International Communication in the Internet Age:

The convergence of telecommunication and computing and the ability to move all type of data via the internet and digitalized transmission have revolutionized international information exchange; it is occurring at a phenomenal rate.

The New Media Environment:
- increased growth in computing capacity, reduction in costs, and convergence of computing and communication technologies have opened up potential for unprecedented global interconnectedness through the internet.

Internet:
- emerged from US military research in the 1960s (linking civilian and military communication in event of Soviet attack)
  - Civilian branch divided from military in 1980s
  - Internet development exploded with establishment of World Wide Web in 1989
    - URL – universal resource locator (unique address)
    - http – hypertext-transfer protocol (transfer of text audio and video files)
    - html – hypertext mark-up language (links)
  - The Web reached an audience of 50 million users in three years time, achieving what took TV 15 years and radio 40 years to accomplish
    - The instantaneous and relatively inexpensive exchange of text, sound, and pictures has made a huge impact on international communication
The Digital Divide”: a social issue referring to the differing amount of information between those who have access to computers and the Internet and those who do not.

- Access is only one aspect
  - quality of connection and auxiliary services, processing speed and other capabilities of the computer used, and other factors are also part of the issue.

The number of Internet users worldwide and by country
http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm

- The global imbalance in access to information must be viewed within the overall context of international inequality
- Powerful states are at the forefront of establishing standards for equipment and frequencies, which are then transferred to new consumer regions; essential for servicing global markets.

Internet + mobile telephones + satellites = telecom revolution (convergence) and the creation of new industries and opportunities for e-commerce, entertainment, and interactive services = $
- such choices and freedoms also = more vulnerability to direct marketing/advertising + implications for personal security and privacy

How do WE approach these technologies intellectually?

GOOGLE – Speed and scope regarding information access vs.
intellectual laziness, plagiarism, skimming issues

Media Online (Commercial Silos):
- Development of multiple platform strategies, synergies
- Greater interactivity
- Instant and personalized news (MyCNN)
  - Same old news brands (CNN, MSNBC, AOL, Yahoo)
  - Narrowcasting = easier govt/business surveillance of consumer media patterns, political activities, private information (for sale)
    ▪ Advermovies, advergames, advertainment
Consequences:
- Infotainment and Edutainment
  - Public discourse is assuming form of entertainment
  - Speed and quantity of news is undermining quality, accuracy and context
  - Emphasis on consumer journalism, sports, entertainment
    - Style trumps substance
    - Culture of Visuals → little patience for extended engagement with complex narrative structures of news
  - Q = In this age of ever shorter soundbites, can this ‘turbo news’ → critical assessments, reflection and deeper connections/responses to the information presented? Does the information overload only further erode the potential for anything other than a superficial response?
    1) Critics suggest it is the logical outcome of entertainment conglomerates buying news organizations and turning them into profit ventures
      - Shift to News-Lite which further erodes the level of public understanding of global affairs and increases the lack of contextual information

Digital Copyright and Regulation
- For TNCs, it is critical that a legal framework for electronic commerce is governed by principles across international borders; protection of copyrighted works in the age of internet distribution has brought the issue of intellectual property to the fore
- US has pushed for enforcement of WTO TRIPS agreement, WIPO Copyright Treaty and WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty
  - IP = largest growing economic sector
- Tracking/prosecuting infringements is very difficult
- Relations to intellectual property differ across cultures and countries
  - Extension of intellectual property regime has raised concerns
    1) Assesses ‘taxes’ on knowledge which benefit western TNCs
    2) Blocks access to knowledge diffusion and new technologies
    3) Restricts competitive power of developing countries
    4) US control of Internet Domain Names (ICANN); bitter dispute in 2005

A more stringent international patent regime – A RIGHTS REGIME -- will greatly facilitate the process of global commodification of human intellectual and artistic creativity, leading to an even greater concentration of copyright ownership in the hands of global cultural industries

The Internet and Political Communication
- commercialism is undermining democratic potential of Internet as a medium
- directing ‘international digital dialogues’ → commerce and entertainment culture
  - Internet is still important link for community groups, NGOs and political activists (G8, WTO, IMF, World Bank meetings)
  - Extraordinary source of information for all – connecting people to new perspectives in regional and international contexts
    - Blogosphere, moblog, vblog, facebook, youtube, myspace, etc.
      - Preponderance of misinformation
Global War on Terror
- militant Islam is inimical to modern, secular, and rational market democracy
- Islam becomes undifferentiated militant ‘culture’ while the west = moral commitments to protect human rights, develop democracy, whatever the means and as defined by the west
  - framed in discourse of humanitarianism and high moral rectitude
    - Operation: Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Just Cause, Iraqi Freedom, Provide Comfort, Restore Hope, Uphold Democracy, Enduring Freedom
    - US has flaunted rules of geostrategic engagement
      - Fueling Anti-Americanism

