

TIMELINE: INFLUENCE OF MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY ON AMERICAN SOCIETY AND CULTURE

- 1915 *The Birth of a Nation* feature film, based on Thomas Dixon's novel *The Clansman*, a progressive narrative expressed racial tensions in America during and after the Civil War is released.
- 1919 United Artists Corporation founded by D. W. Griffith, Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks.
- 1923 Henry Luce and Briton Hadden launch *Time*, first newsmagazine.
- 1925 Calvin Coolidge's Inauguration, first on radio.
- 1927 *The Jazz Singer*, first talkie motion picture.
William Paley creates CBS from a 16-affiliate radio network.
- 1930 The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) develops the Motion Picture Production Code, also known as the Hays Code, to raise the moral standards of films by restricting the content which the major film studios could include in their films. The code authorized nudity only in naturist quasi-documentary films and in foreign films.
- 1932 Walt Disney produces first full-color movie *Flowers and Trees*.
- 1934 Though in place since 1930, the Hays Code is enforced in response to objections voiced by several groups to the content of the 1933 Czech film *Ecstasy*, which was highly controversial in its time largely because of a nude swimming scene by Hedy Lamarr.
- 1935 Franklin Delano Roosevelt debuts Fireside Chats on radio.
- 1937 Walt Disney produces the first animated feature *Snow White*.
- 1941 Pearl Harbor attack is reported by radio.
- 1942 Critically acclaimed *Casablanca* film starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman is released. Set during World War II, it focuses on the evils of fascism and portrays America as a place for refugees to find freedom.
Why We Fight, a series of seven documentary films commissioned by the U.S. government during World War II to persuade soldiers and general public to support U.S. involvement in the war.
- 1946 Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* is released shortly after the end of WW II. The film pays tribute to individual courage, community service, and the belief that one person can make a difference.

- 1947 CBS and NBC begin first newscasts.
- 1949 Harry Truman's Inauguration, first televised.
- 1950 Black-and-white television becomes part of the average American home.
- 1951 Edward R. Murrow pioneers television news.
The first TV kiss was in the family sitcom *The Honeymooners* starring Jackie Gleason as New York City bus driver Ralph Kramden and his wife Alice (Audrey Meadows). Ralph kisses Alice smack on the lips and says, "Whoa baby."
- 1953 *I Love Lucy*, 71.7% of viewers watch the episode of Little Ricky's birth.
- 1956 Elvis Presley receives his first Gold Record (over 1 million sold).
- 1954 Color TV system is approved by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).
- 1959 *Some Like It Hot* is released without approval from the Motion Picture Association of America Hays Code because it features cross dressing and includes a man and woman in bed together. A year after *Some Like It Hot* is released, the head of the MPAA proposes a classification system might work better than a censorship system that no one was paying attention to. The MPAA shifts from restricting filmmakers to alerting audiences using a film-ratings system in 1968.
- 1960 Olympic Games are the first televised.
- 1961 President John Kennedy debuts live press conferences.
- 1963 President Kennedy's assassination is reported by television.
Barbara Walters becomes female anchor of the Today Show.
The film *Promises! Promises!* is released starring Jayne Mansfield who is recognized as the first mainstream American actress to appear nude in a starring role.
- 1964 The Beatles perform in the U.S. and take rock music global.
The movie *Dr. Strangelove*, a political satire comedy film that portrays the military-industrial establishment in a negative light is released.
The subject of abortion is discussed for the first time on TV during an episode of daytime soap opera *Another World*. This was nine years

before the Roe vs. Wade case, which made abortion legal for women in the United States.

1965 Black American actor and comedian Bill Cosby is cast with Robert Culp as a detective on the popular series *I Spy*. This is the first time in the history of television that a Black American is a co-star in a dramatic series.

Barbara Eden's navel is a real hot button issue on *I Dream of Jeannie*. As a genie who emerges from a bottle to serve the astronaut who frees her, Eden wears a skimpy costume including an exposed midsection with billowing pants to cover her legs and a belly button cover.

1966 *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton debuts. The film wins many awards while testing the Motion Picture Production Code film rating system limits on violence and language.

1967 Congress creates the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

The Graduate starring Dustin Hoffman who enters a romantic affair with the wife of his father's business partner is released. The movie reflects the attitudes of many members of the young generation who were growing dissatisfied with the social norms and traditions established by their more conservative elders.

The film *Bonnie and Clyde* is a hit at the box office. In the film a young, antiestablishment couple sets out on a cross-country bank-robbing spree.

