TECHNOLOGY IN SOCIETY & CULTURE
ANT/SOC 261-602, Fall 2019
Distance Education

Instructor: Laura Bray
E-mail: labray@ncsu.edu
Office: 1911 Building, Office 228
Office Hours: By appointment

> *Technology is neither good nor bad; nor is it neutral.*
>
> Melvin Kranzberg, 1986
>
> *All science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided.*
>
> Karl Marx, 1894

COURSE OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

The goal of this course is to critically examine the role of technology in modern society. We often think of technology as material objects that exist independently of humans. By contrast, a social science approach takes as its central premise that technological artifacts are inextricably bound up in *social relations*. In this course we will examine the practices and relations that create and sustain technology, as well as the social and political consequences of these systems. We will discuss the relationship between technology and a number of different areas of social life, including the environment, medicine, and work.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Discuss the role of technology in processes of social and cultural change
2. Apply social scientific theories and concepts to understand the relationship between technology, society, and culture
3. Analyze both the potential and limitations of technology as a solution to social problems
4. Examine the unequal distribution of technological costs and benefits

This course fulfills 3 credits hours in the Social Sciences General Education Program (GEP). Each course in the Social Sciences category will provide instruction and guidance that help students to:

1. Examine at least one of the following: human behavior, culture, mental processes, organizational processes, or institutional processes
2. Demonstrate how social scientific methods may be applied to the study of human behavior, culture, mental processes, organizational processes, or institutional processes
3. Use theories or concepts of the social sciences to analyze and explain theoretical and/or real-world problems, including the underlying origins of such problems.

REQUIRED READINGS & EQUIPMENT

1. Volti, Rudi. 2017/2014. *Society and Technological Change,* 7th/8th ed. NY: Worth Publishers.
2. PDFs and online articles that will be available through Moodle.

All-In Program. This class is taking part in NC State's All-In program to deliver the Volti textbook electronically. You will have free access to materials through **Wednesday, September 4** and must purchase access by that date using the link on Moodle. If you do not purchase access by Sept. 4, you will need to acquire the textbook through another source.

Technological Requirements. A reliable computer and internet access are required for this course. Lack of digital access and technical malfunctions will not be an acceptable excuse for missing deadlines.

COURSE STRUCTURE & EXPECTATIONS

1. **Office Hours & Communication:** I am available to meet in person by appointment. If you have questions or are not doing as well as you would like, please don't hesitate to contact me. Students may also post questions in the Questions & Help forum
   Please allow at least 24 hours for an email response. As a general rule, emails should be written professionally, as though you are communicating with a work colleague. Begin with a greeting, followed by my name (please call me Laura or Professor Bray. Ms. or Mrs. Bray is not an appropriate address) and compose the body of the email using complete sentences.

2. **Coursework:** *All coursework and exams will take place online through the Moodle course website.* Students are expected to follow the schedule of readings and assignments each week. Staying on track with the readings is essential to success in the class. Again, please do not hesitate to contact me if you want additional help understanding the material.

3. **Interaction:** Content checks and online discussion forums will provide the equivalent of class attendance and participation. These are designed to be low-stakes activities that allow students to actively engage with their peers and the course material. For the online discussion forums, students will interact in small groups of 15-17.

4. **Section Content:** The course is broken up into three units, with an exam at the end of each unit. Each unit will include a 2-3 topical sections that contain readings, a lesson, and assignments. The course is designed so that each week you will be responsible completing either a forum post or activity. All material is located on the schedule on the home page.

TESTS & ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Content Checks (10%):** Each section will include one content check. These are low-stakes assignments to check your understanding of the material. *Pay attention to the instructions.* Most of these have "soft deadlines" – although it's recommended that they be completed by this date, the content checks may be done at any point prior to the final day of classes. Most of the content checks can also be attempted multiple times to improve your score.

2. **Discussion Forum (10%):** Students will write a forum post for each section that responds to a prompt provided by the instructor, as well as reply to one of their peers' posts. Discussion prompts and instructions will vary each section and can be found under the corresponding forum. Read these instructions carefully to understand the requirements and grading expectations. For full credit, the original post must respond in full to the prompt and be a minimum of 300 words. The peer-response post should be a minimum 100 words. Original

posts are due by **Wednesdays at 11 pm**. Responses are due **Fridays by 11:00 pm**. <u>Late posts will not receive credit</u> (see late work policy below).

