

HUM 354/COM 554: Introduction to Science and Technology Studies
Tuesdays 1:50-4:30pm
Engineering 1/Rettaliata 027
Spring 2017

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photo: assortment of crash test dummies, via designnews.com

Course Description:

This course will acquaint you with key theories and methods in the field of Science and Technology Studies. It will ask you to question widely-held preconceptions about the relationship between technology and society. In particular, we will focus on several themes:

- How technologies are instruments of social control. Sometimes in a very intentional way, sometimes “accidentally.”
- How social expectations and needs shape technological artifacts during their design and deployment, and how far this process extends into the realm of the “technical.”
- How people are affected differently by the same technologies, owing to their race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, socioeconomic status, or intersections of these categories.
- How the history of these changes is useful for understanding your own fields of study and your endeavors as engineers, scientists, or humanists.

Expectations:

You are expected to do the reading for each class day in advance of the class, and to complete the relevant assignments laid out on the syllabus, or assigned in class, for the dates defined. Late work will not be accepted except in the case of illness or unusual hardship. It is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate in the event you miss class. Please refrain from emailing me to ask me to catch you up unless you've exhausted all other options; due to the length and discussion-based nature of class it is not possible for me to provide extensive summaries of what we covered.

Please take advantage of IIT's Writing Center to help you improve your writing. It is located in the Humanities Dept., Siegel Hall, Room 232-233:

http://www.iit.edu/csl/hum/resources/writing_center.shtml

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verified disabilities. Register with IIT's Center for Disability Resources and also speak with me at the start of the semester so that we can make arrangements: <http://www.iit.edu/cdr/>

Please be aware of the code of student conduct contained in your student handbook: **cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the assignment and possibly for the entire course.** A record of academic honesty infractions is recorded with the central university administration and may affect your ability to continue your studies at IIT or in graduate school.

Assignments:

For undergraduates, your grade will be composed of the following:

Attendance, participation, unannounced in-class writing assignments or quizzes: 20%

Several small projects and exercises listed on the syllabus or that will be given as homework: 20%

Short essay(s): 20%

Midterm exam: 20%

Final project: 20%

For graduate students, you will be responsible for the above and also for the completion of readings or assignments listed as optional, or which I mention in class as supplemental. You will be expected to play an active role in class discussion and perform to a higher standard than your undergraduate peers on assignments. During the semester you will also be responsible for helping to lead one class discussion (assigned in advance).

Readings:

Readings will be available on Blackboard or through URLs on the syllabus. You must bring a copy of the day's readings with you in paper or electronic form. Two books are available at the bookstore and on reserve in the library. They are optional to buy but you will need to do readings from one or both: Noble, Tynes et. al., *The Intersectional Internet* and Wu & Goldsmith, *Who Controls the Internet*.

Schedule:

Class 1

Jan 10: What is STS? And why should you care?

Handouts in class, class exercise, syllabus

Reading (in class): N. Balabanian, "On the Presumed Neutrality of Technology" and L. West, "I've left Twitter"

Class 2

Jan 17: Technical versus Social

L. Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?"

B. Latour, "Where are the Missing Masses: A Sociology of a Few Mundane Objects"

Library Database/Instruction Session, if time permits

Class 3

Jan 24: SCOT

T. Pinch and R. Kline, "Users as Agents of Technological Change"

B. Woods & N. Watson, "In Pursuit of standardization: the British ministry of health's model 8F wheelchair, 1948-1962"

"SCOT a bike" assignment given in class (Assign groups). Due Feb 10th.

Class 4

Jan 31: Simulating Humanity: Technological Change and Moral Panics

Excerpt from S. Turkle, *Alone Together*

A. Turing "Computing machinery and intelligence"

Class 5

Feb 7: Race, Agency, and Technology

Tynes, Schuschke, & Noble, "Digital Intersectionality Theory and the #Blacklivesmatter Movement"

Read selected excerpts from *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

Excerpts from *Killing the Black Body* by Dorothy Roberts

Short Paper assigned on theories discussed so far in class. Paper assignment:

Due Feb 23 by 11pm, uploaded to www.digitalhistorylab.com

In an essay of no less than 900 and no more than 1500 words, tell me what value the theories we've learned about so far in class have for your understanding of present day technologies. Use specific examples from the class texts (at least 5) and specific examples from your own experience (at least 3). Remember to leave an extra line of white space between your paragraphs so your paragraph breaks remain visible after you've uploaded your essay.

