



Prof. Dr. Zeno Ackermann
Prof. Dr. Gesine Drews-Sylla
Prof. Dr. MaryAnn Snyder-Körber

JMU Würzburg (Germany)
Winter term 2024/25

Course announcement:

Smartphone Cultures

(Online research seminar / #WueOnline)

As a transnationally open installment of our CULTURAL STUDIES COLLOQUIA series, this online research seminar brings the perspective of cultural studies to bear on **the smartphone as a key node in the cultural circuitry of our contemporary moment.**

We will investigate the virtual world/s created, the online practices facilitated, and the 'artificial intelligences' articulated by the phone and by the digital networks to which it links its users. However, our primary accent will be on the **real uses made of the phone** in *on-site* social, economic or political contexts – and on the **direct or indirect effects** of such uses. How, for example, do the phone and the technologies it mediates impact individual as well as collective lives, agencies, intelligences or imaginaries? How does the smartphone – in analogue life as well as through online operations – transform social, economic, and natural environments? How is the phone produced and marketed, and what are the material or immaterial consequences? Hardly least, how do the smartphone and its affordances impact the political – either as a conduit for misinformation or as a low-threshold tool and portal of democratic participation?

To explore these questions, the seminar will determinedly **move beyond Western European and North American contexts**, putting a particular emphasis also on **Eastern Europe** and the countries of the former Soviet Union as well as on India and other regions of the so-called **Global South**. The objective is to consider both the local dimensions and the global intersections of smartphone culture/s.



Photo (adapted): Victoria Prymark (licensed through Unsplash).

From the story of the Sony Walkman to the cultural implications of the smartphone

We take inspiration from a classic cultural studies project undertaken by Paul du Gay, Stuart Hall and collaborators in the 1990s. Their Open University course on "Cultures of the Walkman" examined the key mobile entertainment device of that time: the portable cassette player. Telling *The Story of the Sony Walkman*, as they did in the 1997 textbook documentation of the project *Doing Cultural Studies*, allowed for an investigation not only of the Walkman but of the entire culture that sustained the device, its production, and the forms of its practical use. At the same time, the project honed the conceptual tools of cultural analysis, especially in terms of media and articulation studies. We hope that our turning to the smartphone may work along similar lines and engender similar benefits.

Form and organization of the research seminar

The seminar will take place via 'ZOOM' in weekly 90-minute sessions from **mid-October to mid-December 2024**. It will conclude on 30 and 31 January 2025 with a two-partite online symposium in which seminar participants will have the opportunity to present their projects to an expanded audience.

To create a committed and cohesive thinking community, we ask prospective participants to compose a brief (productive or even provocative) **statement of purpose** (of 1 to 1,5 pages) in which they **(1)** introduce themselves and **(2)** outline their interest/s in this semester's topic. Please mail your statement of purpose to culturalstudies@uni-wuerzburg.de by **15 September**.

The Cultural Studies Colloquia are designed for **advanced and graduate students**. In this semester's course, particular emphasis will be placed on transnational participation. As needed, the participation of non-JMU students can be documented via JMU Cultural Studies certificate. We will respond to statements of purpose by 22 September.

"Smartphone Cultures" is part of the **JMU Cultural Studies Colloquia (CSC)** series. For an overview of CSC seminars and Study Days to date as well as the associated JMU Cultural Studies publication series with Würzburg University Press, please visit our website: [LINK](#).

Inspiration

As introduction to topic and approach (and also as a possible inspiration for individual statements of purpose), we particularly recommend looking into the following texts:

Castells, Manuel, et al. *Mobile Communication and Society: A Global Perspective*. Cambridge, MA:

MIT Press, 2006. [Accessible online through UBW.] → Please see the book's conclusion: "The Mobile Network Society" (245-258).

Du Gay, Paul, Stuart Hall, et al. *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*. London: Sage /

Milton Keynes: The Open University 1997. (2nd ed., 2013.) → Please see the general introduction to the book and its first section ("Making Sense of the Walkman") = 1997 ed.: 1-40. [WueCampus.]

Snickars, Pelle, and Patrick Vanderau, ed. *Moving Data: The iPhone and the Future of Media*. New

York: Columbia UP, 2012. → Please see the introduction by the editors (1-16). [WueCampus.]

Vincent, Jane, and Leslie Haddon, eds. *Smartphone Cultures*. London: Routledge, 2019. → Please see the introduction by the editors (1-8). [WueCampus.]