3. **Activities (40%):** Each section will have one activity to complete. Make sure that you address all required components of the assignment. Answers should be in-depth and make connections to course material. Sources should also be properly cited (see ASA Quick Guide for formatting). Activities are due **Fridays at 11 pm.**

4. **Exams (40%):** There will be three exams, the first worth 10% and second and third worth 15% each. The final exam is not cumulative but may build on prior. Exams may consist of a combination of multiple-choice, true/false, and short-answer questions and will be timed 1.5 hours. You may use material and notes from class, but do not collaborate with peers or access other internet sources.

COURSE EVALUATION & GRADING POLICIES

Assignment	Percent
Content Checks (8)	10%
Forum Posts (9)	10%
Activities (8)	40%
Exams (3)	40%
	100%

Grading Scale

97-100%	A+	87-89.99%	B+	77-79.99%	C+	67-69.99%	D+
93-96.99%	A	83-86.99%	B	73-76.99%	C	63-66.99%	D
90-92.99%	A-	80-82.99%	B-	70-72.99%	C-	60-62.99%	D-
						Below 60%	F

1. **Late & Make up Work Policy:** For full credit, assignments must be completed by their due date (with the exception of documented excuses or prior arrangements with the instructor. See <u>Attendance Regulations</u> for more). All assignments are due at 11 pm, with a 15-minute grace period to allow for technological issues or other unforeseen circumstances. The grace period does not apply to exams.

    Only **activities** and **exams** may be completed late for credit. Late activities will receive an automatic 15% penalty and must be submitted within **three days** (72 hours) of the original due date to receive partial credit. Prior arrangements must be made with the instructor to make up a missed exam. Late discussion forum posts will not receive credit.

2. **Extra Credit Policy.** No extra credit will be offered in this course.

3. **"Rounding" Policy.** The upper and lower bounds of each letter grade can be found on the above grading scale. If at the end of the semester your final grade falls within 0.5% of the next highest letter grade, your overall course performance will be automatically evaluated to determine if rounding is appropriate. This will involve examining patterns of participation, missed work, and responsiveness to instructor feedback.

<div align="center">**COURSE SCHEDULE**</div>

Note: Course schedule is subject to change with appropriate notification to students. Please read material in the listed order and pay attention to page numbers. [T] refers to the Volti textbook, *Society and Technological Change*. All other readings can be found on Moodle.

Readings should be completed by the end of the section at the latest; however some may need to be done sooner in order to complete other assignments. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments are due at 11 pm.

UNIT 1	
Aug. 21-Sept. 1	**Section 1: Introduction to Course & Technology Studies**
Introduction to Technology Studies	• Postman. 1998. "Five Things we Need to Know about Technological Change" • [T] Ch. 1: "The Nature of Technology" • [T] Ch. 2: "Winners and Losers"
Studying Society & Culture	• Miner. 1956. "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema"
<mark>Assignments Due</mark>	✓ **Friday, Aug. 23:** Introductory Forum Post ✓ **Wednesday, Aug. 28:** Forum Post 1 ✓ **Friday, Aug. 30:** Forum Response 1 ✓ **Friday, Aug. 30:** Activity 1
Sept. 2-15	**Section 2: Theoretical Perspectives on Technology in Society**
Technological Change & Globalization	• [T] Ch. 3: "Sources of Technological Change" • [T] Ch. 4: "Scientific Knowledge and Technological Advance" • [T] Ch. 5: "The Diffusion of Technology" Pp. 81-92 [**SKIM**] • Ritzer. 1983. "The McDonaldization of Society"
Technological Determinism	• Smith & Marx. 1994. "Introduction" in *Does Technology Drive History* • Bimber. 1994. "Three Faces of Technological Determinism" [**Pp. 79-86 only**]
The Social Construction of Technology	• Kline & Pinch. 1996. "Users as Agents of Technological Change"
<mark>Assignments Due</mark>	✓ **Wed., Sept. 4**: Forum Post 2 ✓ **Friday, Sept. 6**: Forum Response 2 ✓ **Friday, Sept. 13:** Activity 2
Sept. 16-29	**Section 3: Technology & Values**
Technological Politics	• Winner. 1980. "Do Artifacts have Politics?"

