

HIST 214.002

Technology and Society in American History

Professor: Dr. Kyle Riismandel

Classroom: CKB222

Time: Monday and Thursday, 2:30-3:55P.M.

Office: Cullimore 326

Office Hours: Monday 1-2PM, Tuesday 2:30-3:30PM, Thursday 1:30-2:20PM, and by appointment

Contact: kriis@njit.edu/973-596-3379

Course Description:

This course examines the relationship between technology and society throughout the history of the United States. We will analyze the roles and impacts of major technological innovations within their cultural and historical contexts seeking to understand how these contexts shaped and were shaped by these technologies including electricity, railroads, video games, the internet, among others. In doing so, we will highlight the ways in which technologies articulated, exacerbated, and undermined social identities and relationships of power.

Course Goals and Assessments

Students will:

Identify, analyze, and deploy secondary sources to make historical arguments	Lecture Primary and Secondary Readings Discussion Exams Paper Assignment
Practice the skills necessary to analyze, discuss, and write about primary and secondary sources related to the study of American culture and technology	Lecture Primary and Secondary Readings Discussion Exams Paper Assignment
Identify, analyze, and differentiate key terms and ideas in the history of technology	Lecture Primary and Secondary Readings Discussion Exams
Demonstrate understanding of the relationship between technology and American society at various points in US history	Lecture Primary and Secondary Readings Discussion Exams

COURSE TEXTS

All course readings are available via moodle.njit.edu. **Please bring all readings to class.**

ASSIGNMENTS

**YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL ASSIGNMENTS TO PASS THE COURSE.
FAILURE TO DO SO WILL RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC F.**

Reading Responses - 4% x 3 = 12%

Rather than a summary, your response should address the following questions for a secondary source reading:

- What is the central argument?
- What evidence supports that argument?
- How does the reading relate to that week's lecture?

Primary Source Analysis – 4% x 3 = 12%

Rather than a summary, your response should address the following questions:

- When was it from?
- What did the source communicate about the values, ideals, and culture of its time and place?
 - In particular, you may want to consider some of the following depending on the source:
 - What did the source tell you about a particular technology's intended or unintended use?
 - What did the source say about the technology as part of a larger technological system?

Reading Quizzes – 4% x 3 = 12%

These quizzes are designed to test reading comprehension which means they will ask questions about the content of a reading rather than “gotcha” questions about minor details.

Class Participation - 19%

Students are expected to participate actively in all class discussions and activities, to be respectful to the instructor and their fellow classmates, to arrive to class on time, and to stay focused on what is happening in our classroom not on chatting or using digital devices.

Participation will be assessed on the quality of contributions to class discussions. Quality participation demonstrates the following:

- Understanding of the historical context as gleaned from lectures and readings
- Completion of that week's assignments such as readings and reading responses
- A willingness to engage in critical assessment of course texts and lectures

Students are expected to attend class and to be punctual. Excessive absences or late arrivals will result in a greatly diminished class participation grade. Further, there will be only one screening of each film so please do your best to not miss class.

Midterm - 15%

This exam will be a take-home with short identifications and one essay.

Final Exam - 30%

The final exam will be a take-home essay exam that will ask you to think integratively and comparatively about the topics, ideas, and questions raised over the course of the entire semester.

Course Policies

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all course meetings on time unless receiving prior authorization. Missing class will not only adversely affect your class participation grade, but will prevent you from learning course content and skills. This policy refers to all absences, including missing class because you are ill or have a family emergency. However, if you miss class to attend an NJIT sponsored event, to observe a religious holiday, or documented illness such absences will be excused. For these absences to count as excused, you **must** receive permission from the instructor in advance or provide a doctor's note in the case of sickness.

Office hours/student appointments: My office hours will be every Monday 1-2PM, Tuesday 2:30-3:30PM, and Thursday 1:30-2:20PM. I am also available to meet by appointment if students are unable to make it to my office during these times. I encourage you to send me an email to set up a meeting to talk to me about course topics, assignments, or grades.

Academic dishonesty: Students are expected to obey the NJIT honor code, and I will enforce this code to its fullest extent. For the tenets of the code or for clarification of what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, please consult:
<http://www.njit.edu/academics/honorcode.php>.

Cell phones: Use of a cell phone in class for unauthorized activity will result in student's choosing either:

1. Immediate expulsion from class
2. Placement of the student's cell phone at the front of class with the instructor for the remainder of that class and each class for the remainder of the semester.

Though, you may think texting, using Twitter, etc. is innocuous or invisible, it is not. It interrupts the flow of discussion, distracts other students, and will inevitably embarrass the texter when I have to call you out.

Laptops and miscellaneous technology rules: Students may use laptops in this course for class-related activities only. If I learn that students are using laptops for any other purpose, I will issue a laptop ban for this class. Students are also prohibited from listening to ipods or using any other device in this class that has not received prior authorization. Further, do not keep headphones in your ears even if you are not listening to anything. Essentially, you are in class approximately 3 hours a week. Please be present

and prepared when you are here. If you would rather text or surf the internet, please do not come to class.

Students with Disabilities or Special Needs: Students who have disabilities or special needs should contact NJIT's Student Disability Services to help procure accommodations in completing coursework. The center can be found at <http://www.njit.edu/counseling/services/disabilities.php>.

