“Make it New!” demanded Ezra Pound.

This course examines the modernist notion of newness alongside the new media, and finally how the old —memories — can be made new in different archival contexts.

Together we will explore interactions of media in conjunction with theories about how messages come to exist and are meant to be understood. Beginning with the demand for change expressed in modernist manifestos like Marinetti’s “Futurist Manifesto” and Tristan Tzara’s “Dada Manifesto,” with a quick stop in the surrealist novel Une Semaine de Bonté, we consider what a message is, how it is expressed through its own form, and the emergent meetings of the visual, auditory, and textual media in modernity.

Moving along, we work through the similarities and differences between the modernist manifestos and Marshal McLuhan’s theoretical collage The Medium is the Massage. We consider the fruitfulness of the serendipitous typo in the text’s title as we enter the more technological realm of German Media Theory, represented in this course by Friedrich Kittler and Niklas Luhmann. Along the way we will consider readership in the world of the digital as it becomes problematized by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Donna Haraway, and Wendy Chung, whose texts will open the door to discussion of the new state of the human, love, and war in the digital era. Lastly, we investigate the relationship of future and past as we excavate the concept of the archive alongside the digital collection. How are memories maintained and created in the archive? How is the message constructed in or by a collection?

To help exemplify and keep our theoretical discussions grounded, we will approach them through the lens of some key artistic works such as M by Fritz Lang, examples of visual art and architecture, and music.

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