits exemplary creativity through historical research and critical analysis. Research and writing is lucid and engaging with zero mistakes.
B — Good. References to the course material are well-selected and topical. Critical analysis is present, but largely rehearsed from class lecture and discussion. Student's style is clear and has very few mistakes.
C — Satisfactory. References to the course material are well-selected and topical, but student performs little or no historical or critical analysis. Problems exist in student's work. Work consists mostly of underdeveloped ideas, off-topic sources or examples, inappropriate research, or anecdotes.
D — Unsatisfactory. Student does not engage with the material and no historical or critical analysis is present. Substantial problems exist in student's work.
F — Fail. Student does not submit work, or work is below unsatisfactory level