Week 1

January 18 - Introduction/What is Technology?/What is History?

Week 2

January 22 - Theories of Technology

Secondary Sources

Langdon Winner, "Do Artefacts have Politics?" *Daedalus*, Vol. 109, No. 1, (Winter, 1980), pgs. 121-136.

January 25 – The Printing Press in Early America

Secondary Source

Heather A. Haveman, *Magazines and the Making of America: Modernization, Community, and Print Culture, 1741-1860*, pp. 57-86

Week 3

January 29 – Discussion – Print Culture

Primary Sources – Choose three documents from the link below

Printed Ephemera, 1763-1800 - <https://www.loc.gov/collections/broadsides-and-other-printed-ephemera/>

To prepare for discussion, please address the following questions for each document you chose:

- When is it from?
- What is the topic?
- Who is the audience of the image?
- What does the image communicate about American culture in that time and place? How does it do so?

February 1 – The Factory

Secondary Source

Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn*, Ch. 3 – available as an e-book through the NJIT Library

Primary Source – Please choose at least 2 articles and be prepared to discuss them in class

Lowell Offering, selections, 1840

Week 4

February 5 – Slavery and Technology

Primary Source – Please read these laws with an eye toward the role played by technology in the laws governing enslaved peoples

Washington, DC Slave Code - <https://www.loc.gov/resource/lsc.002/?st=gallery>

Please choose and read one narrative:

“Born in Slavery: Slave Narrative from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1938” -
<https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/about-this-collection/>

February 8 – Slavery and the Sugar Plantation

Secondary Source

Susanna Delfino and Michelle Gillespie, eds., *Technology, Innovation, and Southern Industrialization: From the Antebellum Era to the Computer Age*, “Slavery and Technology in Louisiana’s Sugar Bowl,” pp. 68-97 -- available as an e-book through the NJIT Library

Week 5

February 12 – Industrialization and Organized Labor

Primary Source

Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, ch. 15, sect. 1-5

February 15

Secondary Source

Paul Krause, *The Battle for Homestead: Politics, Culture, and Steel, 1880-1892*, Ch. 12

Week 6

February 19 – Electrifying America

Secondary Source

Ernest Freeberg, *The Age of Edison*, selections

February 22 – Coney Island

Primary Source

Coney Island (1919)

Week 7

February 26 – The Telephone

Secondary Source

Claude Fischer. “‘Touch Someone’: The Telephone Industry Discovers Sociability,” *Technology and Culture*. V. 29, n. 1 (Jan., 1988), pgs. 32-61.

March 1 – NO CLASS

Week 8

March 5 – Lecture

Highways vs. Cities

March 8 Highways vs. People

Secondary Source

Eric Avila. *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City*, Ch. 3

Week 9 – SPRING BREAK

NO CLASS

Week 10

March 19 – Housework, the Home, and Gender

Primary Source

Please choose two ads and/or articles that depict the relationship between women and domestic technology

Ladies Home Journal

<https://archive.org/stream/ladieshomejourna65janwyet/ladieshomejourna65janwyet#page/n13/mode/2up>

March 22 –

Primary Sources

The Honeymooners, “TV or Not TV,” 1955

Secondary Source

Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*, Ch. 3, pp. 73-98

Week 11

March 26 – Atomic Culture

Lecture – Cold War America

Primary Source

United States Air Defense System Plan – October 24, 1950

March 29 – Nuclear Anxiety

Primary Source

Dr. Strangelove; Or How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964)

Secondary Source

Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb’s Early Light: American Thought and Culture At the Dawn of the Atomic Age*

Week 12

April 2 – Cars and the Environment

Secondary Source

Christopher W. Wells, *Car Country: An Environmental History*, Ch. 7

April 5 – Business Machines and Identity

Secondary Source

Steven Lubar, “ ‘Do Not Fold, Spindle, or Mutilate’: A Cultural History of the Punch Card”

Week 13

April 9 – The Personal Computer

Primary Source

Bill Gates, “Open Letter to Hobbyists,” February 3, 1976

Secondary Source

Paul Ceruzzi. “From Scientific Instrument to Everyday Appliance: The Emergence of Personal Computers, 1970-77,” *History and Technology*. V.13, 1996, pp. 1-31

April 12 – The Internet

Primary Source

WarGames (1983)

Secondary Source

Stephanie Schulte, “The *WarGames* Scenario: Regulating Teenagers and Teenage Technology,” pp. 23-55

Week 14

April 16 – The World Wide Web

Primary Sources

Tim Berners-Lee. *Weaving the Web: The Original Design and Ultimate Destiny of the World Wide Web*. (New York: HarperCollins), 2000, chapter 1-3, pgs 1-34.
Bill Gates. *The Internet Tidal Wave*, Memo, May 26, 1995.

April 19 – Genetics, Science, and Identity

Primary Source

Harriet McBryde Johnson. “Unspeakable Conversations,” *The New York Times Magazine*, Feb. 16, 2003,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/16/magazine/unspeakable-conversations.html?sec=health&pagewanted=all>

Secondary Sources

Alondra Nelson, *The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation After the Genome* (New York: Beacon, 2015), Chs. 8 and 9

Week 15

April 23 – TBD

April 26 – Final Exam Review

**FINAL EXAM DUE BY 5PM MAY 10TH VIA TURNITIN
NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED**