

Impacts of Technology

(draft 07.09.07)

Class # and Section:	E59.1034, section 1
Class time and room:	Tues/Thurs 11 – 12:15 pm, TBA
Instructor:	Dr. Gabriella Coleman
Office:	TBA
Office hours:	TBA and by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW

This course will introduce undergraduates to a range of theories and approaches to the study of technology so as to provide various perspectives on the co-construction of society and technology. It recognizes that technology is not merely a set of material artifacts with a straightforward impact on our world but represents a complex set of practices, norms, and values that both reflect and shape our convictions about personhood, time, class, gender, space, labor, and politics. Further, because technology often depends on the broader socio-economic, legal, and political context from which it is invented, adopted and stabilized, ample attention will be placed on these contextual conditions and the hidden assumptions that drive its popular understandings.

The course primarily concentrates on communication technologies of the last 150 years (telegraph, telephone, computers, Internet) and is roughly chronological, starting with the telegraph and ending with our digital present. However, we will consider a number of other technologies (railway, reproductive technologies, farming technologies) that will help sharpen our theoretical frameworks and will provide a comparative touchstone to discuss the intersection of communication technologies with other technological systems as well as what may be unique about communication technologies.

COURSE GOALS

The goal is not to arrive at the “right” theory of technology, but have students come away with a firm understanding of multiple methods and approaches by which to assess technology in various social and political terms. As such, we will be studying the ways in which scholars from different disciplines—history, sociology, philosophy, media studies, anthropology, for example—have approached questions about technology, society, and politics. This means that we will also learn about the different ways in which different disciplines weigh the value of different types of data. By the end of the course, students should be able to

understand various ways by which to assess the mutual relationship between society and technology; to identify different theoretical approaches to the study technology; and finally, begin to decide which questions and approaches they find most useful for analyzing contemporary issues and debates as they concern technology and society.

COURSE FORMAT, GENERAL REQUIREMENTS, ATTENDANCE, & ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I will begin each class with a short introductory lecture that examines the themes and readings for the week. The rest of the class should function to promote class discussion and student-led conversation about the various readings. Because active participation in discussion is the cornerstone of the class, you should come prepared for discussion and with copies of the reading.

To aid our discussion and to improve their writing skills, you be required to turn in one weekly writing assignment where you will (1) provide a summary of the thesis and argument of each reading (2) pose at least one conceptual question about the readings and/or topics under discussion. A short in-class mid-term and a take-home final exam will also be given. More information on these assignments and grading criteria are provided on a separate sheet.

Because this is a seminar course, regular class attendance is required. Three or more missed classes without prior notices or excuse will result in your grade being dropped by one half letter.

Plagiarism or cheating on any assignment will not be tolerated under any circumstances and will result in a failure of the assignment and possibly failure of this class.

For further information, please consult the Steinhardt policy on academic integrity:
http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/dcc/undergraduate/Statement_On_Academic_Integrity.php

GRADING (please see separate assignment sheet for further details)

- Attendance and Class Participation: 15%
- Weekly Writing Assignments: 25%
- In-Class Mid-Term Exam: 25%
- Final Exam: 35%
- Extra-credit assignments: If completed to satisfaction, the extra-credit assignment can raise your grade by one unit of alphanumeric grading (that is, from a B to a B+ or A- to an A).

READINGS AND OTHER MATERIALS:

Most readings are available on Blackboard. The following two texts are required and are available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore:

Standage, Tom
1999 The Victorian Internet. New York: Berkley Trade Book.

Dibbel, Julian
2006 Play Money, Or, How I Quit My Day Job and Made Millions Trading Virtual Loot. New York: Basic Books

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week I.

1. September 4: Introduction

During the first meeting we will discuss the syllabus, goals and requirements of the course.

2. September 6: Thinking Historically and Conceptually

Williams, Rosalind
2005 Afterword to Castell's The Network Society: A Cross-cultural Perspective: An Historian's View. <http://web.mit.edu/sts/sites/rwilliams/writings/castells-afterword.html> (Read after

Technology and Presentism).

Marx, Leo

1993 "Does Improved Technology Mean Progress?" In *Technology and the Future*. Albert H. Teich, ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 3-14.

Suggested Reading

Cowan, Ruth Schwartz

1997 "American Ideas about Technology." Chapter 9 in *A Social History of American Technology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 201-219.

Week II.

1. September 11: A First Case Study: Space-Time Compression: The Telegraph

Standage, Tom

1999 *The Victorian Internet*. New York: Berkley Trade Book, pp. TBD

Kielbowicz, Richard

1987 "News Gathering by Mail in the Age of the Telegraph: Adapting to a New Technology." *Technology and Culture*. 289(1): 26-41.

2. September 13: Space-Time Compression: The Telegraph and the Railway, Continued.

Standage, Tom

1999 *The Victorian Internet*. New York: Berkley Trade Book, pp. TBD

Shivelbush, Wolfgang

1977 "Railroad Space and Railroad Time." Chapter 3 in *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century*. Berkeley: The University of California Press, pp. 33-44.

