

History of Media Studies Newsletter May 2025

*Welcome to the 50th edition of the **History of Media Studies Newsletter**. The monthly email, assembled by Dave Park, Jeff Pooley, and Pete Simonson, maintains a loose affiliation with the new **History of Media Studies** journal and the **Working Group on the History of Media Studies**. Please **contact us** with any questions, suggestions, or items.*

1. Working Group on the History of Media Studies

The next remote session of the **Working Group on the History of Media Studies** will be Wednesday, September 17, 14:00–15:00 UTC (10am–11am EDT)—devoted to a working paper by member Angela Xiao Wu. Details, a Zoom link, and the paper download will be added to the **Working Group page** soon.

Hosted by the **Consortium for History of Science, Technology and Medicine** (CHSTM), the Working Group Open to anyone interested in the history of the media studies fields. **Instructions to join** are **here**. Questions? **Contact us***

2. Conferences, Calls & Announcements

*If you have a call or announcement relevant to the history of media studies, please **contact us**.*

1. CFP: *História dos Estudos de Comunicação no Mundo de Língua Portuguesa*

- [See link for Portuguese, Spanish, and English versions of the call] This symposium will give participants an opportunity to map, critique, and celebrate the histories of communication studies in the Portuguese-speaking world—including Portugal, Brazil, Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP), East

Timor, Macau, and the diasporas—by inquiring into how the dynamics of colonialism, post-colonialism, dictatorships, and globalization have shaped the field. We have a twofold commitment: to decentre dominant narratives, highlighting epistemologies, institutions, and marginalized figures; and to connect the multiple Portuguese-speaking world traditions, exploring transatlantic dialogues and tensions and resistances. We encourage papers that explore connections among Portugal Africa, Brazil, East Timor, and Macau, as well as connections with other countries and regions in the “Global South.”

- Conference dates: 11 and 12 December 2025
- **Deadline:** 30 July 2025
- [More details](#)

2. Call for Papers: Harold Lasswell and the Return of Propaganda: The Centenary of Propaganda Technique in the World War

- Among the important events related to propaganda research whose tradition re-emerged in these first three decades of the 20th century, one stands out as a turning point: the first doctoral thesis on the subject, defended by political scientist Harold Lasswell in 1926 at the University of Chicago, which also celebrates its centenary. Published the following year, *Propaganda Technique in the World War* became the pioneering landmark in academic studies on war propaganda and transformed its author into the most important American expert on the subject for many years. This *Esferas* dossier celebrates not only the centenary of Harold Lasswell's thesis but also the approaching centenary of propaganda studies, founded on the need to understand this product of the media and which, despite its multiple facets, continues to present itself as an urgent problem to be interpreted in contemporary times.
- **Deadline:** 15 December 2025
- [More details](#)

3. Online seminar: Film From Within: A Transnational History of the Slade Film Department

- In 1960 the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London, became home to Britain's first university film department.
- Conference dates: Britain did not have a national film school at the time, but the Slade Film Department stands in an intriguing and revealing relationship with the National Film and Television School, which was being debated throughout

the Slade Film Department's 1960s heyday, and which opened in 1971. Birghid Lowe and Henry Miller's paper discusses it as a different kind of film school, with a different relationship to the industry.

- 4 June 2025, 16:00 to 17:30 CEST
- [More details](#)

3. The Journal

In May *History of Media Studies* published an "Up from the Stacks" special section on the U.S. philosopher Susanne Langer's reflections on film:

- Jefferson Pooley and Sue Curry Jansen, "[A Note on Langer: An Introduction to the Susanne Langer on Film Special Section](#)"
- Susanne K. Langer, "[A Note on the Film](#)" (1953)
- Courtenay Wyche Beinhorn, "[Susanne Langer's Film Theory: Elaboration and Implications](#)" (1974)
- Tereza Hadravova, "[Film as a Dream of the Modern Man: Interpretation of Susanne Langer's 'Note on the Film'](#)" (2020, updated)

History of Media Studies encourages [submissions \(en español\)](#) on the history of research, education, and reflective knowledge about media and communication—as expressed through academic institutions; through commercial, governmental, and non-governmental organizations; and through "alter-traditions" of thought and practice often excluded from the academic mainstream.

4. New Publications

Works listed here are newly published, or new to the [bibliography](#).

The [History of Communication Research Bibliography](#) is a project of the [Annenberg School for Communication Library Archives \(ASCLA\)](#) at the University of Pennsylvania.

1. *MIT Technology Review*. "A Brief, Weird History of Brainwashing." April 12, 2024. <https://www.technologyreview.com/2024/04/12/1090726/brainwashing-mind-control-history-operation-midnight-climax/>.

ABSTRACT: *[first paragraph, in lieu of abstract] On an early spring day in 1959, Edward Hunter testified before a US Senate subcommittee investigating "the effect of Red China Communes on the United States." It was the kind of opportunity he relished. A war correspondent who had spent considerable time in Asia, Hunter had achieved brief media stardom in 1951 after his book Brain-Washing in Red China introduced a new concept to the American public: a supposedly scientific system for changing people's minds, even making them love things they once hated.*

2. Blüml, Jan. "Sociology of Popular Music in Czechoslovakia (1948--1989)." *Popular Music* 43, no. 3 (2024): 362--80.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143024000461>.

ABSTRACT: *This article focuses on the history of the Czechoslovak sociology of popular music, which formed at the beginning of the 1960s. The article first examines the origins of thinking about 'mass music genres' in the Czech lands in the interwar period. It further discusses considerations of mass music genres and their audiences after World War II in light of the communist takeover in 1948, Stalinism of the 1950s and liberalisation of the 1960s. Finally, the article presents the situation after the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in 1968. Based on analysis of archival sources and original theoretical texts, hitherto unknown in the context of Anglophone scholarship, this article seeks to show how the specific political background of the Central European state behind the Iron Curtain determined the foundation, scholarly focus and social role of the sociology of popular music and how it differed from the situation in Western capitalist countries.*

3. Cloonan, Martin, Jochen Eisentraut, Franco Fabbri, Simon Frith, David Horn, Bruce Johnson, Yngvar B. Steinholt, Garry Tamlyn, Martha Tupinambá De Ulhôa, and Peter Wicke. "Philip Tagg (22 February 1944--9 May 2024)." *Popular Music* 43, no. 2 (May 2024): 237--46. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143025000017>.

ABSTRACT: *[first paragraph, in lieu of abstract] Phil Tagg. Where do you start? By acknowledging a totally unique and amazing human being who pioneered work in his field and thus made the world a better place for thousands of scholars. A true one-off, the like of whom we shall not see again. An obsessive, contrary and brilliant character whom you could never forget meeting. A great bloke to go for a pint with and a bastard to argue with. All this and more. I will remember Phil best as a wonderfully warm person whose generosity matched his brilliant mind. There was never a dull moment with Phil. He made you think and provoked you. He did all this because he absolutely believed that scholarship mattered, that it was important to get things right. In part, I think, this was because in its early days what became Popular Music Studies faced a lot of opposition within the academy.*

It would win few friends with shoddy scholarship and Phil was determined that that would not happen. He cared and wanted other people to care too. Otherwise, what was the point?

4. Collins, Samuel Gerald. "Communication without Control: Anthropology and Alternative Models of Information at the Josiah Macy, Jr. Conferences in Cybernetics." *History of Anthropology Review* 49 (January 19, 2025).
<https://histanthro.org/notes/communication-without-control-macy-conferences/>.

ABSTRACT: *[first paragraph, in lieu of abstract] The Josiah Macy, Jr. Conferences on Cybernetics (1946-1953) originated at a moment of limitless optimism for a "new lingua franca" where a "universal language of information, feedback, and homeostasis" would lead to a capacity to "model all organisms from the level of the cell to that of society" (Kline, 2020: 13). It would be difficult to find another meeting with quite the same scope and soaring ambitions. Including the physical sciences, biology, neuroscience, linguistics, psychology alongside anthropology, the Macy conferences seemed to herald a new era where experts could speak to each other with a common language that would underwrite post-war technocratic dreams. And, as Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson hoped, anthropology would prove key to the development of that language.*

5. Fossa, Fabio, and Roberto Franzini Tibaldeo. "Hans Jonas's Image Theory." *Intellectual History Review* 35, no. 2 (2025): 267--87.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17496977.2024.2369831>.

