Soc 310: Technology and Society

https://people.eou.edu/soctech

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Website:  https://people.eou.edu/soctech

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This is the first offering of this course, which is designed to help students think about technology. Doing so in the US is like getting fish to think about water. It's so much a part of our society that it's difficult to examine it dispassionately. Yet if affects every facet of our lives, including our work, and also affects the lives of people across the globe through a chain of production, consumption, and disposal. The class will focus on technology and history, culture, environment, scale, change, and consequences of technological change (especially in the 21st century).

LEARNING OUTCOMES  Upon completing course students will demonstrate capacity to:
1. Develop critical thinking skills around technology and related issues;
2. Examine 'systems' of technology and how they combine social, cultural, political and organizational elements (referred to as 'sociotechnical systems');
3. Understand how innovation and diffusion or spread of technology can impact other cultures, and how technologies often embody values of the cultures from which they came;
4. Examine how different technologies, sometimes serving the same functions, can have different impacts on the environment and on carbon 'footprints.'
5. Reflect on digital technologies (especially the 'smart' phone), and apply your learning to better understand longer-term impacts and trajectories of change.

MEANS OF ASSESSMENT: A written assignment asking students to choose and analyze three different news outlets that represent different points on the political spectrum (50%); mandatory attendance in class (25%); summary of readings assigned from Censored text (25%).

REQUIREMENTS
You must attend the course. You cannot miss the class and make up assignments. No exceptions. The course is taught every term. You'll have to drop or attend during another term. No exceptions.
You'll need to access and read from the reading list on Canvas:

CLASS FORMAT
The class will be a combination of lecture, discussion, small groups and video. I do encourage you to take notes in class. They will be quite useful as you sit down to complete your post-weekend assignments.

GRADING PROCEDURES, ASSIGNMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>description</th>
<th>due</th>
<th>pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in forum</td>
<td>There will be two discussion threads, focused on course content, which must be completed within a specified two-week window.</td>
<td>Feb 7-23</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary/analysis of readings</td>
<td>Brief summary/analysis of each of the readings for class; a concluding paragraph that provides synthesis</td>
<td>Feb 19</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal/reflection</td>
<td>On your use of the 'smart phone.' Pretty detailed for one week, and if you're up for it, one day cold turkey</td>
<td>Mar 19</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| total                        | 200                          |

Soc 310: Technology and Society
Winter ’17/1
Grading scale
Grading on straight percentage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Points Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90% &gt;</td>
<td>180 – 200 pts</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89%</td>
<td>160 – 179 pts</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79%</td>
<td>140 – 159 pts</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69%</td>
<td>120 – 139 pts</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 60%</td>
<td>&lt; 120 pts</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minuses will be given for the bottom third (0-3) of each range; pluses for the top third (7-9). I will also use pluses and minuses positively if I feel that one’s grade did not reflect his/her effort; I will not use them to reduce a grade. Unless I’ve made a mathematical error, all grades are final.

Assignment descriptions

Attendance
Instead of the attendance requirement, students will receive points for their participation in two discussion threads. One will be based on the writing assignments: the summary/analysis and journal/reflection. The second will come from the videos we would have watched in class. You can complete these between Feb 7 - 23.

The discussion threads will allow you to ask questions about the course, and allow us to have some of the conversation we would have had in the classroom. Take advantage of them both to learn about different ways to approach technology, and to make sure you’re on the right track for the assignments.

- Printing press and knowledge transformation
- Guns, Germs and Steel (plant and animal domestication)
- Story of Stuff
- Story of Solutions
- Small is Beautiful (appropriate technology) (examples)

Students will be expected to respond to the prompt for each discussion forum, and also to reply thoughtfully (that means referencing the class, the readings, videos, etc.) to at least three other students’ posts in each forum (rubric below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficient (22-25 pts)</th>
<th>Adequate (18-21 pts)</th>
<th>Developing (&lt;18 pts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Student posted in each thread (minimum 4), one substantive post and replies to other students’ posts (at least three);</td>
<td>* Student posted in each thread, including at least one substantive reply to another student’s post.</td>
<td>* There’s something missing—the substantive post may inadequately address the prompt or fail to show the student actually did the reading(s), student may have failed to post in each thread, either the substantive post or replies to others’ posts;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Substantive post shows clearly that the student has read the source material, thoughtfully responded to the prompt(s), properly cited any sources used, and provided logic and evidence to support his/her points that acknowledges the materials referenced in the prompt.</td>
<td>* Substantive post demonstrates that student has read the material, but either hasn’t responded to the prompt, hasn’t supported his/her claims with any evidence or logic, or showed little effort in trying to understand the reading material;</td>
<td>* Posts reflect minimal effort in trying to understand the material in question;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Student is engaging in discussion with other students, but not engaging the prompt and/or reading material.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We will practice standard ‘netiquette’ (discussion forum behavior). No ‘flaming’ of individuals. This is where we discuss, debate and exchange ideas. Civility and mutual respect rule. I will deal with personal attacks privately, but firmly, so don’t do it—we’re here to encourage everyone to participate, so avoid postings that discourage others from doing so.
1. *You need to post during the time window in which the discussion is taking place.* It will be specified. Each thread will be available over a two-week period. But there are no make-ups.