1968 *60 Minutes* debuts.

The Hays Production Code is abandoned altogether and is replaced with the MPAA rating system with four ratings: G for general audiences, M for mature content, R for restricted (under 17 not admitted without an adult), and X for sexually explicit content.

The revised MPAA rating system gives filmmakers greater freedom to include racy content dealing with subjects such as infidelity, prostitution, lesbianism, drugs, etc. After one year an X-rated movie wins an Oscar for Best Picture — *Midnight Cowboy*. And it took just two years after that for *Midnight Cowboy* to be re-rated from X to R, without any editing suggesting the change of social standards and culture in America.

The MPAA film rating system gives filmmakers more freedom to include nudity in various forms. This autonomy is used liberally in

future films including Jane Fonda (*Coming Home*, 1978), Julie Andrews (*S.O.B.*, 1981), Kate Winslet (*Titanic*, 1997), Gwyneth Paltrow (*Shakespeare in Love*, 1998), Reese Witherspoon (*Twilight*, 1998), Rene Russo (*The Thomas Crown Affair*, 1999), Katie Holmes (*The Gift*, 2000), and Halle Berry (*Swordfish*, 2001).

Diahann Carroll becomes the first black woman to star in a prime-time TV series, *Julia* a sitcom about a nurse raising her young child alone after her husband's death.

TV's first interracial kiss shared between William Shatner (playing Captain Kirk) and Nichelle Nichols (playing Lieutenant Uhura) in an episode of *Star Trek*.

- 1969 Neil Armstrong's walk on the Moon is televised in color globally.
- The movie *Easy Rider* is released. The plot explores the counterculture movement, issues, and tensions in the U.S. during the 1960s including the hippie movement, drug use, and communal living.
- Midnight Cowboy*, one of the first Hollywood films to receive an X rating wins three Academy Awards.
- The Swedish film *I Am Curious: A Film in Yellow*, directed by Vilgot Sjöman, is initially banned in the U.S. for its depiction of sexuality; however, this is later overturned by the Supreme Court.
- 1970 TV sitcoms address social issues – e.g. *M*A*S*H*, *All in the Family*, *Happy Days*, *Sanford and Son*, *Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *The Jeffersons*, and *Chico and the Man*.
- Email is developed.
- Monday Night Football debuts on television.
- The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) rating system changes the M Rating to GP (General with Parental Guidance) because of the confusion over the meaning of "mature audiences."
- 1972 The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) rating system changes the GP Rating to PG, for "parental guidance suggested."
- M*A*S*H* is the first American movie to use the F-word.
- HBO (Home Box Office) a premium cable and satellite television network owned by WarnerMedia Entertainment is launched.
- 1975 Bill Gates and Paul Allen launch Microsoft.
- VCRs are introduced.

- 1976 Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak launch Apple Computer, Inc.
Cable is broadcast by Ted Turner.
Ed Bradley becomes the first African-American White House television correspondent.
- 1977 VHS-format videocassettes.
Roots an eight-part mini-series airs. The program follows four generations of an African American family beginning when the first member was brought to the U.S. from Africa and sold as a slave.
George Carlin's stand-up comedy routine airs on the revolutionary new pay cable channel, HBO basically redefining the "Seven Words" as ones you can't say on broadcast television but you can say on the censorship-free haven of HBO.
- 1979 The film *Apocalypse Now* described by Rotten Tomatoes as "one of a cluster of late-1970s films to depict the Vietnam War as a descent into primal madness" is released.
- 1980 Color television replaces black-and-white in most American homes.
CNN, first 24-hour news station, debuts.
Black Entertainment Television (BET) a pay television channel targeting the Black American audience is launched.
- 1981 IBM PC is introduced.
MTV debuts.
- 1982 USA Today debuts.
CDs are introduced.
- 1983 Analog Motorola DynaTAC 8000X introduced as the first truly mobile phone small enough to carry for a cost of around \$4,000.
- 1984 *The Cosby Show*, a Black American family sitcom, featuring Bill Cosby debuts.
The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) creates the PG-13 rating as a middle tier between PG and R in response to public complaints regarding the severity of horror elements in PG-rated titles such as *Gremlins*, *Indiana Jones*, and the *Temple of Doom*.
- 1985 Microsoft Windows is launched.
Gloria Estefan & Miami Sound Machine become America's leading Latin recording artists.

