

Introduction to TechnoCulture - Discussion Section Syllabus

ATEC 2300: Introduction to TechnoCulture Discussion

Section 2300.201

Thursday's 7pm - 8:15pm

Room ATC 1.305

Spring 2019

Teaching Assistant Contact Information

David Wilson

david.wilson2@utdallas.edu

NOTE: please include ATC2300 in the subject line of your email

Office Hours

Wednesday's 12-1pm, ATC 2.901

Course Description

Welcome to your discussion section.

This course provides an introduction to the study of arts, technology, and emerging communication through a focus on five key questions:

- (1) What is culture?
- (2) What is technology?
- (3) How have the relationships among humans, technologies, and culture changed over time?
- (4) How do we understand the multiple and (often) contradictory effects of technology?
- (5) How do we imagine the cultural possibilities (both positive and negative) of emerging technologies?

This aim of this course is to encourage students to think more complexly about technology, about culture, and about the many ways in which the two are always inextricably linked. This will be the foundation for the development of a rich and nuanced technological imagination, which is, in turn, the foundation for learning and research in ATEC.

Once a week, all students attend a 75-minute LECTURE that presents historical background and social context for the exploration of key concepts. Lectures incorporate multiple media: text, images, photographs, animation, video, sound, and music. These sessions might also include Q & A, participation activities, live demonstrations, or performances.

Each week, students also attend in a small-group DISCUSSION SECTION led by an ATEC Teaching Assistant who will assign readings, individual writing exercises, and collaborative creative activities that explore key topics and new ideas. These sessions are designed to stimulate discussion about issues and questions related to the weekly lecture or course topics.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Students will...

- Research the technocultural histories of significant object or process
- Describe how an object evokes meaning

- Analyze an object to elaborate how technology and culture are related
- Create an original analysis of an object that illustrates the complex relationship of human beings, technology, and culture
- Read academic writing, so as to engage in informed discussions about significant topics
- Apply critical method of analysis to open-ended questions
- Synthesize information from multiple sources to create new insights

Textbooks

Philip K. Dick. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Ballantine Books (2008)

Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore. *The Medium is the Massage*. (original 1968). Republished. Gingko Press, 9th edition (2001)

Langdon Winner. *The Whale and the Reactor A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. The University of Chicago Press (1986). PDF made available on eLearning

Viewings

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*. Four-part TV series
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pDE4VX_9Kk

Hidden Figures (Directed by Theodore Melfi, 2016)
 Will be screened in ATC

Bladerunner: The Final Cut (Directed by Ridley Scott, 1997)
 Will be screened in ATC

Gattaca (Directed by Andrew Niccol, 1997)
 Will be screened in ATC

Discussion Section Assignments and Calendar

January 17

Week 1 - Inspiring the Technological Imagination

DISCUSS: Review of Syllabi

ASSIGNMENT: Write a Love Letter to an Object

ASSIGNMENT: Watch an Episode of Ways of Seeing (as selected by your TA)

January 24

Week 2 - Evocative Objects

The Camera

Key question: How does an object acquire meaning?

Discussion topics: Camera as memory machine; the invention of photography; the camera as the eye of history; the rise of visual culture

WARM UP: *The Medium is the Massage* pg 10 : Probing and Crossing Barriers

DISCUSS: Antiques Roadshow Clip

DISCUSS: Love Letter to an Object

ASSIGNMENT: View-A-Point

January 31

Week 3 - Making Meaning for the Eye

The Book

Key question: What is culture?

Discussion topics: Technologies of writing and storytelling; book as technology; the cultural impact of the printing press; the medium is the message

WARM UP: The Medium is the Message pg 50, 53 : Visual Perspective & the Ditto Device

DISCUSS: View-A-Point

February 7

Week 4 - Making Meaning for the Ear

The Turntable

Key question: What is culture?

Discussion topics: How does sound have meaning; history of sound recording; technologies of listening; turntable as instrument; McLuhan's Laws of Media

WARM UP: The Medium is the Message pg 111 : The Ear Has No Perspective

DISCUSS: McLuhan's Four Laws of Media (Effects)

ASSIGNMENT: All Things are Delicately Interconnected

ASSIGNMENT: Watch Hidden Figures

February 14

Week 5 - Socio-Technical Systems

Hidden From History

Key question: What is technology?

Discussion topics: Calculating machines; symbol processors; the Turing Test; computer-mediated communication; gendered labor; institutional oppression

WARM UP: The Medium is the Message pg 26 - 45 : All Media Work Us Over Completely

DISCUSS: Hidden Figures

DISCUSS: All Things are Delicately Interconnected

ASSIGNMENT: Read The Whale and the Reactor (pdf available on eLearning)

February 21

Week 6 - Unintended Consequences

Digital Piracy

Key questions: Do technologies have politics?

Discussion topics: Money as information; credit cards and consumer behavior; data security; identity theft; digital privacy

WARM UP: The Medium is the Message pg 122 : Authorship

DISCUSS: The Whale and the Reactor

DISCUSS: Midterms Preparation

February 28

Week 7 - MIDTERM

ASSIGNMENT: Read Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? Chp 1 through 11

March 7

Week 8 - Designed for Dreaming

The Car and the Suburbs

Key question: How are technology and culture entangled?

