Technology and Society

SC04601
O’Neil 211
January - May, 2013
Tuesdays and Thursdays - 9:00am - 10:15am

Instructor: Mr. Alexander Hernandez
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E-mail: alexander.hernandez@bc.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays: 10:20am – 11:20am, Thursdays: 8:00am – 8:50am & or by appointment

Course Description

The goal of this course is to understand the importance of technology and technological change in our social world. Through the use of sociological concepts and the sociological imagination, students will be asked to consider how social factors (e.g. race, class and gender) impact the development and presentation of technology. With the help of lecture, discussion, and hands-on work with technological applications, we will engage with technology in a way that should make you better understand how technology influences our everyday lives.

Course Objectives

- Examine the social impact of technology both historically and in contemporary society
- Understand the various ways that stereotypes and biases affect our perception and use of technology
- Identify the inventors and innovators who have helped bring about technological change
- Consider the public policy implications of technological innovation
- Learn the usefulness of a variety of technological applications

Perennial Questions – In this course we will examine several vital questions, including:

- What makes society work?
- How does society evolve?
- What is truth within our society? Other societies?

Cultural Diversity – In addition this course will examine how race and ethnicity is dealt with in American society and other cultures.
Historical Perspective - In order to understand the field of sociology, a history of our paradigms must be examined as well. We will discuss how American ideals have been shaped by social, cultural and technological change since our nation’s founding. For example, we will discuss how slavery in this country has affected race relations in our modern world.

Methodology - The way in which sociology as a discipline and sociologists as social scientists are able to report on and study societies must be examined as well as the findings themselves. As part of becoming a critical thinker and an examiner of everyday life, this course will challenge all approaches to obtaining sociological “knowledge” in order for students to better understand our society and other societies. In order to do this we will be considering the various techniques employed by sociologists including interviews, surveys and ethnography. We will weigh the positives and negatives of each method in order to better understand the science of sociology.

Creating a Personal Philosophy – This course, in its attempt to help students think more critically about everyday life, our social structures, and social change, will help students uncover what their own, unique approach to life is. More specifically, each student will, in effect, create his or her own sociological perspective. In order to achieve this end, students will be presented with a wealth of information on some of our most important social issues (e.g. racism, sexism, etc.). This information will come in many forms that are familiar to students including books, magazine articles, movies, music and of course prepared lecture. From this they are expected to cultivate their own viewpoint on the issues and then present them in the form of class discussion, homework assignments, reaction papers and exams.

Course Readings

Readings will be required throughout the course and they will be available online. The readings will be posted at least one week before they are to be discussed in class. I will be posting announcements as well as sending out emails to inform students when a reading has been posted but it is the student’s responsibility to listen for any classroom announcements regarding the readings.

Course Requirements/Grading:

Class Attendance is required. You should attend every class unless you are ill or faced with an emergency. Many in-class activities cannot be made up and papers must be turned in on time. It is extremely difficult to understand sociological topics without being able to relate them to your own life and experiences. You can get a lot of information from the readings, but without coming to class you risk missing important discussions, and we will miss your input.

A portion of your final grade will be based on your attentiveness and contributions. You must listen to the lectures, to your fellow students and to anyone else addressing the group. Asking questions and speaking out is encouraged, but interruptions or disrespect will not be tolerated, so please raise your hand before addressing the class.
BE WARNED: EXCESSIVE ABSENCES WILL RESULT IN A REDUCTION OF YOUR FINAL GRADE. The class lectures are meant to complement the readings, but they will not repeat the readings. New, original information will be available in every class session. You can get a lot of information from the readings, but without coming to class you risk missing important discussions. Because of this, you will earn a portion of your grade from your attendance and participation in class activities. If you miss a class activity or if you do not participate, you will lose points from your final point total. I do not excuse absences as you are all adults and can decide whether your personal issues warrant missing a class. This will be worth 20% of your grade.

REACTION PAPER – DUE FEBRUARY 21st

For this assignment, you are to read and review a news article. This paper will be graded on content, clarity, and relevance to the course. Your topic will be given to you two weeks before the paper is due. This paper should be based on your opinion, but it also must provide insight into something that you learned. You can agree or disagree with the topic. This paper will be typed, double-spaced, 12-pt. font, numbered, and at least 1,500 words. A prompt will be presented when the topics are given out. These are due on the specified due date and cannot be made up or turned in late. This paper will be worth 20% of your grade.

HANDS-ON PROJECT PAPER – DUE MAY 2nd

For this assignment, you are to gain some hands-on experience with some form of technology such as creating a YouTube video or learning basic computer programming. You will then write about your experience and discuss/describe the value of this skill in our modern world. This paper will be typed, double-spaced, 12-pt. font, numbered, and should be at least 1,500 words. I will provide a detailed prompt and an example of what this paper should look like when we discuss it in class. These are due on the specified due date and cannot be made up or turned in late. This assignment will be worth 20% of your grade.

EXAMS – MIDTERM EXAM: FEBRUARY 28th & FINAL EXAM: MAY 9th

We will have two (2) exams throughout the course. Each exam will be worth 20% of your grade. I reserve the right to use a variety of question types including but not limited to multiple choice, True/False, short answer and essay questions. Students will be eligible to take a make-up exam only at the instructor’s discretion with proper documentation.

POP EXTRA CREDIT/QUIZZES

I reserve the right to give pop extra credit/quizzes at any time throughout the semester.

There are three ways to earn extra credit: (1) Class participation that demonstrates deep insight and/or understanding of our social world, (2) through the submission of articles, clips, music or pictures that
directly relate to the course, and (3) the completion of a 3,500 word essay (**you must discuss this option with the instructor before starting**).

