Media, Self, & the World

# Mass Communication

**Background**: The electronic epoch began with the invention of the telegraph in 1896. This device used radio waves to carry messages in Morse code and this discovery paved the way for broadcast radio, which became increasingly popular in the 1920s. In addition to broadcasting weather and news reports, radio stations often had in-house orchestras and aired live music daily. Families gathered around the radio to listen to evening programs such as *Amos N’Andy*, *The Lone Ranger*, *The Green Hornet*, or President Roosevelt’s fireside chats.

On the 30th of October in 1938, Orson Welles produced, hosted, and acted in the most famous single radio broadcast of all time, an adaptation of H.G. Well’s science fiction novel, *The War of the Worlds*. Instead of just acting out the novel, he broadcasted it in a news format, which lead people, especially those who missed the opening disclaimer, to believe his account of battles between Martians and the U.S. Army were real. It is believed to have created panic amongst citizens.

**Due**: Upload on Moodle the completed document by 1/18 @ 9:00am. **Be prepared to discuss the broadcast in class**.

**Directions**: Listen to this famous broadcast from the **8-minute mark to the 27-minute mark** and **thoroughly respond** to the following questions. This is a graded assignment.

1. How would you react if you heard this live in 1938?
2. What sound effects make this broadcast believable?
3. In terms of people’s reactions to the broadcast, do you think something like this [mass panic] could happen today (2018-2023)? If yes, why? If no, why not?
4. How could you, back in 1938, verify the information?
5. If this broadcasted live, today, how would you verify the information?
6. How does the technology we have today influence how we receive and react to information? **(Be specific.)**
7. State an example of mass panic **caused** by the media within last 15 years.

How is this reaction similar to and different from the reaction caused by the *War of the Worlds* broadcast?