Suggested Reading

Cowan, Ruth Schwartz

1997 "Industrial Society and Technological Systems." Chapter 7 in *A Social History of American Technology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 149-171.

Week III.

1. September 18: How Can Technology Communicate and Reshape our World? Molding the Body

Tenner, Edward

2003 "Technology, Technique and the Body" Chapter 1 in *Our Own Devices: The Past and Future of Body Technology*. New York: Knopf, pp. 3-29.

2. September 20: How Can Technology Communicate and Reshape our World? Political Logics.

Winner, Langdon

1986 "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" Chapter 2 In *The Whale and the Reactor: a Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, pp. 19-39.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20030503061115/wwwpersonal.si.umich.edu/~rfrost/courses/Women+Tech/readings/Winner.html>

Suggested Reading

Feenberg, Andrew

2006 [1999] "Democratic Rationalization." In *Society, Ethics, and Technology*. Morton Winston and Ralph Edelbach, eds. pp. 98-112. [14 pages]

Week IV.

1. September 25: Sounds that Travel: The Telephone and Gender

Fischer, Claude.

1988 Gender and the Residential Telephone, 1890-1940: Technologies of Sociability. *Sociological Forum*. 3(2): 211-233.

Your Own Wireless Telephone (Washington Post, 1910):

<http://paleo-future.blogspot.com/2007/05/your-own-wireless-telephone-1910.html>

2. September 27: The Cellular Telephone and . . .

Vicente L. Rafael.

2003 The Cell Phone and the Crowd: Messianic Politics in the Contemporary Philippines. *Public Culture* 15(3): 399-425.

OR

Horst, Heather and Daniel Miller

2005 From Kinship to Link-up: Cell Phones and Social Networking in Jamaica. *Current Anthropology* 46(5): 755-764.

Week V.

1. October 2: Large-Scale Industrial Farming, Large Technological Systems, and Cultural Critique

Hughes, Thomas P.

1987 "The Evolution of Large Technological Systems." In *The Social Construction of Technological Systems*. Wiebe Bijker, Thomas Hughes, and Trevor Pinch, eds. Cambridge: MA, MIT Press, pp. 51-66, 71-80

Pollan, Michael

2006 *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. (one chapter, TBD)

2. October 4: Large-Scale Industrial Farming, Large Technological Systems, and Cultural Critique, Continued.

Pollan, Michael

2006 *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (one to two chapters, TBD).

Johnson, Nathanael

2006 "Swine of the Times: The Making of the Modern Pig." *Harpers*. May, pp. 1-9.

Week VI.

1. October 9: Computers: Omissions and Unforeseen Applications

Light, Jennifer

1999 "When Computers Were Women." *Technology and Culture*. 40(3): 455-483.

Ceruzzi, Paul

2007 [1993] "An Unforeseen Revolution: Computers and Expectations, 1935-1985." In *Technology and the Future*. Albert H. Teich, ed. pp. 117-131.

Suggested Reading

Edwards, Paul

1995 "From 'Impact' to Social Process: Computers in Society and Culture." In *Handbook of Science and Technology Studies*. Sheila Jasanoff, Gerald Markle, James Petersen and Trevor Pinch, eds. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 257-285.

2. October 11: Networks and/of Labor: Then and Now

Downey, Greg

2001 Virtual Webs, Physical Technologies, and Hidden Workers: The Spaces of Labor in Information Internetworks. *Technology and Culture* 42: 209-235.

Review for Mid-Term

Week VII.

1. October 16: In class midterm

2. October 18: Society Seeps into Networking, Networking Seeps into Society

Turner, Fred

2005 Where the Counterculture Met the New Economy: The WELL and the Origins of Virtual Community. *Technology and Culture*. 46: 485-512.

Pfaffenberger, Bryan

1996 If I Want It, It's OK^o : Usenet and the (Outer) Limits of Free Speech. *The Information Society*. 12: 365-386.

Week VIII.

1. October 23: Technology, Imperialism, and Colonialism

Philip. Kavita

2007 Nature, Culture Capital, Empire. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*. 18(1): 5-12.

Salvatore, Ricardo Donato

2006 Imperial Mechanics: South America's Hemispheric Integration in the Machine Age *American Quarterly*. 58(3): 662-691.

2. October 25: The Technical Politics of Autonomy

Kunreuther, Laura

2006 Technologies of the Voice: FM Radio, Telephone, and the Nepali Diaspora in Kathmandu. *Cultural Anthropology*. (21) 3: 323-353.

Week VIII.

1. October 30: Technologies of the Self: Body Modification

Elliot, Carl

2003 "Amputees by Choice." Chapter 9 In *Better than Well: American Medicine Meets the American Dream*. New York: WW. Norton, pp. 208-236.

Suggested Reading

Hacking, Ian

1986 "Making Up People." In *The Science Studies Reader*, pp. 161-171.