### GRADE BREAKDOWN

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<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage of Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Activities, Participation</td>
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<td>Essay I</td>
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<td>Essay II</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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### POINT CONVERSION SCALE

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<td>A</td>
<td>93-96</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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### Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy:

I take cheating and plagiarism **VERY** seriously. I have included an excerpt of the university’s academic integrity policy in the addendum. It is your responsibility to know what the policy is and to ask questions if anything is unclear. When in doubt, ask!

### Other Important Notes:

- For other important dates and information, such as withdrawal, audit, incomplete, and repeat course policies, refer to your college handbook.

- **Instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus and class schedule if necessary. If this is the case, an announcement will be made in class.**

### Course Schedule

**TOPIC 1: FINISH THESE READINGS BY JANUARY 24th**

**Sociological Foundation**

1. A Billion Wicked Thoughts by Ogas and Gaddam
2. Information and Equity by Lievrouw and Farb
3. Why the First Laptop Had Such a Hard Time Catching On by Alexis Madrigal
4. Feminist Technology by Linda Layne

**TOPIC 2: FINISH THESE READINGS BY FEBRUARY 7th**

**History**
5. The Bomb and the Genome by McClellan and Dorn
6. A History of the Internet and the Digital Future by Johnny Ryan
7. Creation Myth by Malcolm Gladwell

**TOPIC 3: FINISH THESE READINGS BY FEBRUARY 28th**

**Theory**
9. The Net Generation Comes of Age by Don Tapscott
10. The Big Switch by Nicholas Carr
11. The Shallows by Nicholas Carr
12. Everything is Miscellaneous by David Weinberger
13. Too Big to Know by David Weinberger
14. The Information Diet by Clay Johnson
15. Abundance by Diamandis and Kotler

***THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28th – MIDTERM EXAM***

***TUESDAY, MARCH 5th to THURSDAY, MARCH 7th – SPRING BREAK***

**TOPIC 4: FINISH THESE READINGS BY MARCH 28th**

**Media**
16. Television and Internet in the Construction of identity by Imma Tubella
17. The Filter Bubble by Eli Pariser
18. Small Change by Malcolm Gladwell
19. Body and Soul by Matt Rubinstein
20. Why Facebook and Google's Concept of 'Real Names' Is Revolutionary by Alexis Madrigal
21. How To Do Things With Videogames by Ian Bogost

***NO CLASS – MARCH 28th – Holy Thursday***

**TOPIC 5: FINISH THESE READINGS BY APRIL 4**th
Crime and Deviance

22. Liars and Outliers by Bruce Schneier
23. Does Cybercrime Really Cost $1 Trillion? By Maass and Rajagopalan
24. Hacking Capitalism by Johan Soderberg
25. ‘I've Got Nothing to Hide’ by Daniel Solove

**TOPIC 6: FINISH THESE READINGS BY APRIL 15**th
Education

26. E-Learning and the Transformation of Education for a Knowledge Economy by Betty Collis
27. The Net Generation As Learners by Don Tapscott
29. Programming for All by Matt Ford

**TOPIC 7: FINISH THESE READINGS BY APRIL 23**rd
Family, Work, and Consumption

30. Love and Sex With Robots by David Levy
31. Patterns of Racial-Ethnic Exclusion by Internet Daters by Robnett and Feliciano
32. Race Against the Machines by Erik Brynjolfsson
33. The Net Generation in the Workforce by Don Tapscott

**TOPIC 8: FINISH THESE READINGS BY MAY 2nd**

Tech Miscellaneous

34. The Most Human Human by Brian Christian
35. The Need to Bleed? by Aengst and Layne
36. The Case of the Electromechanical Vibrator by Rachel Maines

***THURSDAY, MAY 9th – FINAL EXAM***
Addendum to Syllabus

Email: Please do not email me for the following reasons:

- You are not going to attend class, but you just wanted to let me know.
- You missed a class and wanted to find out if “we did anything important.”

Please do not be personally offended, but emails of these types will not be answered. Please see the category below for more information on solving these types of problems. There are some times when email is helpful. Please email for the following reasons:

- You need to talk to someone but you can’t attend the office hours- you want to make an appointment.
- You have an EMERGENCY situation and need immediate attention (from an instructor... for other types of emergencies, please dial 911).

Also, please be sure to be very specific in your email. “I want to stop by to talk about my paper grade” doesn’t help me as much as “I want to stop by on Tuesday to talk about the grade I got on Paper #2.”

SOME ADVICE: Come to office hours if you have a problem. It is much easier to solve a problem when I can work with you face to face.

Class Notes: All of my class materials including PowerPoint’s and lectures are my personal property and are not to be distributed without my permission. In addition, my lectures are NOT to be recorded.

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating and Plagiarism

“Plagiarism, or literary theft, is defined as appropriating the literary composition of another person, including parts, passages, or language of the writing, and passing off the appropriate material as one’s own. Plagiarism is the failure to give proper credit or citation to one’s sources of information. It includes the failure to use conventional methods of documentation for material quoted or paraphrased. Additionally, plagiarism includes allowing someone else to compose or rewrite an assignment for a student.” Please see the college handbook for more information. You can also use that as a reference during the course. If cheating or plagiarism is discovered the student will receive a grade of zero (0) for the assignment. Further disciplinary action will be taken upon a second incidence including a grade of “FF” for the course.

Equal Access Statement:

I am committed to providing every student, without regard to race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, gender, age, marital status, disability, national origin, etc., the same opportunity to learn. If you have any special needs that would prohibit you from attaining this equal education, please advise me, or the Office of Student Services as soon as possible, so that we can make arrangements suitable for the circumstance. This includes missing class due to University recognized religious holidays.