ABSTRACT: *This essay explores Jonas's multifaceted and rich enquiries into the notion of image. In particular, it argues that reflecting on the "image" helps Jonas clarify the unique condition of human existence, where the twine of thought and being reveals a paradoxical (and yet crucial) relationship between time and eternity, change and permanence, immanence and transcendence. The employ of the interpretative device provided by the image enables a nuanced understanding of the human complexity which goes beyond the partial and reductive descriptions of relativistic immanentism, on the one hand, and immutable transcendence, on the other. By commenting upon its anthropological, aesthetic, and ethical significance, we propose that the study of Jonas's thoughts on the image not only offers valuable insights into the philosophical understanding of such a fascinating object, but also sheds a new and interesting light on the unity of his oeuvre.*

6. Norton, Bryan. "Our Tools Shape Our Selves." *Aeon*, April 1, 2024.
<https://aeon.co/essays/bernard-stieglers-philosophy-on-how-technology-shapes-our-world>.

ABSTRACT: *[first paragraph, in lieu of abstract] It has become almost impossible to separate the effects of digital technologies from our everyday experiences. Reality is parsed through glowing screens, unending data feeds, biometric feedback loops, digital prostheses and expanding networks that link our virtual selves to satellite arrays in geostationary orbit. Wristwatches interpret our physical condition by counting steps and heartbeats. Phones track how we spend our time online, map the geographic location of the places we visit and record our histories in digital archives. Social media platforms forge alliances and create new political possibilities. And vast wireless networks -- connecting satellites, drones and 'smart' weapons -- determine how the wars of our era are being waged. Our experiences of the world are soaked with digital technologies. But for the French philosopher Bernard Stiegler, one of the earliest and foremost theorists of our digital age, understanding the world requires us to move beyond the standard view of technology. Stiegler believed that technology is not just about the effects of digital tools and the ways that they impact our lives. It is not just about how devices are created and wielded by powerful organisations, nation-states or individuals. Our relationship with technology is about something deeper and more fundamental. It is about technics.*

7. Opekar, Aleš. "Non-Academic Writing on Popular Music in the Czech Lands after 1945." *Popular Music* 43, no. 3 (2024): 321--43.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143024000473>.

ABSTRACT: *This article examines writing about popular music which took place outside the academic sphere in the Czech nation after 1945. This is not just the usual magazine and book journalism. Owing to the censorship of all publishing entities by the state and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia 1948--1989, alternative publishing platforms played a very important role in mediating the professional exchange of opinions and information on topics that were not preferred or even forbidden elsewhere. These included periodicals of various social organisations and interest institutions as well as privately produced and distributed printed matter and manuscripts. The article compares how these activities have evolved over time in the context of political change and reflects on the functions they have fulfilled in society.*

8. Parry, Katy. "Editorial Introduction: Media, War & Conflict's 15-Year Anniversary Special Issue." *Media, War & Conflict* 18, no. 2 (2025): 165--78.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/17506352251341806>.

ABSTRACT: *[first paragraph, in lieu of abstract] This Special Issue began life as a pre-conference at the International Communication Association (ICA) annual conference in Toronto, Canada, in May 2023, entitled 'Reimagining the field of Media, War and Conflict in the age of information disorder', supported by the ICA Visual Communication division. The pre-conference celebrated the 15-year*

anniversary of Media, War & Conflict, and aimed to build on the thriving community the journal established with our 5-year anniversary conference in London, and 10th anniversary conference in Florence. Before summarizing the selected articles for this anniversary special issue, I present a section looking back at how the scholarship we have published over 15 years has responded to shifts in media technologies and disruptions to the professional context for journalists, and how it has employed various conceptual frameworks to understand how media intervene in a variety of war and conflict situations. With an interest in the authorship patterns as well as the content, I provide data on the countries where our authors are based institutionally and note a gradual shift toward internationalization, a trend we hope to encourage further.

9. Shepperd, Josh. "Research and Development: Emergence of Communication Studies: Reception Research as a Strategic Tool of Media Reform." In *Shadow of the New Deal: The Victory of Public Broadcasting*, 113--49. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2023. <https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/?id=p087257>.