	• Wetmore. 2007. "Amish Technology: Reinforcing Values and Building Community"
Gendered Technology	• Hopkins. 1998. "The Intersection of Culture, Gender, and Technology" • Criado-Perez. 2019. Ch. 8 "One Size Fits Men" in *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*
Gender & Sexuality in Gaming	• Documentary: *Gaming in Color* (2015, 1 hour). **Also available through Amazon Prime (free), YouTube ($0.99), and Google Play ($0.99).**
Assignments Due	✓ **Wed., Sept. 18:** Forum Post 3 ✓ **Friday, Sept. 20:** Forum Response 3 ✓ **Friday, Sept. 27:** Activity 3

Exam 1: The exam will open at 8:00 am on Friday, September 27 and will close at 11:00 pm on Sunday, September 29. You may begin at any time during this period, but must finish once the exam is opened. The exam is timed 1 hour.

UNIT 2	
Sept. 30-Oct. 13	**Section 4: Technology at Work** FALL BREAK: OCT. 10-11
Technology & the Transformation of Work	• [T] Ch. 9: "Work in Preindustrial Societies" • [T] Ch. 10: "Technology and Jobs"
Technological Change & Life on the Job	• [T] Ch. 11: "Technological Change and Life on the Job" • Scheiber. 2017. "How Uber Uses Psychological Tricks to Push Its Drivers' Buttons"
Assignments Due	✓ **Wed., Oct. 2**: Forum Post 4 ✓ **Friday, Oct. 4:** Forum Response 4 ✓ **Wednesday, Oct. 9:** Activity 4
Oct. 14-27	**Section 5: Technology, Environment, & Health**
Medical Tech. & Health	• [T] Ch. 7: "Medical Technology and Population Health" • Berkman. 2004. "The Health Divide"
Energy & the Environment	• [T] Ch. 6: "Technology, Energy, and the Environment"
Technology & Sustainability	• Gould. 2015. "Slowing the Nanotechnology Treadmill" • Hess & Lamprou. 2011. "Nanotechnology and the Environment"
Assignments Due	✓ **Wed., Oct. 16:** Forum Post 5 ✓ **Friday, Oct. 18**: Forum Response 5 ✓ **Friday, Oct. 25:** Activity 5

Oct. 28-Nov. 10	Section 6: Shaping & Controlling Technology
Managing Urban Tech	• Video: PBS Newshour. 2018. "Why the Rise of the Electric Scooter has been a Bumpy Ride" (10 min)
Technology & its Creators	• [T] Ch. 18. "Technology and Its Creators" • Dahlin. 2011. "There is No 'I' in Innovation"
Governing Technology & Democracy	• [T] Ch. 20: "Governing Technology" • Sclove. 1993. "Technological Politics as if Democracy Really Mattered"
<mark>Assignments Due</mark>	✓ **Wed., Oct. 30:** Forum Post 6 ✓ **Friday, Nov. 1:** Forum Response 6 ✓ **Friday, Nov. 8:** Activity 6

Exam 2: The exam will open at 8:00 am on Friday, November 8 and will close at 11:00 pm on Sunday, November 10. You may begin at any time during this period, but you must finish once the exam is opened. The exam is timed 1.5 hours.

