

Technological Change & Social Justice

Course Syllabus

JUS 394 (60907) – Fall 2006
Tuesday & Thursday 3:15 – 4:30
Location: COOR L1-88

Instructor

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Course Description

This course offers an introduction to the social, historical, and ethical dimensions of modern technology. Attention will be given to the multiple ways in which technologies, individuals and institutions mutually shape one another to the benefit and/or detriment of society. Cases include surveillance devices, transportation infrastructures, reproductive technologies, food production, and more. Readings are drawn from the social sciences, fiction, and popular media. Films and documentary videos will direct inquiry into the potential of technologies for achieving democratic or equitable outcomes. The class is designed to give students freedom to develop and express their own ideas.

Required Texts

1. *Culture + Technology*. By Slack and Wise. 2005. (Hereafter “*C&T*”)
2. Readings Course Pack. Available at Alternative Copy Shop: 715 South Forest Ave. Hereafter “*Reader*”)

Grading

Weekly Essays	30%
Participation	20%
Mid-term Project	20%
Final Project	30%

Course Expectations

Attendance: This class will be conducted with a focus on lectures, activities, and in-class discussions. Because of this format, you are strongly encouraged to attend all classes. Formal attendance will not be taken, but your participation grade will suffer if you are excessively absent or tardy. You must turn in assignments ahead of time and arrange to get notes from a colleague if you are going to be absent. Finally, if you fail to show up for a scheduled meeting with the instructor without cancelling 24 hours in advance, your participation grade will be docked 5 points.

Reading: Complete all readings (and other assignments) prior to the class meeting for which they are scheduled. Most of the readings will be drawn from the required texts for the course or from Internet web pages. You must bring readings (or copies of them) to class for the dates they are assigned. In some cases, I may distribute photocopied readings to you in class. See the course outline below for details.

Participation: Through communication, ideas are formed, revised, borrowed, and developed. It is through argument, description, explanation, and improvisation – within a community – that individual learning flourishes. This course requires full participation (including active listening, facilitating, note taking, and question asking) to create an environment of open and shared learning. An effective participant is not someone who simply talks frequently, but someone who reliably offers thoughtful insights that help others to learn.

Student teams will be formed early on. Each team will have the responsibility of researching and writing a final project for the course. It is expected that teams will engage in significant outside research and preparation.

Writing: Writing is one of the most productive forms of thinking. No late or emailed writing assignments will be accepted. Weekly papers will be submitted through Blackboard (see below for more information). For all other papers, please double-space lines, use 12-point font and 1" margins, and be certain to include a references section that documents all your sources. Papers must be stapled or they will not be accepted. The sociotechnical infrastructure is unreliable, so plan accordingly and print papers well in advance.

Technology: Laptop computers and other portable technologies should be used in class only as learning-facilitation tools. During class, it is not acceptable to play games, answer email, surf the web, answer cell phones, text message, or engage in other non-class-related activities. Your participation grade will be penalized if you break this rule. Why? Not only do these practices negatively affect your learning and participation, but they also distract others and create an environment of disrespect.

Course Assignments

1. On-line Journal:

Starting in Week 2, on-line journal entries of approximately 500 words are due every Saturday by noon. Journal entries should be based on the reading, discussion, and the lecture(s) from the previous week. You must show that you did the reading and listened attentively to the lectures, but not, for example, by listing your reactions in a series of unconnected paragraphs: you must write a short essay that develops them as a whole. I will look not only for your reactions, but more importantly why you had them. Try to give reasons for your reactions, but if you are not sure about your reasons, at least try to state the dilemma in which you find yourself. It is even acceptable, in other words, to write an essay about your confusion.

I suggest, therefore, that you jot down ideas for your essays as you read or listen to the lectures, and afterwards step back for a moment to reflect on your overall reaction, that is, the theme for your essay. It is best to take a critical perspective for your theme. A critical perspective does not require that you be against the ideas expressed in the reading or lectures. It means simply that you have asked yourself some hard questions. What are

the alternatives to your reaction? Why is your reaction better than the alternatives? It is always important to remember, especially when the issues in question concern how we should live, that your first reaction may well be defensive, often accompanied by some intense feelings. It is appropriate to explore these feelings in your essay, though it will not always be easy to get to the bottom of them. You will need patience and honesty if you wish to get beyond the level of gut reaction and opinion to the level of justified belief.

