Syllabus

Course
Time: T/Th. 1:00-2:20
Place: Hentschke 201

Instructor
Hamid R. Ekbia
Office: Hentschke 210
e-mail: hamid_ekbia@redlands.edu
Phone: x 3127
Office Hours: M/W 1:00 – 2:00, T/Th. 2:30 – 3:30 (or by appointment)

Textbook:
The Social Shaping of Technology (second edition)
D. MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman

Reading Material: The textbook constitutes only one part of the reading for the course. Other reading material will be prepared and distributed in the manner to be discussed in class.

Course Description
The relationship between society (people as they relate to each other) and technology (things as created by people) is a fascinating, complex, and controversial topic. There is a whole spectrum of views about this relationship — from deterministic ideas of how technology drives history to radical social constructivism that considers technology as a malleable product of social development. In this course, we will study some of the more celebrated examples of such views, with the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the above relationship. The course consists of three main segments (each engaging us for about one-third of the semester). In the first segment, we learn about the general issues involved in a sociological study of technology. In the second segment, we will study particular technologies of production, reproduction, destruction, and so on. In the last segment, we will focus on modern information and communication technologies (ICT).

There are numerous possible topics and subtopics related to ICT, some of which are listed below (in a rather ad hoc manner):

- Technologies and Places
  - ICT at work
  - ICT at home
  - ICT at school
- Technology and Human Identity
  - ICT and gender
  - ICT and ethnicity
  - ICT and human body
- Technology and Culture
  - ICT, art, and entertainment
  - ICT, privacy, and surveillance
  - ICT, copyright, and open access
- Technology and Politics
  - ICT, military, and the state
  - ICT, power, and democracy
  - ICT, activism, and social movements
• Technology and Social Justice
  o ICT, communities, and networking
  o ICT, poverty, and the digital divide
  o ICT, sustainability, and social development

Since there is a wide range of topics, we have to be selective, and you will be instrumental in doing this. At the beginning of the last segment (that is, almost ten weeks into the semester), based on what you have seen in the previous two, each of you will choose a topic or subtopic of particular interest to you, and the group as a whole will spend a week (given the current enrollment in the course), studying and discussing the topic with your guidance. In other words, you get the chance to discuss your favorite topic for a whole week during the semester.

**Activity**
The course involves three major activities:

• *Reading*: Everyone should read the material *before* coming to class
• *Writing*: There is a great deal of writing involved in this course (see below), so be prepared for it!
• *Informing*: A good citizen of our society should be not only well informed, but also an active and reliable source of information. As a practice for good citizenship, at the beginning of each session everyone will share a piece of *current* technical or technology-related information with the rest of the class. You can use the more traditional sources of news (newspaper, TV), but as part of this activity you should regularly visit a website or subscribe to at least one IT-related mailing list such as (but not limited to) the following:

  o [http://vancouvercommunity.net/lists/subrequest/communityinformatics](http://vancouvercommunity.net/lists/subrequest/communityinformatics)
  o [http://vancouvercommunity.net/lists/subrequest/ciresearchers](http://vancouvercommunity.net/lists/subrequest/ciresearchers)
  o [http://www.incommunicado.info](http://www.incommunicado.info)
  o [http://mail.sarai.net/pipermail/bytesforall_readers](http://mail.sarai.net/pipermail/bytesforall_readers)

**Writing and Grading**
You will write a very short (about one page) reflection piece for the articles we read for every session and turn it in at the beginning of class every day (20 pieces, 20%). You will also write three papers, one at the end of each segment of the course. The first two papers (5-10 pages long, 20% each) should demonstrate what you have learned in the relevant section, and the last paper (10-15 pages, 30%) would be a case study or a research paper on the topic that you have chosen for the last section. Participation and the informing activity would count as 10% of the final grade.
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<th>Period</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<td>Week 1: Jan. 10-14</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introductory Essay</td>
<td>Reflection 0</td>
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| Week 2: Jan. 17-21 | • Do artifacts have politics?  
• Modest_Witness@Second_M | Ch.1, 2          | Reflections 1, 2 |
| Week 3: Jan. 24-28 | • Edison and electric light  
• Inventing persona computing | Ch. 3, 4         | Reflections 3, 4 |
| Week 4: Jan. 31-Feb. 4 | • Constructing a bridge  
• Competing technologies | Ch. 5, 6         | Reflections 5, 6 |
| Week 5: Feb. 7-11 | • The social construction ...  
• Redefining the social link  
• Caught in the wheels  
• Making the ‘white’ people ... | Ch. 7 - 10       | Reflections 7, 8 |
| Week 6: Feb. 14-18 | • Technology of production  
|                      | Intro to Part 2 | Paper 1 (due 02/15) |
| Week 7: Feb. 21-25 | • The watermill and feudal...  
• The machine vs. the worker  
• Technology & capitalist control  
• Social choice in design  
• Writers, texts and writing acts  
• Working relations ... | Ch. 11-14       | Reflections 9, 10 |
| Feb. 28-March 04  | •  | | Spring break |
| Week 8: March 07-11 | • Reproductive technology  
• The industrial revolution at home  
• A gendered socio-technical... | Intro P.3 + Ch. 20 | Reflections 11, 12 |
| Week 9: March 14-18 | • Military technology  
• Cold war and white heat  
• The American Army and M-16  
• The Thor-Jupiter Controversy | Intro P.4 + Ch. 24 Ch. 27, 28 | Reflections 13, 14 |
<p>| Week 10: March 21-25 | • ICT | t.b.d | Paper 2 (due |</p>
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<td>ICT</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
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<td>Week 14: April 18</td>
<td>ICT</td>
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<td>Final’s Week</td>
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<td>[Paper 3](due 4/25)</td>
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