

**Technology (the Self) and Society**  
SYA 4930, Section 052B, Spring 2013  
Matherly Hall 0016  
Fridays, Periods 6-8 (12:50pm – 3:50pm)

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Office Hours:

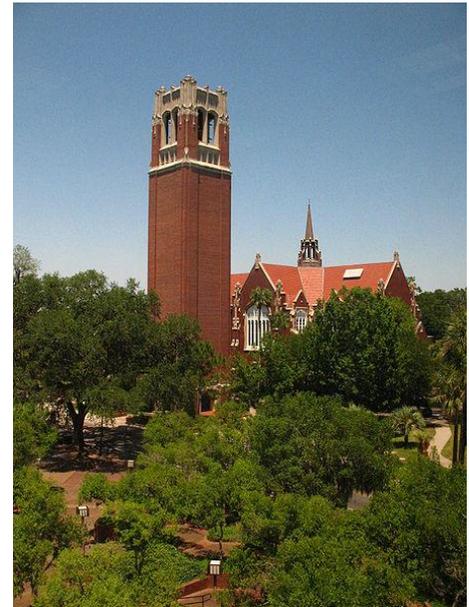
200 Walker Hall

Wed. 9-12pm or by appointment

**Course Description**

Technology is defined as the means by which people impose meaning and order upon nature. Looking at how we create and use different kinds of technology, then, reveals much about culture and society. Technologies mediate the quality of our community life and social integration, as well as how we negotiate our daily lives and construct our own identities. It is largely by technologies that society hangs together.

This course introduces the sociology of technology by exploring different theoretical perspectives to understand our relationships to everyday artifacts, from clocks and bridges, to cars and refrigerators, to microwaves and mobile phones. We then apply these perspectives to discuss and analyze human interaction with digital technologies. This semester, the course will also collaborate with Feathr, a UF-based start-up firm in Innovation Square, on a semester-long 'final' project to study the use, meanings, and implications of this smart phone 'app'.



**Course Objectives**

*The goal of this course is to explore human-material interaction. In so doing, the course aims to:*

- Introduce students to the main theoretical approaches and methodologies for studying the relationship of individuals and technology across the field of science and technology studies.
- Provide students with the sociological tools, terminology, and principles to understand the social elements, structures, and processes of technological development.
- Enable students to connect theoretical ideas to empirical case studies of technologies in their everyday lives.
- Equip students with the capacity to employ sociological reasoning, and the design and marshalling of evidence, in a critical examination of a specific area of interest (through the final project).
- Develop students' information-seeking, communication, collaboration, and presentation skills through group research and discussion.

***\* I reserve the right for us to make changes to this syllabus, as long as they are announced in advance.***

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

<b>Sociological Approaches to Studying Technology</b>	
<b>1. Introduction</b>	
Jan. 11	Introduction
<b>2. History/philosophy of technology</b>	
Jan. 18	Heidegger, Martin. (1954[1977]) "The Question Concerning Technology" <i>Recommended Reading:</i> Mumford, Lewis. (1934) <i>Technics and Civilization</i> (Chpt 1: "Cultural preparation") <b>*Personal Information Cards due in class on 1/18</b>
<b>3. Technological determinism</b>	
Jan. 25	Winner, Langdon (1980) "Do artefacts have politics?" <i>Daedalus</i> 109: 121–136. Hofmann, Jeanette. "Writers, texts, and writing acts: Gendered user images in word processing software." <i>The Social Shaping of Technology</i> . 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. D. MacKenzie and J. Wajcman. Philadelphia: Open UP, 1996. 222-243. <i>Recommended Reading:</i> Joerges, Bernward (1999) "Do politics have artefacts?" <i>Social Studies of Science</i> , 29(3): 411–31.
<b>4. Social shaping of technology</b>	
Feb. 1	Cowan, Ruth Schwartz (1985) "The industrial revolution in the home" In D. MacKenzie and J. Wajcman (eds.), <i>The Social Shaping of Technology</i> . Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 181-201 Kline, Ronald & Pinch, Trevor (1996) "Users as agents of technological change: The social construction of the automobile in the rural United States." <i>Technology and Culture</i> , 37: 763-795.
<b>5. Actor-networks</b>	
Feb. 8	Latour (1992) "Where are the missing masses? The sociology of a few mundane artifacts" In (W.E. Bijker & J. Law, eds.), <i>Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change</i> . Cambridge: MIT Press, 225–258.
<b>6. Fluidity of technology - Class on Feb. 15 will meet at the Harn Museum of Art</b>	
Feb. 15	de Laet, Marianne & Mol, Annemarie (2000) "The Zimbabwe bush pump: Mechanics of a fluid technology." <i>Social Studies of Science</i> , 30(2): 225-263.
<b>7. Studying users of technology</b>	
Feb. 22	Peterson, Tina. (2009) "The zapper and the zapped: Microwave ovens and the people who use them" In P. Vannini (ed.), <i>Material Culture and Technology in Everyday Life</i> . New York: Peter Lang, 229-244. Portus, Lourdes M. (2008) "How the urban poor acquire and give meaning to the mobile phone." In J. Katz (ed.), <i>Handbook of Mobile Communication Studies</i> . Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 105-118. <b>*Exam 1 distributed on 2/22 – due by midnight on 2/27</b> <b>*Final project topics due</b>