Mechanics: Post your entries to our course page on Blackboard (<https://myasucourses.asu.edu/>) under the proper week heading (e.g. “Week 2”) in the “discussion board” section. If you compose the entry in a word processing program, please cut-and-paste the text into Blackboard rather than attaching a file. These assignments will be graded on a pass / fail basis. If you make a sincere effort, you will pass. As with everything else, feel free to check with me at any time throughout the semester if you are concerned about your progress with journal entries.

2. Mid-term Project:

The midterm project will be a 9-10 page paper due October 17. For this paper, you will write an essay that a) identifies one specific technology or system, b) analyzes the social problems or injustices surrounding that technology, and c) proposes viable solutions to those problems. More information can be found after this syllabus in the course reader.

3. Final Team Project:

The final project will be a team-based research paper of 20-25 pages due December 5. Teams will decide upon their own technology and social justice topics and will thoroughly investigate them using a variety of research techniques: interviewing, photographing, mapping, observing, surveying, and – of course – reading. Experimentation is highly encouraged for this project, and alternative formats are welcome. Be creative and have some fun! The team with the best project in the course (as decided by the instructor) will present it to the entire class on December 5, and each member of that team will receive an additional 5 points of extra-credit. More information can be found after this syllabus in the course reader.

I reserve the right to distribute unannounced quizzes on the reading or lecture material. Any missed points on these quizzes will be deducted from your participation grade. Quizzes may not be made-up if you are absent.

Academic Honesty

In order to avoid plagiarism, your papers must provide full citations for all references: direct quotes, summaries, or ideas. While you are encouraged to develop your thinking with your peers, you cannot use their material without citing it. Work from other courses will not be accepted in this course. Allowing your writing to be copied by another student is also considered cheating. Please review the Student Code of Conduct for complete guidelines on academic honesty. Note: Any instance of plagiarism or cheating can be grounds for failure of the entire course or expulsion from the university.

Gender-Fair Language

Language structures thought and action. Biases in language can (and do) naturalize inequities.

Imprecise language also signifies uninterrogated values and sloppy thinking. For all of these reasons, the use of gender-fair language is expected in this course. For example, do not use words like "mankind" or "men" when referring to people in general; alternate between "she" and "he" instead of always using "he", or construct sentences in the plural instead of the singular so you can use "they" or "them" and avoid the problem altogether.

ESL/LD Students

Course requirements can be adjusted to serve the needs and capabilities of ESL and LD students. Please speak with the instructor during the first two weeks of class to make arrangements. Students may be advised to attend additional sessions during the instructor's office hours so they can draw comparable value from the course.

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Week 1 **Introduction**

August 22 Course Introduction

August 24 *C&T* Introduction

Wolfe, Gene. 1996. "One-Two-Three for Me." (*Reader*)

Week 2 **What is Progress?**

August 29 *C&T* Cht. 1

August 31 *C&T* Cht. 2

Halstead, Ted. 2003. "The American Paradox." (*Reader*)

Week 3 **Technological Politics**

September 5 *C&T* Cht. 3

Weinberg, Alvin. 1966. "Can Technology Replace Social Engineering?" (*Reader*)

September 7 *C&T* Cht. 15

Winner, Langdon. 1980. "Do Artifacts have Politics?" (*Reader*)

Week 4 **Technology & The City**

September 12 Graham, Stephen and Simon Marvin. 2001. *Splintering Urbanism*, pp.1-16. (Reader)

September 14 C&T Cht.12

World Resources Institute. 1997. "Transportation and Land Use: Portland, Oregon." (Reader)

Marshall, Alex. 1996. "Putting Some 'City' Back In the Suburbs."
(Reader)

Week 5 **Surveillance & Social Control**

September 19 C&T Cht.11

Clarke, Roger. 2001. "While You Were Sleeping ... Surveillance Technologies Arrived." (Reader)

September 21 Rosen, Jeffrey. 2001. "Being Watched: A Cautionary Tale for a New Age of Surveillance." (Reader)

Institute for Applied Autonomy. "i-SEE Project." (Webbing)
<http://www.appliedautonomy.com/isee/>

