COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar approaches information and communication technologies from critical and historical perspectives. We will investigate theories of the relations among technology, information, ideology, culture, and social structure, as well as methods for studying those relations.

We will investigate theories of the relations among technology, information, ideology, culture, and social structure, as well as methods for studying those relations. We will survey the available theories and methods for understanding large scale technological systems, including the social construction of technology, technological determinism, feminist technology studies, and the political economy of information and communication. We will ask about the motives and tactics of interested actors in institutional and historical context as they promote, sustain, and interpret information and communication systems. We will investigate how information and communication systems mediate, alter, or entrench power relations and cultural practices. While our focus will be on media and information technologies, more theoretical or methodological readings will necessarily cover other systems. Case studies may include investigations of orality, writing, telegraphy, telephony, cinema, broadcasting, and computing (mainframe, desktop, networked, and mobile).

COURSE OBJECTIVES, LEARNING OUTCOMES, AND RELATION TO PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

Course objectives and intended learning outcomes are:

- to attain familiarity with literature in the sociology of technology
- to develop ability to critique methodological approaches to technology study
- to attain familiarity with literature on the history of information and communication technologies
- to develop ability to pursue independent research in the history and sociology of information.

Students will become conversant with some of the fundamental concepts, theories and practices within the information disciplines (Program Learning Outcome 1). The knowledge and values awakened in this course will inform students’ future exercise of leadership (Program Learning Outcome 2). Students will learn to identify and articulate current issues in information, and suggest means of exploring those issues (Program Learning Outcome 3). Students will develop a solid understanding of the patterns of information in our societies as well as patterns of change in those practices (Program Learning Outcome 4). Students will develop an understanding of the application of new technological developments to the preservation and communication of information, and in the identification of the impact of such developments on society (Program Learning Outcome 5). The course also provides a foundation for students to engage in intellectual growth beyond graduation (Program Learning Outcome 6).
ASSESSMENT MECHANISMS

This is a seminar; preparation and participation are required. In addition to attending every class prepared to critically engage the readings, you will:

- for every class session, prepare three discussion questions, based on the readings, in relation to the course so far and to your own interests, experience, and understanding.
- write one 5-7 page paper. This will be a response, informed by class readings and discussions, to a set of questions posed by the instructor.
- write a 3,000 – 4,000 word term paper critically examining a particular issue, practice, or theory of information or communication technology. You will also write a short prospectus of the term paper before embarking on the full paper.

Final grades will be assessed based on performance in each of those tasks, weighted as follows:

- Discussion questions: 20%
- Response paper: 30%
- Term paper: 50%

SAMPLE READING LIST

(* Items preceded by an asterisk are available electronically through the U of To library system. Other items will be available on reserve in the Inforum.)


*Fischer, Claude. 1994. *America Calling.* Berkeley, CA: University of California. (Chapters 1, 2, 6, 7, 9)
* Friedman, Batya and Helen Nissenbaum. 1996. Bias in Computer Systems. ACM Transactions on
Information Systems 14 (3): 330-347


* Heide, Lars. 2008. “Punched Cards for Professional European Offices: Revisiting the Dynamics of
Information Technology Diffusion from the United States to Europe, 1889–1918,” History and

Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. (Chapter 3.)


Law (Eds.) Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change. Cambridge,
MA: MIT Press.


Pp. 111-134 in Bijker, Wiebe, Thomas Hughes, and Trevor Pinch (Eds.) The Social Construction


Tabulation Technology and Persecution in Nazi Germany.” IEEE Annals of the History of


* Martin, Michèle. 1991. “Hello Central?”: Gender, Technology, and Culture in the Formation of
Telephone Systems. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. (Chapter 3)

(Chapter, Chapter 2)


**SAMPLE CALENDAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6 Jan</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>20 Jan</td>
<td>Approaching technology</td>
<td>Wajcman, Law (1999), Scranton, Edwards</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>27 Jan</td>
<td>Information, communication, technology, and reality</td>
<td>Latour (1999)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 Feb</td>
<td>Technology, gender, race, and class</td>
<td>Marvin, Martin, Maines, Ensmenger</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10 Feb</td>
<td>Technology and capital</td>
<td>Yates, Braverman, Leubke and Milton, Heide Critical response paper due</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>17 Feb</td>
<td><strong>READING WEEK</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>24 Feb</td>
<td>Technology and empire</td>
<td>Zerubavel, Bektas, Headrick and Griset, Urton Term paper prospectus due</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3 Mar</td>
<td>Case: Orality and literacy</td>
<td>Yates (1966), Ong, Clanchy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10 Mar</td>
<td>Case: Radio</td>
<td>Ahiska, Horten, Douglas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Case:</td>
<td>Authors/Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>17 Mar</td>
<td>Telephony</td>
<td>Fischer</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>24 Mar</td>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>Winston, Jordan, Light, Friedman and Nissenbaum</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>31 Mar</td>
<td>Gardens in the Cloud</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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**Term Paper due noon Wednesday, 9 April.**

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

As per the University’s website:

Honesty and fairness are considered fundamental values shared by students, staff and faculty at the University of Toronto. The University’s policies and procedures that deal with cases of cheating and plagiarism are designed to protect the integrity of the institution and to maintain a community where competition is fair. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. Any student accused of committing an academic offence will find that the accusation is dealt with formally and that the penalties can be severe if it is determined that they did, in fact, cheat.

All of the policies and procedures surrounding academic offences are dealt with in one policy: The Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (“the Code”) available at http://www.utoronto.ca/govcnc/pap/policies/behaveac.html.

**DIVERSE LEARNING STYLES**

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach your instructor and/or the Accessibility Services Office [http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility.htm] as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations.