

McMaster University
Arts & Science Program
ARTSSCI 3BB3 - Technology and Society II

Instructor: Prof. David Goutor
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2017/18 (Winter 2018)
Lecture: Tuesday 2:30-5:20
Classroom – MDCL 1010

Course Description

This course is about the interaction between technology and society. It will especially focus on the impact of technology on the economy, the world of work, and the lives of working people. It will also explore how technology has changed the shape and direction of social movements, and affected public discourse about key social issues. We will explore these questions in historical perspective, and looking forward to the impact of emergent technologies.

The format of the course will be a mixture of lecture and discussion. The instructor will start the exploration of each subject with a lecture, and then students will discuss key themes from both the lectures and the readings. Engaged and constructive discussion is essential for the course to work; in-class participation thus makes up a substantial portion of the grade. Most of the class will be in open seminar format, although if needed, the instructor may delegate students or groups to prepare questions and lead the discussion.

Course Objectives

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

1. Understand and discuss the many of the key social issues raised by technological change, especially as it relates to work and workers' lives.
2. Use some of the main theories, concepts, and analytical approaches to the current debate about technological change.
3. Pose important research questions about technology and society, develop analytical responses to these questions and organize research papers around their arguments.
4. Find and assess research sources, critically evaluate scholarly studies on technology and society, and use evidence in supporting their analytical positions.

Required Texts

Custom Courseware – Arts & Science 3BB3 – Technology and Society

Additional readings (actually most of them) are available online. There are also a few recorded lectures that are available online or at iTunes.

Additional Reading

There are a number of important studies that students will also find valuable for both understanding course material and doing their research papers. Some of the required reading are selections from these books:

- Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows – What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*
- Cathy O’Neill, *Weapons of Math Destruction – How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens our Democracy*
- Robert Gordon, *The Rise and Fall of American Growth: The US Standard of Living Since the Civil War*
- Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Dues – A Brief History of Tomorrow*
- Nicholas Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Proletariat – Global Labour in the Digital Vortex*
- Tim Wu, *The Master Switch – The Rise and Fall of Information Empires*
- Tim Wu, *The Attention Merchants – The Epic Scramble to Get Inside Our Heads*
- Mariana Mazzucato, *The Entrepreneurial State- Debunking Public vs. Private Sector Myths*
- Franklin Foer, *World Without Mind – The Existential Threat of Big Technology*
- Evgeny Morozov, *To Save Everything, Click Here – the Follow of Technological Solutionism*

Marking Scheme and Due Dates

Source Review	February 6	15%
Major Essay	March 13	40%
Participation	In Class	20%
Final Exam	Exam period	25%

- More details about the assignments will be provided in handouts as the course goes on.
- **Late Penalties** for assignments:
 - **First 3 days:** 1% per working day. (This means 1% out of 100 on that assignment, not 1% from the final course grade.)
 - **After first 3 days:** per working day. (This means 2% out of 100 on that assignment, not 2% from the final course grade.)
 - NOTE: You can email a late paper to stop the clock on penalties, but I need a paper copy to mark.

Outline of Topics and Readings

1. Introduction – January 9
2. Disruption and Response: The Original Case – January 16
 - a. Eric Hobsbawm, “The Machine Breakers”
 - i. <https://libcom.org/history/machine-breakers-eric-hobsbawm>
 - b. Jeff Horn, “Understanding Crowd Action: Machine Breaking in England and France”

