

# Centre for Culture, Media & Governance

Jamia Millia Islamia

New Delhi



## REGULATION OF U.S. RADIO, 1904 – 1934

### Dr. Noah Arceneaux

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#### Abstract

Beginning in 1899, a variety of companies, inventors, and entrepreneurs transmitted messages over the airwaves using the technology of wireless telegraphy. In 1904, a board appointed by the US government, and comprised largely of Navy officers, proposed a framework as to how the technology should be regulated and managed. No rules were put in place, however, until 1910, and comprehensive regulations were not established until 1912.

The 1912 rules remained in place even after wireless telegraphy evolved into the next phase of technology, radio broadcasting, in which the sounds of the human voice and music replaced the dots-and-dashes of Morse code. Government regulators struggled to apply the out dated rules to the new technology, as if often the case with rapidly developing media platforms. The chaotic conditions of the early 1920s eventually forced the government to establish new rules for managing the airwaves.

This presentation provides an overview of U.S. radio history from its original inception until the passage of the Communication Act of 1934, the rules that provided a framework that is still largely followed today. Particular attention is given to harsh actions taken by the U.S. government during World War I, when all amateur and commercial radio activity was taken over by the U.S. Navy. The talk will also focus on the initial broadcasting boom of the early 1920s, a period in which hundreds of radio stations appeared in the U.S. and almost anyone with money was allowed to broadcast over the air.

#### About the Speaker

Noah Arceneaux is an associate professor in the School of Journalism & Media Studies at San Diego State University. For Spring 2014, he is a Fulbright Fellow at Centre for Culture, Media & Governance where he is researching the policy of spectrum allocation in India. His research explores the social construction of new media technologies, including historical phenomenon (such as wireless telegraphy) as well as emerging forms of mobile media. In 2006, he co-edited an anthology of academic studies of cell phones, *The Cell Phone Reader*, and in 2012, he edited an updated anthology entitled *The Mobile Media Reader*. His research has been published in the *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *American Journalism*, *New Media & Society*, *Technology & Culture*, and *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*.

#### Event Details

**Venue:** CCMG Network Governance Lab,

**Date:** Friday, 21 March, 2014

**Time:** 11:00-12:30 pm