<b>Sociological Themes in the Study of Digital Technologies</b>	
<b>8. Networked technologies</b>	
March 1	<p>Castells, Manuel (1996) "The Net and the self: Working notes for a critical theory of the informational society". <i>Critique of Anthropology</i> , 16(1): 9-38.</p> <p>Crawford, Susan P. (2011) "The new digital divide" <i>The New York Times</i>, Sunday 4 December: Sunday Review, p. 1</p>
<b>9. Social capital and community interaction</b>	
March 15	<p>Hampton, Keith N., Chul-joo Le, and Eun Ja Her. (2011). "How new media affords network diversity: Direct and mediated access to social capital through participation in local social settings" <i>New Media &amp; Society</i>, 13(7): 1031-1049</p> <p>Granovetter, Mark. (1973) "The strength of weak ties" <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>, 78: 1360-80.</p>
<b>10. Mediated relationships</b>	
March 22	<p>Turkle, Sherry. (2011) <i>Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Ourselves</i>. New York: Basic Books (Chpt. 10 "No need to call", 187-209). (Second reading TBD.)</p>
<b>11. Authenticity and virtual communities</b>	
March 29	<p>Baym, Nancy (2010) <i>Personal Connections in the Digital Age</i>. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press. (Chpt 5: "New relationships, new selves?" 72-98)</p> <p>Malacrida, Claudia (2010) "How do I change his nappy? Disabled mothers and cyber-community". In B.M. Pirani and I. Varga (eds.), <i>Acting Bodies and Social Networks</i>. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 157-175.</p>
<b>12. Labor and creativity</b>	
April 5	<p>Gershenfeld, Neil. (1999) <i>When Things Start to Think</i>. New York: Henry Holt. (Chpt. "Things that think")</p> <p>Gauntlett, David (2011) <i>Making is Connecting</i>. Cambridge: Polity Press. (Chpt. 8 "Web 2.0: Not all rosy?" 185-216)</p> <p><b>*Exam 2 distributed on 4/5 – due by midnight on 4/10</b></p>
<b>13. Emotional and the non-human</b>	
April 12	<p>Turkle, Sherry (2007) "Authenticity in the age of digital companions" <i>Interaction Studies</i>, 8(3): 501-517.</p>
<b>14. Final Discussion: Feathr</b>	
April 19	<p>Final Discussion/Group Presentations</p> <p><b>Last day for any extra-credit blog posts/comments.</b></p>
April 24	<p><b>Final Group Papers Due by midnight via Sakai.</b></p>

### **COURSE READING**

This course is divided into 'weeks' on particular themes. Each class meeting will involve three activities:

1. Class discussion
2. Group activity
3. Lecture/preparation for the next week's reading

Students are expected to complete the required readings listed for each week before the Friday class meeting. It may be helpful to bring a laptop with wireless internet capability to class if convenient for group activities. All required reading will be made available via the Lessons section of the course Sakai website. Exceptions to this will be noted and distributed one week prior.

**It is your responsibility to read the required readings in advance of class meeting, and bring these readings to class (in either paper or electronic form).**

#### Instructions for readings:

At the end of each class, I will spend some time introducing the next reading and suggesting important concepts and questions on which to focus and take notes when reading. (These are also the concepts/questions that you will see in the take-home exams.) Some of these readings may be very complex, in terms of ideas presented, literature referenced, methods used, etc. Instead of reading the entire text with a close eye to every detail, I advise that you approach the readings strategically and focus on how they elaborate questions addressed in class lecture. Ask yourself: How does this reading illuminate aspects of what was discussed in class? What in it is of interest to me? How can I relate this reading to my life? Additionally, make sure that you have a thorough understanding of the key terms/concepts in each reading as highlighted in class lecture.

If you have questions about terms in the readings, I advise you to consult the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu/>).

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

Personal information card (5%)

Please fill out and return the personal information card at the end of this syllabus by **Fri., Jan. 18**

Take-home exams (2 x 20% = 40%)

There will be 2 take-home, open-book exams on topics from the lectures and required readings. Your responses should be submitted as word documents electronically through Sakai by midnight on the due date. Please use 1.5 spacing, 11-12 point serif font, and 1” margins. Allow 2 hours per exam.

1. Exam 1 will cover Weeks 1-4. Given Feb. 22; Due **Wed., Feb. 27**
2. Exam 2 will cover Weeks 5-8. Given April 4; Due **Sun., April 10**

Participation/in-class activities (20%)

You are expected to participate fully in class discussion and group activities.

The following group assignments will involve original research on an aspect of the final class project, a study of UF-based start-up firm Feathr and its smartphone ‘app’. Each group will choose an aspect of the firm to explore through literature and other research, for example: everyday use and meaning, politics of the app, usability, etc. Group research topics and a bibliography of four related readings are due through Sakai **Friday, Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>** (5%).

Final group presentation (15%)

The last day of class will be devoted to discussion and presentation of group projects. Each group should speak for 15 minutes and prepare a PowerPoint presentation about their research findings.

Final group paper (15%)

The final group paper is due through Sakai by midnight on **Wed., April 24<sup>th</sup>**. The paper will describe your research question, methods, and findings, drawing on theory as relevant. The paper will include 4 new refereed sources in the bibliography (in addition to any from the course syllabus). The paper should also have a paragraph appendix briefly describing the contributions of each group member to the final paper/project. The paper should be 10-12 pages with 1.5 spacing, 11-12 point serif font, and 1” margins. If you would like me to comment on an outline or draft of the paper, email me before April 10<sup>th</sup>.

Extra-Credit Options

The blog feature of Sakai is active. You may earn up to 5% on your final grade by:

1. Writing 300+ word close reflections on any reading(s) in the syllabus or any refereed book or article on the topic of your group research project. (each post is worth 1% point of final grade)
2. Writing 200+ word responses to someone else’s post. (each is worth 1% point of final grade)

I have also created a Facebook group “UF Technology and Society”. You are invited to join and use it to share links, etc. I will award up to 5% extra credit for active individuals in this group who relate current events or information items to class discussions.

All extra-credit posts/comments should be completed by before **April 19<sup>th</sup>**.

*Final grades will be available via ISIS on May 8<sup>th</sup>. You can check the status of your grade anytime using the Gradebook 2 feature on Sakai. The final grade scale may be adjusted at the discretion of the instructor.*

<b>Grades:</b>	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E,I,NG,WF
grade scale:	94-100	90-93	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	59-0
grade points:	4.0	3.67	3.33	3.0	2.67	2.33	2.0	1.67	1.33	1.0	0.67	0

### **GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION**

ACADEMIC ETIQUETTE: This course is designed to pair lecture and group activities with instructor- and group-led class discussion. I expect students to work together as colleagues to engage theoretical and empirical ideas, share and discuss these ideas, and provide each other with respectful and constructive feedback.

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ACADEMIC HONESTY: As your instructor, I resolve to abide by my faculty responsibilities outlined in the [UF Academic Honesty Guidelines](#), namely, to promote honest behavior and encourage students to bring negative conditions to my attention. If you have any concerns whatsoever, you may email or come to see me in confidence. In turn, I expect members of this course to comply with the Student Honor Code of the University of Florida (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>). Cheating or plagiarizing will be reported to the Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability with the Disability Resources Office, located at 0001 Building 0020, Reid Hall (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>, [accessuf@dso.ufl.edu](mailto:accessuf@dso.ufl.edu), 352-392-8565). Students requesting classroom accommodation should bring this paperwork to my regularly scheduled office hours within the first two weeks of class so that we may discuss the accommodations.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance in all classes is mandatory. If you will miss all or part of a class, please notify me by email *before* the class to be excused. Unexcused absences will impact participation grades.

BREAK: We will take a break in the middle of class. The exact time will vary.

EXTENSIONS: Late assignments will not be accepted. Extensions may be requested by email in the case of personal emergencies.

FEEDBACK: I always appreciate feedback about the course in person or by email. Thank you, in advance, for your constructive thoughts and comments.

QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS: My office hours are Wednesdays, 9am-12pm, but I have an open-door policy for students when I am in the office. If you are having trouble with the class concepts, readings, or assignments, please come see me. My office phone number is: 352-392-0796.

READING AND WRITING CENTER: If you have trouble with the writing required by this course, you are encouraged to visit the University of Florida Reading and Writing Center (RWC), which offers mentorship and editing services to University of Florida students: <http://www.at.ufl.edu/rwcenter/>.

**Classmates**

Please write down the contact information for three classmates, so that you can get help outside of class.

Name	Email	Phone #

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**Personal Information Card**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Photo: 

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Can you bring a laptop to classes? Y N

Is there anyone you'd like to work with on the final project? \_\_\_\_\_

What prompted your interest in this course? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are you hoping to learn in this course? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How do you learn best? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What qualities do you find helpful in an instructor? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to tell me an interesting fact about yourself? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_