Week 6 **High-Tech Policing and Prisons**

September 26 **250-word abstract of mid-term project due**

Cole, Simon. 2001. "The Myth of Fingerprints." (Reader)

Berenson, Alex. 2001. "As Police Use of Tasers Rises, Questions Over Safety Increase." (Reader)

September 28 Wired. 1997. "Prisons Aim to Keep, and Keep Ahead of, Convicts." (Reader)

Lynch, Jim. 2005. "Can tethers give jails leg up on space?" (Reader)

Week 7 **Regulating Sex**

October 3 Fishman, Jennifer R. 2002. "Sex, Drugs, and Clinical Research." (Reader)

Darby, Robert. 2005. "The Sorcerer's Apprentice: Why Can't We Stop Circumcising Boys?" (Reader)

October 5 Ludwig, Eric. 1998. "The Impact of Norplant on Minority Women." (Reader)

Bunkle, Phillida. 1993. "Calling the Shots." (Reader)

Week 8 **Body Modification**

- October 10 Frank, Arthur W. 2004. "Emily's Scars." (*Reader*)
- Elliott, Carl. 2000. "A New Way to be Mad." (*Reader*)
- October 12 Herzig, Rebecca. 1999. "Removing Roots." (*Reader*)

Week 9 **Globalization & Postindustrialization**

Mid-term project due

- October 19 C&T Cht. 16
- Hardt, Michael & Antonio Negri. 2000. "Postmodernization, or the Informatization of Production." (*Reader*)

Week 10 **Technologies of Food Production**

- October 24 Ayres, Ed and Alan Durning. 1994. "The History of a Cup of Coffee." (*Reader*)
- Ayres, Ed and Alan Durning. 1995. "An Order of French Fries." (*Reader*)
- Talbott, Stephen L. 2003. "Cheap Food at Any Cost." (*Reader*)
- October 26 Schlosser, Eric. 2002. "The Most Dangerous Job." Chapter from *Fast Food Nation*. (*Reader*)
- Shand, Hope and Pat Mooney. 1998. "Terminator Seeds Threaten an End to Farming." (*Reader*)

Week 11 **Environmental Effects of "Clean" Technologies**

- October 31 Center for Health, Environment, and Justice. 1998. "Love Canal: the Start of a Movement." (*Reader*)
- Smith, Ted. 1997. "The Dark Side of High-Tech Development." (*Reader*)
- Research your zip-code on www.scorecard.org
- November 2 Doherty, Brendan. 1998. "Intel Outside." (*Reader*)
- Intel. 2003. "Intel in your Community: Arizona Environment." <http://www.pentium.com/community/arizona/environ.htm>

Week 12 **Health Inequalities**

November 7 Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2002. "Rotten Trade." (*Reader*)

November 9 Davis, Paul, and Meredith Fort. 2004. "The Battle Against Global AIDS." (*Reader*)

Week 13 **Media & Democracy**

November 14 **Three-page summary of final project due**

FreePress. 2006. "The Struggle for Net Freedom." (*Reader*)

Webbing:

Listen to one program at www.Radio4All.net

Read one story at www.IndyMedia.org

Watch short video on Net Neutrality:
<http://www.publicknowledge.org/node/307>

November 16 Media ownership chart. 2006. (*Reader*)

McChesney, Robert W. 2006. "Fight for a Free Press." (*Reader*)

FAIR. 2006. "Fear & Favor 2005—FAIR's Sixth Annual Report." (*Reader*)

Week 14 **Affluence & Overconsumption**

November 21 2000. "Media Reports & Views." (*Reader*)

2005. *Mother Jones*. "This New House." (*Reader*)

Webbing:

Buy Nothing Day: <http://adbusters.org/metas/eco/bnd/>

Calculate your ecological footprint:
<http://www.lead.org/leadnet/footprint/default.htm>

November 23 THANKSGIVING

Week 15 **Nanotechnology**

November 28 *C&T* Conclusion

Feder, Barnaby. 2005. "Experts Give Scientists Roadmap on Nanotechnology Research." (*Reader*)

November 30 Sarewitz, Daniel and Edward Woodhouse. 2004. "Small is Powerful."