PROGRAMME:

[AR = assigned reading // FR = further reading.]

Meetings on 17/10 & 24/10:

Germany: 4.00-5.30 p.m. / Ukraine: 5.00-6.30 p.m. / India (IST): 7.30-9.00 p.m.

17/10 (Thu.) Introduction:

- **Opening the field** (selected facts & figures)
 - **Individual/regional perspectives & questions**
 - **Basic design of the seminar**
- ➔ Based on participants' statements of interest & the general introductory reading (see below) & input by the teaching team.

Prep for this session:

- Please browse/read participants' statements of interest.

24/10 (Thu.) Studying smartphone cultures:

- **Pondering approaches** (methodological angles & conceptual tools)
- **(Selecting) Topics**

AR:

- Paul du Gay, [General] "Introduction," *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*, by Paul du Gay, Stuart Hall, et al. (Los Angeles: Sage, 1997) 1-5. [WueCampus.]
- Jane Vincent and Leslie Haddon, "Introducing Smartphone Cultures" & "Concluding Smartphone Cultures," *Smartphone Cultures*, ed. Vincent and Haddon (London: Routledge, 2019) 1-8 & 179-191.
- Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vanderau, Introduction, *Moving Data: The iPhone and the Future of Media*, ed. Snickars and Vanderau (New York: Columbia UP, 2012) 1-16. [WueCampus.]

FR:

- Marshall McLuhan, [selections from] *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964; London / New York: Routledge, 2001) – esp. chapter 1, "The Medium is the Message" (7-23); see also chapters 7 and 27.

Prep for this session:

- Please contribute to the open documents 'Topics' and 'Concepts' [WueCampus].

Meetings from 31/10 to 19/12:

Germany: 4.00-5.30 p.m. / Ukraine: 5.00-6.30 p.m. / India (IST): 8.30-10.00 p.m.

31/10 (Thu.) The smartphone as gadget and cultural artefact

- **Design, marketing, and their discursive contexts**
- **(Cinematographic, artistic / literary representations)**

AR:

- Paul du Gay, Stuart Hall, et al., "Making Sense of the Walkman," *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman* (Los Angeles: Sage, 1997) 7-40. [Wue-Campus.]

FR:

- Heidi A. Campbell and Antonio C. La Pastina, "How the iPhone Became Divine: New Media, Religion and the Intertextual Circulation of Meaning." *New Media & Society* 12.7 (2010): 1191-1207. [WueCampus.]
- E. Cabell Hankinson Gathman, "Cell Phones," *The Inner Histories of Devices,* ed. Sherry Turkle (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 41-49. [Available online.]
- **Oliver Ruf, ed. and introd., Smartphone-Ästhetik: Zur Philosophie und Gestaltung mobiler Medien** (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018). [The book's front matter and introduction can be downloaded from the publisher's website: [LINK.](#)]

Prep for this session:

- Responses can be contributed to 'Discussion Forum' [WueCampus].

07/11 (Thu.) Reflection & organization

14/11 (Thu.)

21/11 (Thu.)

28/11 (Thu.)

05/12 (Thu.)

12/12 (Thu.)

19/12 (Thu.)

Topics from 14/11 to the end of the semester:

This research seminar will try to create a proper research dynamic by bringing the actual interests of the group to bear on the seminar. Therefore, we follow an open approach and do not prescribe a predetermined programme for the sessions until the holiday break. Instead, we will collaboratively set the topics for the remaining sessions in 2024.

➔ *Please see the CLUSTERS OF TOPICS and the respective LITERATURE listed BELOW. We will decide in class which topics to pick from (or add to) the list. The main readings to be discussed in the individual meetings will also be jointly chosen.*

[Christmas break: NO meetings on 26/12 and 02/01]

[NO meetings on 09/01, 16/01, and 23/01.]

09/01: Deadline for symposium proposals: If you wish to contribute a presentation to the two-partite concluding symposium – or if you have an idea for a different kind of contribution, please hand in a short proposal by this date.

Symposium-meetings on 30/01 & 31/01:

Germany: 3-6 p.m. / Ukraine: 4-7 p.m. / India (IST): 7.30-10.30 p.m.

30/01 (Thu.) Concluding symposium 'Smartphone Cultures' (part 1)

31/01 (Fri.) Concluding symposium 'Smartphone Cultures' (part 2)

TOPICS (for meetings between 14/11 and 19/12 and for the symposium):

This is only a preliminary list of overarching topics and key subtopics. Please let us know about important topics/perspectives that are still missing. We envision choosing six focused topics/subtopics from a list that will have been expanded with further examples and texts.