2. *Follow basic online 'netiquette.'* We certainly don’t have to agree—but we can disagree in a civil way, and use persuasion, logic and evidence to support our own ideas.

3. If you’re writing a long post, *use paragraphs to break up points* and, to be safe, you might compose in something besides Canvas (and save as you go), and then paste it into Canvas—this will help you avoid the frustration of losing a post you’ve spent considerable time on.

You’ll do fine on this if you show effort to complete the requirements, and intellectual engagement in the process. This isn’t an opinion format—it’s a place to show that you have read/watched the material, have something thoughtful to express about it, and keep the discussion going by responding to others’ ideas—that cross-fertilization is especially important for a course on a topic like technology, whose study can span many disciplines.

**50 pts possible, 25 for each thread**

Summary / Analysis of readings assigned for class weekend (due Feb 19 by midnight in Canvas)

Write a 5-6 page summary and analysis of the readings assigned on the readings page in Canvas (you’ll see the link on the home page). For each reading:

1. Provide a full citation (hint: *There's an easy way to do this ...*)
2. Provide a short summary of the reading’s main points, and find out who the author is (e.g., what is his/her profession?)
3. Use a second short paragraph to analyze the reading—what did you find to be the most useful points, and can you apply them to contemporary society/our own lives (make the case for the comparison, in other words justify why it’s relevant).
4. At the end, a concluding paragraph that attempts to synthesize what you’ve learned from all this, and a thoughtful explanation of how the readings might have changed your thinking about technology.
5. I’m looking for a paper between 1100-1300 words, meaning about 100 words per reading, and your conclusion (double-spaced, standard font size).

It’s to your benefit to read these well, as you’ll be more prepared for class, get more out of it, and be more prepared when you leave Saturday to be thinking about the term project assignment.

**To do well:**

- It’s probably a good idea to take notes as you do the readings—they’ll help later and reduce the amount of re-reading you have to do.
- As you’re reading, you might be thinking about ideas or themes repeated in different readings. In other words, seek to find ways in which you can connect some of the readings and also relate them to contemporary society—that’s a sure sign of learning.
- Good writing, proofreading of course. Produce a paper of 5-7 pages (double-spaced, standard fonts).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Possible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Following guidelines</td>
<td>Doing the assigned readings, writing them up</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Demonstrate you’ve read original source material</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Discuss each reading’s importance, ideas or concepts that may overlap, things that you can point to that may reinforce or even refute what authors are saying (e.g., not everyone agrees with Perrow’s analysis).</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Paper should be well proofread, ideas well-organized and presented</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*50 points possible, submit in Canvas before midnight Feb 19 (Sunday).*
Journal/reflection: On the ‘smart’ phone

This is the term project assignment, where you put together what you’ve learned and apply it to the assigned subject matter. I am keeping this one somewhat flexible at this point, simply because I need to speak to everyone and see how this assignment can work. So there may be revisions to what follows, don’t panic if it doesn’t seem to apply to your situation.

There are two parts to this assignment:

First, keep a journal of your use of your smart phone. Some things to try to document:

▫ **Details**—First, phone type, anything else relevant (designer case, etc.—you can include an image if you like), when you use it; where you use it; how you use it (communicate [phone, text, social media], shop, play, watch, etc.); how long you use it (and where and when do you use it most; how long per day do you charge it, also, try to document all your time—in other words, hours sleeping, working, using phone, commuting, eating, reading, leisure, etc.), where you keep it (pocket, bag, etc.)
▫ **Socially**—with whom are you interacting (no need to get personal—use categories like immediate family, extended family, friends, co-workers, kids’ teachers, customer service, facebook friends…)
▫ **Other observations** (e.g., do you notice other people’s phones? Do you attach any status or judgments to the types of phones people have [including flip phones]); you can discuss your feelings about your phone—how important it is to you in terms of status, how it connects you to people, the world, etc., your history of phone purchases, strong preferences you have about phones or operating systems (Apple, Droid, etc.).
▫ **On your day without**—thoughtful observations—how are you spending your time, how often do you think about your phone, how habitual are your thoughts about it (thinking of checking texts, etc.), is your mood affected by not using the phone, also—if you ‘cheat’ or can’t make it, don’t lie about it—this assignment is done for your benefit, to get you to think thoughtfully about your use of technologies, in this case a set of technologies that could influence how your brain processes information, how your memory functions (in a way, how you learn). This isn’t about better or worse, it’s just about self-awareness and being honest about how you interact with your phone.