ETC Group. 2003. "Nanotech Un-good!" (*Reader*)

Week 16 **Conclusions . . .**

December 5 **Final team project due**

Closing lecture and best team presentation

**Mid-Term Project
(20% of class grade)**

Overview:

The mid-term project will be an in-depth analysis of the relationship between technological change and social justice. For this project, you should focus on a particular issue of interest to you and analyze it using the concepts introduced in this course. The key to success on this project is selecting an issue that is focused rather than broad (e.g., looking at handicapped access into ASU buildings rather than handicapped access in the city of Phoenix as a whole). **You must incorporate concepts and examples from the course readings and lectures.**

There should be three main sections to this paper:

1. **Identify one specific technology or technological system.** Describe the technology and its context in detail. What is the technology supposed to do? Is it a technological fix for some social problem? What are the reaches of the technology, either in terms of production, interdependence, upkeep demands, disposal, etc.?
2. **Analyze the social problems or injustices surrounding that technology.** What are the politics of the technology? To what extent does the technology contribute to social problems and in what ways does it contribute? Are certain populations more negatively or positively affected than others? How so and why? How are social relations altered by the technology? What are the ramifications of the problems (communal, individual, environmental, or otherwise)?
3. **Propose viable solutions to that socio-technical problem.** Attend to both social and technical fixes while you map out some incremental steps toward positive change. Be certain to make your solutions as plausible as possible. Speculate on what the obstacles are to the solutions you propose and how one could overcome or mitigate them. Finally, indicate an awareness of other problems that might arise from your solutions and how you might minimize them in advance.

Choosing an issue:

Depending on the technology you choose, related social problems might include income disparity, overconsumption, environmental degradation, racial profiling, racial segregation, arms proliferation, domestic violence, social isolation, or inadequate access to affordable housing, health care, food, etc. Your proposed “solutions” should concentrate on different configurations of socio-technical infrastructures, meaning the relationship among technology designs, social behaviors, government policies, etc.

Other instructions:

The suggested page limit for this second project is 9-10 pages. Please use 12-point font and 1" margins. Text should be double spaced. Your instructor’s name should appear on the first page of your essay. Please do not use cover pages or folders of any kind. All papers must be stapled or they will not be accepted. No late papers will be accepted.

Important Dates:

September 26: Submit a 250-word abstract of your paper by this date.
October 17: Final Draft of paper due at start of class.

Final Team Project (30% of class grade)

Overview:

The final project will be a team-based research project. Teams will decide upon their own technology and social justice topics and will thoroughly investigate them using a variety of research techniques: interviewing, photographing, mapping, observing, surveying, and – of course – reading. Experimentation is highly encouraged for this project, and alternative formats are welcome. Be creative and have some fun! The team with the best project in the course (as decided by the instructor) will present it to the entire class on December 5, and each member of that team will receive an additional 5 points of extra-credit. You must incorporate concepts and examples from the course readings and lectures.

Assignment:

Using material from the course as a starting point, pick one technology and social justice topic worthy of further investigation and conduct research on the design of that technology, its use, its potential for discrimination or “misuse,” and its cultural meanings or social functions. The emphasis for this project should be 1) on the politics of technology, 2) on technology’s contingent design (i.e., how it could have been or might be different), and 3) its potential for modification to bring about social conditions that are more just.

If your team is writing a research paper, the recommended page length is 20-25 pages. However, if you choose an alternative presentation format, such as a web page or a video production, then expectations for the written component will be less stringent. Please consult with your instructor well in advance of the due date in order to get feedback on what will and will not be considered a “complete” project.

Finally, every member in your team should write a two page reflection piece that comments on what was learned from the research and collaboration experience, what the strengths and weaknesses are of the project, and what could have been done to make the experience better. The other members of your team will not see these reflection pieces.

Other instructions:

For the written component of the team project, please use 12-point font and 1" margins. Text should be double spaced. Write the names of all team members on the first page, and do not use cover pages or folders of any kind unless necessary to preserve your presentation (e.g., artwork or photographs). All sources must be cited in the text and listed in a “references” section at the end of the paper. All papers must be stapled or they will not be accepted. No late papers will be accepted. If you would like your work returned to you, please provide your instructor with a large self-addressed and stamped envelope on the last day of class.

Important Dates:

November 14: **Three-page summary of your project due.** Include title, topic description and importance, methods, and preliminary findings.

December 5: **Final project due at the start of class.** (Your final grade may be docked if you are not present for the entire class period.)