(1) THE 'LIFE CYCLE' OF THE PHONE: Producing / recycling / dumping

- [From:] Jenny Chan, Ngai Pun, and Mark Selden, *Dying for an iPhone: Apple, Foxconn, and the Lives of China's Workers* (London: Pluto Press, 2020).
- *Dying for an iPhone*. Website. < <https://dyingforaniphone.com/overview/>>.

(2) HANDLING and OPERATING the 'phone'

- DOMESTICATING the phone
 - Troels Fibaek Bertel, "Domesticating Smartphones," *Smartphone Cultures*, ed. Jane Vincent and Leslie Haddon (London: Routledge, 2019) 83-94.
- CHARGING the phone
 - Maren Hartmann, "Circuit(s) of Affective Infrastructuring: Smartphones and Electricity," *Smartphone Cultures*, ed. Jane Vincent and Leslie Haddon (London: Routledge, 2019) 11-24.
- TOUCHSCREEN gestures – 'Browsing' / 'scrolling' / 'swiping'
 - Stefan Werning, "Swipe to Unlock: How the Materiality of the Touchscreen Frames Media Use and Corresponding Perceptions of Media Content," *Digital Culture & Society* 1.1 (2015): 55-71. [Open access: [LINK.](#)]

- WRITING & TEXTING

- Sora Park and Naomi S. Baron, "Experiences of Writing on Smartphones, Laptops, and Paper in the Digital Age," *Smartphone Cultures*, ed. Jane Vincent and Leslie Haddon (London: Routledge, 2019) 150-162.

(3) SITES of smartphone culture/s

- PUBLIC and PRIVATE spaces and places

- Stephen Groening, "From 'a box in the theater of the world' to 'the world as your living room': Cellular Phones, Television and Mobile Privatization." *New Media & Society* 12.8 (2010): 1331-1347. [\[LINK.\]](#)

- SCHOOL

- Leslie Haddon, "Domestication and Social Constraints on ICT Use: Children's Engagement with Smartphones," *Smartphone Cultures*, ed. Jane Vincent and Leslie Haddon (London: Routledge, 2019) 71-82.

- UNIVERSITY

- Jane Vincent, John O'Sullivan, Christopher Lim, and Manuela Farinosi, "Student's Preferences for Smartphones versus Other Media within Their Academic Study," *Smartphone Cultures*, ed. Jane Vincent and Leslie Haddon (London: Routledge, 2019) 163-175.

- Phone-based ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY

- Gorsev Argin, Burak Pak, and Handan Turkoglu, "Post-Flânerie: How Do Mobile Devices Shape the Experience of the City?" *SHS Web of Conferences* 64, 01005 (2019) [13pp]. Open access. [\[LINK.\]](#)

(4) Smartphone-based PRACTICES – Creative / receptive / consumerist

- SHOPPING and PAYING

- Smartphone PHOTOGRAPHY (and the 'selfie')

- Smartphone CREATIVITY, CRAFTING, and ART

- [From:] Larissa Hjorth et al., eds., *The Routledge Companion to Mobile Media Art* (New York: Routledge, 2020). [Accessible online through UBW.]

- CUSTOMIZING one's smartphone

(5) FAMILY-LIFE & THE LIFE-CYCLE

- CHILDHOOD, YOUNG ADULTHOOD & the FAMILY

- Korea Internet Addiction Prevention Center, website [\[LINK.\]](#).
- Jonathan Haidt, "End the Phone-Based Childhood Now," *The Atlantic*, 13 March 2024 [web/WueCampus].

- Antti Paakkari and Paulina Rautio. "'What Is Puberty, Then?' Smartphones and Tumblr Images as De/Re-Territorialisations in an Upper Secondary School Classroom." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 40.1 (2019): 873-888. [Accessible online through UBW.]
- Maialen Garmendia, Miguel Casado del Río, Estefanía Jimenez, "Adolescents and Smartphones: Coping with Overload," *Smartphone Cultures*, ed. Jane Vincent and Leslie Haddon (London: Routledge, 2019) 108-120.
- Giovanna Mascheroni, "Addiction or Emancipation? Children's Attachment to Smartphones as a Cultural Practice," *Smartphone Cultures*, ed. Jane Vincent and Leslie Haddon (London: Routledge, 2019) 121-134.
- Cristina Ponte, José Alberto Simões, Claudia Lampert, and Anka Velicu, "Parental Practices in the Era of Smartphones," *Smartphone Cultures*, ed. Jane Vincent and Leslie Haddon (London: Routledge, 2019) 41-54.
- AGEING & CARE
 - ASSA: *Anthropology of Smart Phones and Smart Ageing*. Project located at University College London. → Browse the project's website [[LINK](#)] and *YouTube* channel [[LINK](#)].
 - Miller, Daniel, et al. *The Global Smartphone: Beyond a Youth Technology*. London: UCL Press, 2021. Ageing with Smartphones (series). [Open access.] [[LINK.](#)]