Feb 10: (NOTE THAT THIS DUE DATE DOES NOT FALL ON A DAY WE HAVE CLASS)

"SCOT a bike" assignment due, uploaded to www.digitalhistorylab.com—share in next class, time permitting.

Class 6

Feb 14: Does Technology Take Gender into Account?

Articles on Stereotype Threat, Bathrooms, and Medical Research on Blackboard

Before class also listen to Hannah Valentine Lecture, "How Gender Can Save Lives: Redesigning Medical Research," available on iTunesU from Stanford (you will need iTunes for your computer, or the iTunesU app for iPad/iPhone): <http://itun.es/iSV5mf>

Google image search exercise in class and discussion of "#ilooklikea..." campaigns

Before coming to class today, find two news articles that touch on issues of gender and technology

Class 7

Feb 21: Hidden Digital Labor

Excerpts from M. Hicks, *Programmed Inequality*

Excerpts from M. Shetterly, *Hidden Figures*

L. Nakamura, on Navajo women in hardware manufacturing at Fairchild Semiconductor:

<http://www.computerhistory.org/atcm/indigenous-circuits/>

and/or <https://lnakamur.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/indigenous-circuits-nakamura-aq.pdf>

****Reminder that your short paper is due Feb 23 by 11pm (see class 5, above).**

Class 8

Feb 28: Contemporary Hidden Labor

S. Roberts "Commercial Content Moderation: Digital Laborers' Dirty Work" in *The Intersectional Internet*
Mother Jones article, "I Was a Warehouse Wage Slave"

<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/02/mac-mcclelland-free-online-shipping-warehouses-labor>

Plus selected articles on labor and technology on Blackboard, including articles on Mturk, Uber, etc.

Assignment for next class: in addition to doing the readings for next time, bring in one news article that touches on the theme of how technology constructs our identities, and be prepared to engage the class with at least 2 discussion questions about your article.

Class 9

March 7: How Technology Constructs Our Identities

Articles by Drucker, Losse, Wetmore, and on cyborg culture in marked folder on Blackboard

T. Chante'Tanksley "Black Girls in Popular Instagram Memes" in *The Intersectional Internet*

Discuss the news articles class has found

Technology "fast" assignment (entertainment tech) discussed, due March 21st in class (you will write a collaborative essay with a class partner about your experiences, how they differed, and how they were similar.)

Final Paper preview

March 13-18: SPRING BREAK

Class 10

March 21: Where Does Technological Control Come From?

Excerpts from M. Sauter, *The Coming Swarm*

Excerpts from Wu & Goldsmith, *Who Controls the Internet*

Discuss and write about technology fast

Brief midterm review

Class 11 March 28: **MIDTERM EXAM**

Class 12

April 4: No Class. Readings TBA. Use this time to do the following assignments:

- 1. Begin Work on your final projects. Come to class able to articulate both your topic and your argument.**
- 2. Find one political tweet that has affected the news cycle this week and describe how discourse has a material impact on policy or other aspects of governance.**

Class 13

April 11: Lab session

Guest Lecturer Noah McClain (if available)

Discuss your final papers—come to class able to articulate both your topic and your argument.

Screening of Google and the World Brain if time

Assignment: Post an article you'd like to discuss next time, and a brief explanation of why you'd like to talk about it, on www.digitalhistorylab.com by April 16th at 10pm.

Class 14

April 18: Your Choice

****Do class evaluations****

Discussion of articles that you have chosen and brought in to talk about; read your classmates' posts and articles on www.digitalhistorylab.com before coming to class

Class 15

April 24: Summation

You will turn in your final projects on the date set by the registrar for our final exam. You will give them to me in person, in paper format, unless I specify otherwise.

Have a good break!