Discussion topics: The American Dream: A TechnoCultural Case Study; Fordism and the rise of consumer culture; US National road infrastructure project; The romance of the road; Route 66; the invention of the suburbs

WARM UP: The Medium is the Message pg 72 : The Railway - End of the Line

DISCUSS: Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?
DISCUSS: Midterms
ASSIGNMENT: Read Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? Chp 12 through 22

March 14

Week 9 - Montage of a Dream Deferred

Media, Movements

Key question: What happens when dreams of technological utopias give way to frightening cultural realities?

Discussion topics: Social justice and video activism; the formation of techno-utopic counter-cultures; postmodernism; living with the end of the world

WARM UP: The Medium is the Massage pg 125 : Television and the Senses

DISCUSS: Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

ASSIGNMENT: Watch Bladerunner: The Final Cut

SPRING BREAK MARCH 18 - 22

March 28

Week 10 - More Human than Human

Cyberpunk and Bladerunner

Key question: What does it mean to be human?

Discussion topics: Science fiction futurism; cultural imaginaries; memories and experience; post-humanism; techno-phobia and techno-fetishism; cybernetics

WARM UP: The Medium is the Massage pg 68 - 69 : Environments

DISCUSS: Bladerunner: The Final Cut

DISCUSS: Introduction to eLearning Portfolios

DISCUSS: Upcoming Faculty Presentations / Research Opportunities in ATEC

ASSIGNMENT: Message in a Bottle

April 4

Week 11 - Emerging Art

Discussion topics: Sound and performance art; 3-D sculpture; projection mapping; participatory art; art as social practice

DISCUSS: Message in a Bottle

DISCUSS: Final Project Workshops

ASSIGNMENT: Final Project Workshop #1

April 11

Week 12 - Emerging Communication

Discussion topics: Social media and identity formation; media, attitudes and behavior; citizen journalism; social science research methods

ACTIVITY: Final Project Workshop #1

ASSIGNMENT: Final Project Workshop #2

April 18

Week 13 - Emerging Media

Discussion topics: Critical game studies; emergent media cultures; critical making; thinking at the intersections

ACTIVITY: Final Project Workshop #2

ASSIGNMENT: Final Project Workshop #3

ASSIGNMENT: Watch Gattaca

April 25

Week 14 - Emerging Technologies

Discussion topics: Genomics; CRISPR-cas 9; how to study emergence

DISCUSS: Gattaca

ACTIVITY: Final Project Workshop #3

ASSIGNMENT: Final Project Workshop #4

ASSIGNMENT: "Dear AI..."

May 2

Week 15 - Student Showcase

ACTIVITY: Final Project Workshop #4

DISCUSS: "Dear AI..."

May 6 - 11 FINALS WEEK

Student Participation and Evaluation

Graded Activities

- Mid-Term Project: Your midterm project will be due during discussion sections on February 28, 2019. Midterm grades are posted by Saturday, March 9th.
- Final Group Project: For the final project, students work in small groups to create an original analysis of an evocative technocultural object. The final project includes a written research statement, an in-class presentation, and a reflective account of the group process.

Grade Scale

Engagement: 40%

A: Perfect attendance, insightful contributions to discussions, completes every creative exercise

B: Perfect attendance, contributes to discussions, completes most creative exercise

C: Imperfect attendance, infrequent contributions to discussions, creative ambivalence

D: Inconsistent attendance, little contribution to discussions, doesn't even try the creative exercises

F: Excessive absences, lack of participation in discussion or creative exercises

Mid-Term Project: 30%

Final Project: 30%

see project and final grading scales in Course Syllabus Zine

Course Policies

During these sessions you will have opportunities to discuss class topics in a small group setting. It is expected that you have ATTENDED the Weekly Lecture that you have READ / VIEWED assigned materials, and you have COMPLETED assigned activities.

You are allowed **2 absences a semester for the lecture sessions** and **2 absences a semester for the discussion sessions**. This does not include absences for religious purposes. If you are absent FOR ANY REASON, you must contact your Teaching Assistant, preferably before you miss a session.

In the event of weather-related class cancellations, you will be notified as far in advance as possible. All coursework is still due according to prior deadline.

All work must be submitted according to the deadlines stated.

Remember:

Technical difficulties always happen when you work at the last minute. The printer WILL FAIL; it can smell your stress. **Plan for technology delays.**

Lateness is disrespectful. It is noticed. Leaving early is also disrespectful. **Don't do it.**

I expect your **presence and your attention**. Everyone values your engagement and learns from your contributions.

SILENCE your phones; unplug from social media and email; **enjoy the time to be here now.**

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

NOTE! Discussion Section Syllabus is subject to change

Did you read this syllabus when you first received it? Did you read all of it? Send me an email with the subject "ATC2300 - the syllabus is awesome" and I will give you bonus points. Offer valid for one week after first discussion session meeting.