(6) "I"-Phone: SUBJECTIVITY

- AFFECT
- BODY
- SELF-HOOD / IDENTITY
 - Jimmy Stamp, "A Modern Sherlock Holmes and the Technology of Deduction," *Smithsonian Magazine*, 2 August 2012, web. [[LINK.](#)]
 - Meagan E. Malone, "Celebrating Transness: *Tangerine* and the iPhone," *European Journal of English Studies* 24.1 (2020) 65-75.

(7) SOCIALITY

- Social interaction *through* the smartphone / social NETWORKING
- SOCIAL INTERACTION *in the presence of* the smartphone
- FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, and SEX
- GREGARIOUSNESS and LONELINESS
 - Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, revised and expanded edition (New York: Basic Books, 2021); see esp. "Always On" (150-170).

(8) POLITICS on/and the smartphone

- The STATE and the smartphone (e.g., 'Covid app')
 - Giota Alevizou and Eve Murchison, "Authority, Sensory Power and the Appification of Bio-citizenship: From Tracking the Pandemic to Vaccine Passports," *Digital Culture & Society* 8.1 (2022): 13-42. [\[LINK.\]](#)
- DOCUMENTING crime, injustice, atrocity (e.g., the murder of George Floyd)
- Political ACTIVISM
- Organizing POLITICAL RESISTANCE

(9) WAR and the smartphone

- DOCUMENTING war crimes
- WRITING diaries
- ORGANIZING support networks
 - Serhiy Zhadan, *Sky Above Kharkiv: Dispatches from the Ukrainian Front* (New York: Yale University Press, 2023).

(10) Producing FAKE NEWS and CYBER WARFARE**(11) GLOBAL/LOCAL/GLOCAL: The world/S (?) of the smartphone**

- North and South / West and East → Esp. German / Indian / Ukrainian smartphone culture/s
 - Assa Doron and Robin Jeffrey, *The Great Indian Phone Book: How the Cheap Cell Phone Changes Business, Politics, and Daily Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).
 - Carla Barros, "Collective Uses of Mobile Phones in the Global South: Cultural Diversity among Low-Income Groups in Brazil and in South Africa," *Smartphone Cultures*, ed. Jane Vincent and Leslie Haddon (London: Routledge, 2019) 97-107.
- Refugees as smartphone users
 - Koen Leurs, "Communication Rights from the Margins: Politicising Young Refugees' Smartphone Pocket Archives," *International Communication Gazette* 79.6-7 (2017): 674-698. [Accessible online through UBW.]

(12) HISTORICAL SITUATEDNESS: Late modernity / Digital modernity / Late capitalism

- [From:] Manuel Castells, *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001).
- John Durham Peters and Carolyn L. Kane, "Speaking into the iPhone: An Interview with John Durham Peters, or, Ghostly Cessation for the Digital Age," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34.2 (2010): 119-133.

A BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY:

➔ **INTRODUCTORY READING:** Titles marked with an asterisk ★ offer a good initial orientation regarding our topic and possible routes of analysis.

Alevizou, Giota, and Eve Murchison. "Authority, Sensory Power and the Appification of Biocitizenship: From Tracking the Pandemic to Vaccine Passports" *Digital Culture & Society*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2022, pp. 13-42. [\[Link.\]](#)

ASSA: *Anthropology of Smart Phones and Smart Ageing*. Project located at University College London.
➔ Browse the project's website [\[LINK\]](#) and *YouTube* channel [\[LINK\]](#).

Brewster, Vicky. "'You Can't Stop Picturing that Beautiful Handset': The Found Phone Trope in Twenty-First-Century Media." *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 33.4 (2022): 233-253. [Accessible online through UBW.]

Buttkewitz, Uta. *Smiley. Herzchen. Hashtag: Zwischenmenschliche Kommunikation im Zeitalter von Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram @ Co.* Wiesbaden: Springer, 2020. [Accessible online through UBW.]

