Chapter 5:
Visual Media: Photography, Movies and Television
Objectives of chapter:

- Explain the role photography has played in our visual culture and its continued importance within mass communication
- Understand the impact of technological changes on the film and television industries
- Explain how business models and structures have influenced the film industry
- Understand the development of television from its origins to digital TV
- Explain the differences between terrestrial, cable, and satellite broadcasting and what they mean for viewers
- Understand the implications of the convergence of telecommunications and content companies
Interactive & social TV: A changing viewing environment
Photography

- Performs two main functions: **surveillance** and **cultural transmission**

- Roots of photograph found in **camera obscura**: a dark box or room with a small hole that allows an inverted image of an outside image to be shown on the opposite inner wall

- 1839: **Louis Daguerre** unveiled the **daguerreotype**: a method of creating a positive image on a metal plate, with a reduced exposure time of thirty minutes or so
Movies

- Primary function of the movies is to entertain.

- Cinema can be more than simple entertainment; many consider it a serious visual art form comparable to painting, sculpture, or architecture, with a history of important social influence. Still,

- Most commercially produced motion pictures in the United States are made to make money.
1891: **Thomas Alva Edison** created the Kinetoscope, a “peep-show” precursor to the motion picture viewer.

1895: **Louis and Auguste Lumière** patented a more portable camera, film processing unit, and projector, a suitcase-sized single device that allowed shooting in the morning, footage that could be processed in the afternoon and projected for an audience in the evening.
History of the Movie Industry

- Silent era
- Sound & color
- Hollywood movie moguls
- Director as auteur
History of the Movie Industry

- Technological influences on movie genres
- Other entertainment sources for movies
- DVD and streaming
Movie Industry Today

- Major studios are part of much larger media conglomerates

- Production cost of major motion picture: average $70-$100 million; marketing costs can add another $30 to $50 million

- Movie making process: script development → project approval (including actor contract & schedules) → shooting → postproduction
Marketing and Distribution for Movies

- Main channel for marketing movies: TV advertising

- Heavy advertising occurs two weeks before release; nearly impossible for a movie to become popular after poor attendance upon release

- Much research, effort, and expense go into creating appealing movie trailers and packaging to reach the right target audience

- Order of distribution: Domestic theatrical release → international release → video-on-demand (VOD) → pay cable channels (HBO, Showtime, etc.) → network or cable TV → syndicated TV
Movie Industry Business Model

• Simple business model: get as many people as possible to pay to watch a movie

• Audience decline, but box office revenue increase

• License deals to receive royalties on related items
Outlook for the Movie Industry

- Digitization has had profound effects on the movie industry
- Digital film distribution saves money, yet increase for potential piracy
Television

- Average viewer spends 11 years of his/her life watching TV
- 97% of American households own at least 1 TV
- Internet caused a *slight* dip in TV viewership
History of Television

- First television systems
- Modern television takes shape
- Programming & genre influences
History of Television

- Programming
- Cable comes of age
- Filling the days
- Filling the nights
- Sports
- Reality shows
History of Television

• Digital television
  • June 2009: all television broadcast signals in the United States were switched to digital
  • Enables the convergence of computing, television, and telecommunications that makes new storytelling techniques possible

• Flat-panel displays
  • Bring nearly theater-quality sound, color, and picture clarity to living rooms
  • Smart-screen TVs: feature touch and gesture control and speech recognition
Television Distribution

- **Broadcast TV**
  - Traditional means of over-the-air TV distribution for networks, affiliates, and local stations

- **Cable TV**
  - Developed for rural areas where traditional (antennae) broadcasting not viable

- **Satellite TV**
  - Popularity increased with shift from expensive, large three-meter dishes to inexpensive, compact eighteen-inch dishes that could be self-installed; subscription price rivals cable
Television Industry Today

- **Cable system structure**
  - 2011: 84% of American households subscribed to pay-TV with average subscription cost of $86

- **Satellite vs. cable**
  - Subscriptions are usually cheaper, but installation costs are involved with satellite dishes and other equipment
  - Lack of a full local array, important for local news, weather, and other programming
Television Industry Business Model

• Traditional broadcasting model: relied primarily on selling advertising, one-minute or thirty-second ads, taking up between sixteen and twenty-two minutes of an hour-long program

• Nielsen ratings: a way to measure how many people in various markets were watching a particular show; cable’s fragmentation of audiences made the Nielsen ratings a less accurate measure
Outlook for the Television Industry

- 2009 switch to entirely digital TV signal: one more step toward an exclusively digital media world
- Network audiences moving to other locations: Hulu, Netflix