ABSTRACT: *[first paragraph, in lieu of abstract] In 1927 the Federal Radio Commission (FRC) set a precedent that media regulation would follow metric-based, technocratic evidence in determining frequency allocations, which created a path dependency that discourages around ownership "diversity" were subject to technocratic and standardized models of evaluation. Judge E. O. Sykes, who sat on the original FRC deliberations and was unable to pass a post-Communications Act amendment for educators to receive reserved channels, discovered that his colleagues at the Office of Education also sought evidentiary methods for classroom assessment. Reformers received the FCC's decision as a concession to free market principles that blocked implementation of an equitable playing field for noncommercial broadcasters in 1935. Yet administrative pressures set by the FCC and Office of Education exerted a positive influence upon subsequent educational advocacy. Sykes advised reformers that their future success would be contingent upon careful mastery of the institutional and logistical strategies of broadcasting, within the standards set by "public interest."*

10. Subtil, Filipa, José Luís Garcia, and W. Wedny Leeds-Hurwitz. "Media and Multiple Identities: Robert E. Park as Precursor to Intercultural Communication Theory and Research." In *Historical Intersections of Intercultural Studies: Tracing Genealogies, Trajectories, Diversifications*, edited by Michael Steppat and Steve J. Kulich, 11:335--60. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2024.

ABSTRACT: *Robert E. Park's early study of foreign-language newspapers in urban centers hosting multiple immigrant groups deserves recognition as an important precursor to several current assumptions within intercultural communication, especially the move away from equating cultures with nations, and the possibility*

of simultaneously holding multiple identities. Park's research on the media's influence on identity construction contains theoretical contributions that remain highly relevant to a world increasingly configured by global media: in particular, on accepting complexity and the fact that individuals may and do simultaneously hold multiple and conflicting identities. Hence, beyond the nation-state, the appropriate unit of analysis became the ethnic group.

11. Szemere, Anna, and Ádám Ignácz. "Utopianism, Activism and Networks: Insights into the Early Work of János Maróthy." *Popular Music* 43, no. 3 (2024): 301--20. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143024000436>.

ABSTRACT: This article explores the relationships between utopianism, activism and networks in the early career of the Hungarian musicologist János Maróthy (1925--2001). A prolific author of pioneering work on the social history of European peasant and urban folk songs from the antiquity to the modern era, Maróthy is noteworthy for establishing academic research of popular music in Hungary, both preceding and contributing to the emergence of new musicology and popular music studies in European and Anglo-American academia at the turn of the 1980s. Maróthy mediated between various grassroots movements and the party state's institutions and was a participant observer of various off-the-mainstream music-related scenes formed in Romani workers' hostels and jazz clubs. His Department of Music Sociology (at the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) conducted and commissioned research on the local history of workers' songs, urban folklore, empirical studies of musical taste, and the social life and institutions of youth music. This article offers a critical overview of Maróthy's career from its onset in 1948 up to the mid-1960s. This turbulent period witnessed the most repressive years of Stalinism, the anti-Soviet revolution of 1956, its defeat, and the gradual consolidation of a more liberal Kádár-led regime. It examines how changing political and intellectual trends, ideologies and national and supranational realignments within the Soviet Bloc (and beyond) shaped the forms and meanings of Maróthy's multi-faceted activism, along with his shifting ideas about the relationships between music, political movements and entertainment.

12. Wicke, Peter. "Popular Music Studies behind the Iron Curtain: The Constitution of Popular Music Research in East-Central Europe before 1989." *Popular Music* 43, no. 3 (October 2024): 267--300. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143024000412>.

ABSTRACT: The study of popular music in the Soviet-controlled East-Central European region has yet to receive the attention it merits. The objective of this study was to fill this gap by investigating the genealogy of popular music research in East Central Europe prior to 1989. It provides a comprehensive account of the evolution of popular music research in socialist East-Central Europe, with a

particular focus on Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany. It delineates the challenges encountered by researchers in reconciling their work with the complex cultural and political conditions of the era. Furthermore, it considers the influence of Marxist ideology on musicology and sociology, and how this may have shaped research. It offers new perspectives on the history of popular music studies in this domain, which has been lightly explored until now. It seeks to shed light on the intricate relationship between music, politics and ideology behind the Iron Curtain.

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