Global Surveillance:
Control of global communication technologies → advantages in international power relations
- US uses satellite technology to spy on international electronic communication
  - Most effective system in the world
  - Offers potentially competitive advantage in global commerce
  - Global espionage is profitable (satellites are private industry) in a world where the competitive edge is everything
    - our trust belies the extensive domestic and international surveillance operation in effect
      - Echelon – US National Security Agency program

Internet has accentuated Rich-Poor divide
The global imbalance in access to information must be viewed within the overall context of international inequality
- top 500 richest people exceeded that of the poorest 416 million people
- 1 billion people have no access to a telephone
- 2.5 billion people live on less than $2/day (poverty is increasing)
- 1 billion people have no access to safe drinking water
- 2.6 billion people have no access to sanitation
Alternative Communication: produces development journalism
- Go beyond “coups and earthquakes” coverage”
- Reports the process behind the story, rather than simply the story itself
  o on-the-ground reporting bring specific news stories to light and to the attention of a wider audience; news which is not strictly ‘valuable’ or ‘profitable’ in the business sense.
  - African Poverty
    - Inter Press Services [http://www.ipsnews.org/](http://www.ipsnews.org/)
      1) An alternative to corporatized global communication
      2) Covers issues of relevance to the majority of the world and examines the impact of globalization on the world’s poor, as a result of the policies of the World Bank, WTO, IMF.
        - Influx, influence, and impact of the global corporate model of journalism (that caters to the elite, urban-based professional class, emphasizing commercial priorities and infotainment and advertainment) is greatly affecting the development of journalism standards in the South

The Internet and the South
- Much of the population in Southern countries (especially Africa) still lack internet connectivity; many still lack telephone access; things we take for granted are beyond the reach of these populations; such situations IMPLICITLY impede the ability for their societies to compete in the global marketplace.
  - Private companies invest in countries where it is economically viable for them; where the market is not promising, little investment occurs (Africa – 2.2 billion for 33 countries)
Foreign aid is replaced by Foreign investment where the markets are promising (China – 45 billion)

1) Development occurs where the developees’ development helps the developers economically
   - Social goals rarely, if ever, enter as a consideration regarding corporate investment
   - If so, Thusu suggest they are often economic concerns couched in PR, Marketing Strategies

There is no doubt that the Internet Age has brought international communication within a wider scope of possibilities for building “the Global Village,” as the exchange of information occurs at the most rapid rate in history

But it is being used primarily to develop business ventures and goals rather than addressing social issues, such as eradicating poverty, promoting healthcare, or providing education

The power of those western countries and transnational corporations which are 1) making the decisions about these developments and 2) implementing them are impacting the trajectory of Progress as it relates to developing Humanity’s potential as a whole

**Contemporary Global Governance — as it continues to evolve within this matrix of capitalist information networks, interests, and logics (“the global knowledge economy,”) simply remains undemocratic in its present form.**
**Implications for you and I:**

- **Lower level of public understanding, education, and awareness of global conditions and concerns**
  
  → **Fosters** public apathy
  
  → **Advances** the ideals of self-interest
  
  → **Foments** fear/mistrust of ‘difference’
  
  → **Facilitates** potential for public Coercion
  
  → **Implicitly serves** to reproduce ideological hegemony (i.e. you are/remain plugged into the matrix)

**The “Global Knowledge Economy” in not implicitly linked to fostering**

1) **Wisdom**

2) **Ethics**

3) **Equality**

4) **A plurality of voices and perspectives**

5) **A democratic Global Commons (“a collective asset that belongs to all humankind”)**

What distinguishes the new form of capitalism from its colonial predecessor is its emphasis on the almost mythical powers of the market and its use of mediated entertainment and ideological persuasion -- rather than coercion -- to propagate its message, in processes which are both subtle and infinitely more effective.
Despite the claims about the capacity of the free market and new technologies to empower and liberate individuals and create a ‘global civil society,’ capitalism’s contradictions are sharper at the beginning of the third millennium than every before. As corporations and specific countries strengthen their control over the portals of global power while a majority of the world’s population is excluded from the benefits of the emerging electronic economy, the potential for social unrest remains enormous.

If global peace and prosperity for all have to go beyond merely being platitudes, international communication will have to be harnessed to promote a people-centered capitalism to check the continued colonization of the planet.

→ The imperative of promoting corporate social responsibility

What will the Future Look Like?
What are the Consequences?
Where are the Solutions?
What is your role?