

CMS S60: Technopanics  
Spring 2013  
Midterm Assignment

**This midterm is due 3/20**, at the *beginning* of class. Select 2 out of 3 questions to answer. Each answer should be 3-4 pages in length, double-spaced, 12 pt font, 1 inch margins.

1. Choose one of the “old” technologies we have touched upon (writing, print, the telegraph, the stethoscope, the phonograph, radio, television, comics or film) and compare how the concerns about this technology are similar to or different from present day concerns about some aspect or form of “new” media. As we have technically not yet covered “new” media topics, please find and cite at least (2) sources (news articles, journal articles, blog posts, etc.) to support your claims about the new media concerns. Are these concerns, both old and new, about media content or media form? Do the arguments about these technologies generally take a technological determinist perspective, a social shaping of technology perspective or a social constructionist perspective?
2. Some would consider computer hacking to be a “deviant” behavior. Using your general knowledge of hacking (you may also cite outside sources if you wish), assess hacking as a deviant behavior according to the terms Howard Becker used to assess marijuana smoking as deviance. In your answer, please be sure to provide a clear sociological definition of deviance. You may also reference some of the other sociological theories of deviance introduced in class.
3. The name of this course, technopanics, is derived, in part, from the concept of media moral panic, but the question of what does or does not constitute a “moral panic” has always been a difficult one to answer. Analyze the different theories of moral panic introduced by Critcher, and discuss whether or not you find the concept of moral panic to be useful, problematic, or any combination of the two. Be sure to also explain *why* you feel this way. In your answer, offer at least one example of a “technopanic” that we have already covered in class and analyze the issue using one of the models of moral panic explained in the reading.

MIT OpenCourseWare  
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

CMS.S60 / CMS.S96 Technopanics: Moral Panics about Technology  
Spring 2013

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.