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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **LIFE**  Born in Kansas City in 1912, Walter Ong earned an undergraduate degree in Latin from Rockhurst College and worked for two years in publishing and printing before entering the Jesuit order at age 23 and being ordained a Roman Catholic priest 9 years later. He then studied English, philosophy, and theology at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri, where he was a student of a young Marshall McLuhan and received his Master's degree. Ong earned his doctorate at Harvard University in 1955. An author of over 450 publications, Ong was Professor of English and Professor of Humanities in Psychiatry at St. Louis University, where his students labeled his courses "Onglish" to explain his vast knowledge of topics in any class.  **KEY IDEAS IN ONG’S *ORALITY AND LITERACY***  How the psychologies of sight and sound differ  Consciousness  Writing as a technology  Language and its influence on self and society  Media in history  How knowing the ancient world helps us understand the present and future | WRIT 1506 | Stroupe  **QUESTIONS**  ⎯ On one hand it seems obvious that language is oral. Speaking is the most common way we use language every day. But how does recognizing the “oral character of language” (6) challenge our assumptions about writing—and everything in life and society that depends on writing?  ⎯ How could it be that “writing restructures consciousness”? (77)  — How have our technologies changed our society and our sense of self through history? How have they gradually made “artificiality…natural to human beings”?  **COMMENTARIES ON ONG**  “It is probably out of necessity that Ong yields (with enthusiasm) to large generalizations. It would require, as he notes, a far longer book to deal with all the ramifications of the views he champions.” – W.A. Bacon, 1983  “Ong’s work does not support a [simple opposition] between oral and literate cultures. Instead it lays a foundation for understanding how the two tendencies interact within the same cultural environment. Exploration of their interaction has barely begun, but it offers a fertile field for both speculation and empirical research.” – W.E Biernatzki, 2007 | |

*Ong once explained that he choose the field of English for his graduate work because "English seemed intellectually and culturally roomier and more open than other subjects. It could encompass what they did and more - could open the way into almost anything."*

*** A script in the sense of true writing…does not consist of mere…representations of things, but is a representation of an utterance, of words that someone says or is imagined to say” (83).***

Walter Ong