Campbell, Heidi A., and Antonio C. La Pastina, "How the iPhone Became Divine: New Media, Religion and the Intertextual Circulation of Meaning." *New Media & Society* 12.7 (2010): 1191-1207. [Accessible online through UBW.]

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★ Please see esp. the book's conclusion: "The Mobile Network Society" (245-258).

Chan, Jenny, Ngai Pun, and Mark Selden. *Dying for an iPhone: Apple, Foxconn, and the Lives of China's Workers*. London: Pluto Press, 2020.

Coover, Roderick, ed. *The Digital Imaginary: Literature and Cinema of the Database*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024. [Open access: [LINK.](#)]

Doron, Assa, and Robin Jeffrey. *The Great Indian Phone Book: How the Cheap Cell Phone Changes Business, Politics, and Daily Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

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★ Please see especially the general introduction to the book and its first section ("Making Sense of the Walkman") = 1997 ed.: 1-40. [WueCampus.]

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Haidt, Jonathan. "End the Phone-Based Childhood Now." *The Atlantic*, 13 March 2024. [Web/Wue-Campus.]

Haidt, Jonathan. *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. Penguin, 2024.

Hart-Davis, Guy. *iPhone for Dummies*. 2024 edition. Hoboken: Wiley, 2024. [Accessible online through UBW.]

Hjorth, Larissa, et al., eds. *The Routledge Companion to Mobile Media Art*. New York: Routledge, 2020. [Accessible online through UBW.]

Jarlbrink, Johan, Patrik Lundell, and Pelle Snickars. *From Big Bang to Big Data : A History of the Media*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2023. [Accessible online through UBW.]

Korea Internet Addiction Prevention Center. Website. [\[LINK.\]](#)

Leurs, Koen. "Communication Rights from the Margins: Politicising Young Refugees' Smartphone Pocket Archives." *International Communication Gazette* 79. 6-7 (2017): 674-698. [Accessible online through UBW.]

Latour, Bruno. "Technology Is Society Made Durable." *A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology and Domination*. Ed. John Law. Sociological Review Monograph 38 .London: Routledge, 1991. 103-132. [Scan downloadable from Bruno Latour's website: [LINK.](#)]

Kreutzer, Ralf T. *Die digitale Verführung: Selbstbestimmt leben trotz Smartphone, Social Media & Co.* Wiesbaden: Springer, 2020. [Accessible online through UBW.]

Malone, Meagan E. "Celebrating Transness: Tangerine and the iPhone." *European Journal of English Studies* 24.1 (2020).

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. 1964. London / New York: Routledge, 2001. Routledge Classics.

★ Please see esp. chapter 1, "The Medium is the Message" (7-23); see also chapters 7 and 27.

- Miller, Daniel, et al. *The Global Smartphone: Beyond a Youth Technology*. London: UCL Press, 2021. Ageing with Smartphones (series). [Open access: [LINK.](#)]
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- Peters, John Durham, and Carolyn L. Kane. "Speaking into the iPhone: An Interview with John Durham Peters, or, Ghostly Cessation for the Digital Age." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34.2 (2010): 119-133.
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- Sender, Katherine, and Peter Decherney, eds. *Stuart Hall Lives: Cultural Studies in an Age of Digital Media*. Special Issue of *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 33.5 (2016). [Accessible online through UBW.] [LINK.](#)
- Serres, Michel. *Thumbelina: The Culture and Technology of Millennials*. Translated by Daniel W. Smith. London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Sloss, Robert. "Das drahtlose Jahrhundert." *Die Welt in hundert Jahren*. Ed. Arthur Brehmer. Berlin: Buntdruck, 1908. 27- 50. E-book: *Project Gutenberg* [LINK](#) // Scan: *Internet Archive* [LINK](#).
- Snickars, Pelle, and Patrick Vanderau, ed. *Moving Data: The iPhone and the Future of Media*. New York: Columbia UP, 2012.
- ★ Please see especially the introduction by the editors (1-16). [WueCampus.]
- Stamp, Jimmy. "A Modern Sherlock Holmes and the Technology of Deduction." *Smithsonian Magazine*, 2 August 2012. Web. [LINK.](#)
- ★ "The Only Thing That's Changed Is ..." (iPhone 6s Commercial, 2015). [LINK.](#)
- Vincent, Jane, and Leslie Haddon, eds. *Smartphone Cultures*. London: Routledge, 2019.
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