Second, compose a paper reflecting on your journal:

▫ **Obviously,** this means that the more care with which you do your journal, the more source material you’ll have to write the paper.
▫ **You can organize your reflect paper as you like**, but it should be organized in some fashion (and I have nothing against headings as a guide for readers!).
▫ **I hope you’ll think about habitual vs purposive behavior on your phone** as you do this assignment and reflect on it, qualitatively and quantitatively.
▫ **Incorporate some of the ideas and concepts from the assigned readings** (there will probably be five), not gratuitously, but thoughtfully and with as much useful detail as you can provide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
<th>Pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal writing</td>
<td>Follow guidelines, provide sufficient detail to make it useful, demonstrate a serious commitment to logging your use of your phone for a week and making that log useful to the reader.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The paper</td>
<td>Thoughtful reflection, substantive (non-gratuitous) incorporation of source material, use of source material (readings), concepts from class, follow guidelines.</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final reflection</td>
<td>Concluding, thoughtful paragraph reflecting on what you learned from this process</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Proofread, organized, properly cite all sources used, clear demonstration that you fulfilled the letter and spirit of the assignment.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100 points possible. Papers are due in Canvas before midnight, March 19.
Policies, expectations

Academic integrity
The university’s official position: Eastern Oregon University places a high value upon the integrity of its student scholars. Any student found guilty of academic misconduct (including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, or theft of an examination or supplies) may be subject to having his or her grade reduced in the course in question, being placed on probation or suspended from the university, or being expelled from the university–or a combination of these. (see section II of the 2002-03 Student Handbook, p. 32ff, and p. 41 ff; also this page for examples, more guidance at the Online Writing Lab (www.eou.edu/writelab/plagiarism.htm).

My interpretation: Plagiarism is taking credit for work, ideas, papers, which are not yours. Universities make lots of literature available for a nominal fee, the bargain being that if you use the ideas of others, you'll credit them. So it isn’t just wholesale theft, but as the above says, deception, misrepresentation, etc. Be sure you're familiar with what plagiarism is, and how to avoid it. Penn State University has a useful page worth reading on plagiarism (www.libraries.psu.edu/instruction/infolit/andyou/mod9/plagiarism.htm). I recommend you look at it before you turn in papers in this class or others. If you’re caught plagiarizing, you’ll receive an 'F' on the assignment and possibly for the course. Doing your own work turns out to be more rewarding in the long term.

Due dates and late assignments
Assignments are expected on the day they're due. Late assignments will be assessed a penalty (one letter grade for each day, increasing with lateness). Please turn assignments in directly, using the assignments link in Blackboard. If you're not sure how to use it, let me know. If you have extenuating circumstances for being late with an assignment, I'm always willing to listen, but in fairness to others who've managed to get them in on time, later notifications or assignments turned in will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis—contact me.

Expectations
I will justify my lecture and reading material, assignments, etc., by showing their relevance to the overall course objectives. I will provide a friendly environment for discussion of ideas, try to make you think, impart personal experiences relevant to course material, and be generally accessible, approachable, and clear and precise about course expectations. With respect to coverage of content, I tend to emphasize depth over breadth—I would rather cover less points thoroughly, at a reasonable and engaging pace, than pledge strict allegiance to a course schedule. We'll likely not get through all the material.

In turn I expect students will do their own work, use or develop critical thinking skills and be able to express them on paper or in class discussion, speak up when unclear or in disagreement on a concept, either exhibit college-level writing skills or seek help to improve them, and refine note-taking skills. I expect papers that are well-proofread. I'll look for progress in developing abstract thinking skills and students’ abilities to focus on the “big picture”—key concepts delivered in class, their relevance to course material, the real world, etc. Discussion in class will focus on ideas. It’s a short but intense weekend. We can debate people’s ideas in a respectful way, but personal attacks on individuals will not be tolerated. You’re expected to show respect to everyone in the class. If you have questions about what’s appropriate in class, follow the Golden Rule.

Students with disabilities
Any student requiring assistance or accommodation from me in performing course-related work should make his/her needs known to me in a timely manner. If you have a documented disability or suspect that you have a learning problem, you are entitled to reasonable and appropriate accommodations. But you must work with the Disabilities Services Office (Pat Arnson, Director, parson@eou.edu, or Tracie Paddock, disabsvc@eou.edu). The office is located in Loso Hall 234 (phone 541.962.3235).
Drop Policy

A student may drop from a course for any reason with no record on the student's transcript before the end of the 4th week of the term. Thereafter, a student must withdraw from the course (see withdrawal policy). A student may withdraw from the 5th week of the term through the 7th week with a grade of "W" indicated on the transcript.

No withdrawals will be issued after the 7th week of the term. Instructors will issue a letter grade (A-F, or I) for all students enrolled after 7th week. A student making adequate academic progress during the term and needing to withdraw after 7th week may request an incomplete from the instructor.