- 1986 *Platoon* is the first film of a trilogy of Vietnam War films directed by Oliver Stone, followed by *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989) and *Heaven & Earth* (1993) to reflect on the deep and enduring impact of the Vietnam conflict on those who served there as well as the American psyche.
- 1987 First lingerie ad by Playtex using live models. Previously, most lingerie models on TV were mannequins.
- 1988 Rush Limbaugh starts at WABC-AM in New York City.
- 1989 The Simpsons an animated sitcom catering to adults is launched. The series is a satirical portrayal of American working-class life and culture.
- 1990 The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) rating system replaces the X rating with NC-17 (under 17 not admitted), partly because of the stigma associated with the use of the X, XX, and XXX symbols by pornographic bookstores and theaters.
- 1991 First lesbian kiss in episode of *L.A. Law* showing two women kissing.
- 1993 Ellen DeGeneres appears on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and comes out as a lesbian. The coming-out episode of *Ellen* airs later.
The *Seinfeld* episode "*Non-Fat Yogurt*" uses the bleeped F-word as a central joke. Bleeping becomes a frequent comic tool from now on.
- 1994 An Ikea ad runs on TV showing two men shopping for furniture together. This is the first TV commercial featuring a gay couple.
During an episode titled "*Don't Ask, Don't Tell*" of the popular sitcom *Roseanne*, Mariel Hemingway kisses Roseanne Barr.
Amazon.com, Inc. startup as an online marketplace for books.
The Monster Board (monster.com) is the world's first online job search and the first public résumé database.
- 1995 *Microsoft Internet Explorer* is launched.
- 1997 William Jefferson Clinton's Inauguration is live on the Internet.
DVDs replace VHS format.
Titanic records global box office sales of \$1.8 billion.
First news blogs are introduced.
- 2000 The first passionate same-sex kiss on television's *Dawson's Creek* airs when characters Jack McPhee (Kerr Smith) and Ethan (Adam

Kaufmann) share the first ever on-screen homosexual kiss in the season finale.

The *Survivor: Borneo* finale receives the highest ratings of any *Survivor* episode to date with an average of 51.7 million viewers. Nielsen reported that 125 million people watched at least some part of the finale.

- 2001 9/11 attacks are reported immediately through multimedia.
iPod and MP3 format compressed digital files debut.
Instant message services available.
Halle Berry becomes the first Black American woman to win the Academy Award for Best Actress for her performance in the romantic drama film *Monster's Ball*.
Wikipedia debuts.
- 2002 TV standard changes to digital.
Satellite radio is launched.
American Idol begins its first season.
- 2003 iTunes online music store launches.
TiVo, video on demand, debuts.
Myspace comes on the scene.
LinkedIn is officially launched.
Skype Technologies Skype is founded by Niklas Zennström from Sweden and Janus Friis from Denmark .
- 2004 24-hour coverage of the Olympic Games from Athens is available.
Broadband is in half of American homes.
Super Size Me a documentary film follows a 30-day period during which director Morgan Spurlock eats only McDonald's food. The film documents this lifestyle's drastic effect on physical and psychological health and explores the fast food industry's influence.
Fahrenheit 9/11 is another documentary intended to influence public opinion. The film is critical of President George W. Bush's administration and its involvement in the Iraq War.
Facebook.com is launched and quickly surpasses pornography as the #1 activity on the internet.

- The Passion of the Christ* directed by Mel Gibson and starring Jim Caviezel as Jesus Christ is released with mixed reviews; however, it was a major commercial hit.
- 2005 *Brokeback Mountain* is released, starring Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal as two cowboys in a gay relationship.
YouTube launches.
- 2006 Citizen journalists record events on cellular cameras and technology.
Twitter launches.
- 2007 The presidential debates air on CNN/YouTube through the video sharing site YouTube.
- 2008 *Spotify* launches.
- 2010 First iPad released.
Instagram a free photo-sharing program and social network is launched.
- 2012 “*Gangnam Style*” becomes the first video ever to reach a billion views on YouTube.
- 2013 The *Wolf of Wall Street* sets a record for number of F-bombs in a feature film. Some counts say it is over 500.
- 2015 Apple releases racially-diverse emojis.
- 2015 The augmented reality (AR) mobile game *Pokémon Go* is launched.
- 2017 The #*MeToo* movement spreads virally on social media after Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein is accused of misconduct by more than 80 women and is arrested on sex crime charges in New York City.
- 2019 Astronomers capture humanity’s first-ever image of a black hole that sparks a massive and often hilarious internet reaction.