- i. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/p/pod/dod-idx/understanding-crowd-action-machine-breaking-in-england.pdf?c=wsfh;idno=0642292.0031.009>
- 3. 2nd Industrial Revolution – Technology and Modern Life – January 23
 - a. Robert Gordon
 - i. Coursepack: *Rise and Fall of American Growth* – Chapter 4: “The American Home: From Dark and Isolated to Bright and Networked”
 - b. Jean-Paul Sartre – “Collectives and the Queue”
 - i. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/critic/collectives.htm>
 - c. Film: Charlie Chaplain, *Modern Times*
- 4. The Digital Age – the Optimists – January 30
 - a. Coursepack: Don Tapscott, “The Eight Net Gen Norms”
 - b. Jeff Bezos, Letter to Shareholders 2011
 - i. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzVmPBUYs4gaWIBNRU9Woe15NGs/view>
 - c. Kevin Kelley, “Scan This Book!”
 - i. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/14/magazine/14publishing.html>
- 5. Technology and the Future of Work I – The Replacement Debate
 - a. The Pessimists – February 6
 - i. Derek Thompson, “A World Without Work”
 - 1. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/07/world-without-work/395294/>
 - ii. Daniel Susskind and Richard Susskind, “The Future of Professions”
 - 1. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/newsAndMedia/videoAndAudio/channels/publicLecturesAndEvents/player.aspx?id=3302> (also available at I-tunes)
 - b. The Optimists – February 13
 - i. David Autor – Why are the Still So Many Jobs?
 - 1. <https://economics.mit.edu/files/11563>
 - ii. Lacity and Wilcocks – Service Automation and the Future of Work
 - 1. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/newsAndMedia/videoAndAudio/channels/publicLecturesAndEvents/player.aspx?id=3492>
 - 2. <https://hbr.org/2015/06/what-knowledge-workers-stand-to-gain-from-automation>

Mid-Term Break – February 20

6. Technology and the Future of Work II – The Broader Picture
 - a. Pessimists II – February 27
 - i. Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus*, Chapter 9, “The Great Decoupling.” (Coursepack)
 - ii. Nicholas Dyer-Witheyford, *Cyber-Proletariat*, Ch7, Globe (Coursepack)
 - iii. Sarah Roberts - Commercial Content Moderation
 1. <https://illusionofvolition.com/2016/03/24/ccm-on-the-agenda/>
 - b. The Sceptics – March 6
 - i. Robert Gordon, “Is US Economic Growth Over?”
 1. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w18315.pdf>
 - ii. Tyler Cowan, “The Complacent Class”
 1. http://www.econtalk.org/archives/2017/05/tyler_cowen_on_1.html
 2. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/03/did-american-complacency-lead-to-trump/518586/> (Book review)
7. The Government and Innovation – March 13
 - a. Mariana Mazzucato, *The Entrepreneurial State*, Revised Edition, Chapter 5 – “The State Behind the iPhone” (Coursepack)
 - b. Thomas Friedman, “Do You Want the Good News First?”
 - i. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/20/opinion/sunday/friedman-do-you-want-the-good-news-first.html>
8. Tech and Social Empowerment? March 20 & 27
 - a. Optimists: Tech-lead Liberation?
 - i. Reid Hoffman, Linked-In & Jobs
 1. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/10/12/the-network-man>
 - ii. Phillip Howard et al, “Opening Closed Regimes”
 1. <https://www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/Role%20of%20Social%20Media%20During%20the%20Arab%20Spring.pdf>

- b. The Pessimists
 - i. Evgeny Morozov, “Digital Solutionism”
 - 1. excerpts from *To Save Everything, Click Here*, Introduction and Chapter 1 (Coursepack)
 - ii. Nicholas Carr, “Is Google Making Us Stupid?”
 - 1. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/306868/>
 - iii. Cathy O’Neil – Misrule of Algorithms
 - 1. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/sep/01/how-algorithms-rule-our-working-lives>
 - 2. <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/spark/331-it-s-overcomplicated-simpsons-by-the-data-and-more-1.3794248/weapons-of-math-destruction-1.3800536>
 - iv. Franklin Foer, “Facebook’s War on Free Will”
 - 1. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/sep/19/facebook-war-on-free-will>

9. Wrap Up and Exam Prep – April 3

Sustainable Written Work Submission Guidelines

The written work submission guidelines have been chosen to support the more sustainable use of paper, energy, and toner, and meet the **Silver** standard of the Office of Sustainability; <http://www.mcmaster.ca/sustainability/>. Written work should be submitted in the following format: double-sided printing, no title page.

Academic Integrity Statement

McMaster Policy on Academic Integrity:

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences—e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: 1) Plagiarism—e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained. 2) Improper collaboration in group work. 3) Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

MSAF Statement

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF):

In the event of an absence, students should review and follow the Academic Regulations

in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work.” Please consult the MSAF statement on our website (<https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/forms-requests/>) and direct any questions or concerns to Shelley Anderson or Rebecca Bishop in the Arts & Science Program Office as appropriate.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities Statement

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities:

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or email sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

Email Contact and Student Responsibility Statement

Please Note:

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of students to check **their McMaster email** and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes. Announcements will be made in class and by using the course email distribution list.