2. November 1: Technologies of Reproduction: Population Modification

In Class Movie *The Sterilization of Leilani Muir*, Canadian National Film Board, 1997

Ash, Adrienne

2003 Disability Equality and Prenatal Testing: Contradictory or Compatible? *Florida State University Law Review* 315: 318-346.

Steinbock, Bonnie

2000 "Disability, Prenatal Testing, and Selective Abortion." In *Prenatal Testing and Disability Rights*, Erik Parens and Adrienne Asch, eds. Georgetown: Georgetown University Press,

pp. 108-121

Suggested Reading

Sandel, Michael J.
2006 "The Case Against Perfection." In Society, Ethics, and Technology. Morton E. Winston and Ralph Edelbach, eds. Australia: Thomson, pp. 276- 287.

Week X.

1. November: Technological Tinkering: Hackers

In Class Film:

Readings TBD

2. November 8: Technological Tinkering, Objects and Identities

Guest: Joshua Greenberg, Director of Digital Strategy and Scholarship at the New York Public Library and author of Videophiles and Betamania.

Greenberg, Joshua
[forthcoming] "Videophiles and Betamania: Hacking the VCR." Chapter 1 in Betamax to Blockbuster. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Borgman, Albert
1984 Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Small section on devices)

Week XI.

1. November 13: Intellectual Property and Technology

Mann, Charles
1998 "Who Will Own Your Next Good Idea." Atlantic Monthly, pp 57-82.

Gillespie, Tarleton
2007 "A Heroic Tale of Devilish Piracy and Glorious Progress by Jack Valenti." Chapter 4 in Wired Shut. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Helprin, Mark
2007 A Great Idea Lives Forever, Shouldn't its Copyright? Op-Ed New York Times. May 20.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/20/opinion/20helprin.html?ex=1337313600&en=4187cd8cddc05eaf&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss>

Suggested Reading

Boyle, James
2003 Second Enclosure Movement and the Construction of the Public Domain
<http://www.law.duke.edu/pd/papers/boyle.pdf>

Hess, Carla
2002 The Rise of Intellectual Property, 700 B.C.-A.D. 2000: An Idea in the Balance. Daedalus: 6-45.

2. November 15: Tinkering the Law: The Case of Free and Open Source Software

Meet the Geeks: Q & A with F/OSS Developers in Flesh and Blood.

Readings TBD: I just can't decide, I will decide later.

Week XII.

1. November 20: Wiki Politics

Schiff, Stacey

2006 Know it All: Can Wikipedia Conquer Expertise? New Yorker. July 31, 2006.
http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/07/31/060731fa_fact

Lemann, Nicholas

2006 Amateur Hour: Journalism without Journalists. New Yorker. August 7, 2006.
http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/08/07/060807fa_fact1?printable=true

Bossewitch, Jonah

2007 The Zyprexa Kills campaign: Peer production and the frontiers of radical pedagogy.
Re-public: Reimagining Democracy. <http://www.re-public.gr/en/wp-print.php?p=144>

2. November 22

No Class, Thanksgiving Holiday

Week XIII.

1. November 27: Blogs, Genre and Medium

Cohn, Kris

2005 What Does the PhotoBlog Want? Media, Culture & Society 27 (6): 883-901.

boyd, danah

2006 A Blogger's Blog: Exploring the Definition of a Medium. Reconstruction.
<http://reconstruction.eserver.org/064/boyd.shtml>.

2. November 29: The Politics of Web 2.0

Jenkins, Henry

2007 9 Propositions Towards a Cultural Theory of YouTube
http://www.henryjenkins.org/2007/05/9_propositions_towards_a_cultu.html

Susstein, Cass

2001 The Daily We: Is the Internet really a blessing for Democracy?
<http://www.bostonreview.net/BR26.3/sunstein.html>

Week XIII.

1. December 4: Games

Guest: James Grimmelman, Associate Professor of Law, New York Law School. He studies how the law governing the creation and use of computer software affects the distribution of wealth, power, and freedom in society.

Levy, Steven

2006 Living a Virtual Life: Is World of Warcraft a game, or is it a harbinger of virtual realities that we all might inhabit. Only a Night Elf knows for sure. September.
<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14757769/site/newsweek/page/0/>

Taylor, T.L.

2006 "Whose Game is this Anyway?" Chapter 5 In Play Between Worlds: Exploring Online Game Culture. Cambridge: MIT Press, pp. 125-150

Grimmelmann, James

2003 "Virtual Power Politics." In The State of Play: Law, Games, and Virtual Worlds. Jack M. Balkin & Beth S. Noveck, eds. New York: N.Y.U. Press.
<http://james.grimmelman.net/files/VirtualPowerPolitics.pdf>

2. December 6: Games, Continued

Dibbel, Julian
2006 Play Money, Or, How I Quit My Day Job and Made Millions Trading Virtual Loot. New York: Basic Books. (selections, TBD)

Week X.

1. December 1:

Dibbel, Julian
2006 Play Money, Or, How I Quit My Day Job and Made Millions Trading Virtual Loot. New York: Basic Books. (selections, TBD)

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Review for Final