UNIT 3

Nov. 11-24	Section 7: Technology & Social Control
Surveillance in Everyday Life	• Andre. 2014. "Surveillance in the Big Data Era" • Lyon. 2019. "Surveillance Capitalism, Surveillance Culture and Data"
Online Shaming	• TED Talk: Ronson. 2015. "When Online Shaming Goes too Far" (17 min)
Technology & Crime Control	• Jones. 2016. "The US-Mexican Border: Rise of a Militarized Zone" • ProPublica. 2016. "Machine Bias"
<mark>Assignments Due</mark>	✓ **Wed., Nov. 13:** Forum Post 7 ✓ **Friday, Nov. 15:** Forum Response 7 ✓ **Friday, Nov. 22:** Activity 7
Nov. 25-Dec. 8	Section 8: Digital Technologies & The Internet Age
The Internet Age & Digital Inequalities	• [T] Ch. 14: "The Internet Age" • Robinson et al. 2015. "Digital Inequalities and Why They Matter" [**through p. 577 only**] • Video Lecture: Lane. 2017. "Digital Inequality" (12 min)
Digital Media in Social Life	• Chayko. 2017. "Techno-Socialization and the Self," Ch. 6 in *Superconnected*

	• Chayko. 2017. "More Benefits and Hazards of Superconnectedness," Ch. 9 in *Superconnected*
Assignments Due	✓ **Wed., Nov. 27:** Forum Post 8 ✓ **Friday, Nov. 29:** Forum Response 8 ✓ **Friday, Dec. 6:** Activity 8 [Final Activity]

Dec. 9-18	**FINALS**

Final Exam: The exam will open at 8:00 am on **Monday, December 9** and will close at 11:00 pm on **Wednesday, December 11**. You may begin at any time during this period, but must finish once the exam is opened. The exam is timed 1.5 hours.

CLASSROOM & ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICIES

1. **Academic Integrity:** By submitting assignments, you are agreeing to abide by the University's Academic Integrity policy. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, inappropriate collaboration, fabrication or falsification of information, and assisting others to commit academic misconduct. The <u>minimum</u> penalty for a student found guilty of academic misconduct will be a zero on the assignment and the incident may be reported to Student Conduct for academic dishonesty. For more information, please see the Code of Student Conduct policy (NCSU POL11.35.1).

2. **Harassment:** Maintaining a safe environment for learning is of the highest priority in this class. The discussion boards serve as our classroom and each student should respect the beliefs and views of others in the course. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. If any student feels that they have been treated disrespectfully, they should contact me. If I, or any of your peers, say or do anything that you consider harassment, notify me or the department head (Bill Smith) immediately. You may also contact the undergraduate administrator (515-0438), the NCSU Affirmative Action Office (515-3148), or the Women's Center (515-2012). Visit the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity for more information.

3. **Equal Treatment & Inclusivity:** North Carolina State University is committed to equality of educational opportunity and does not discriminate against applicants, students, or employees based on race, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability. In an effort to affirm and respect the identities of transgender and non-binary students in the classroom and beyond, please contact me if you wish to be referred to using a name and/or pronouns other than what is listed in the student directory.

4. **Basic Needs:** The Pack Essentials program provides support and resources for students facing food or housing insecurity. Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing is urged to look at the Pack Essentials website or contact the Division of Academic and Student Affairs for support. If comfortable, please notify me so that I can connect you with resources, including personal support. To discuss your situation in a confidential meeting with the university, you can schedule a meeting by calling 919-513-3401.

5. **Students with Disabilities:** Please notify me immediately if you have a disability so that we can plan accordingly. Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with the Disability Services Office at Suite 2221, Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 919-515-7653. For more information on NC State's policy on working with students with disabilities, please see the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Regulation (REG02.20.01).

6. **Electronic Course Component:** Moodle will be used as learning management system for this course, including course communication, discussions, readings, and grades. See Online Course Material Host Requirements (NCSU REG08.00.01). Students may be required to disclose personally identifiable information to other students in the course, via electronic tools like email or web-postings, where relevant to the course. Examples include online

discussions of class topics, and posting of student coursework. All students are expected to respect the privacy of each other by not sharing or using such information outside the course.

7. **N.C. State Polices, Regulations, and Rules (PRR):** Students are responsible for reviewing the NC State University PRR's which pertains to their course rights and responsibilities:
   - Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Policy Statement: https://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-04-25-05%20 with additional references at https://oied.ncsu.edu/equity/policies/
   - Code of Student Conduct: https://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-11-35-01
   - Grades and Grade Point Average: https://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-50-03
   - Credit-Only Courses: https://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-20-15
   - Audits: https://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-20-04