



UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
FACULTY OF ARTS
Department of Sociology
and Legal Studies

DIGITAL CULTURES

SYLLABUS: SOC 324

Winter 2017

Tuesdays 11:30am – 2:20 pm.

PAS 1229

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer R. Whitson

Office: PAS 2040

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30 – 4:30 pm. Mon-Thurs: drop in if my door is open, or make an appointment via email.

Email: jwhitson@uwaterloo.ca

TA: Rebekah Smoot-Enns

Office: PAS 2058

Email: renns@uwaterloo.ca

Outside of holidays and weekends, emails will be responded to within 36 hours.

Do you have questions about assignment due dates, criteria, or grading? Do you want someone to look over your draft work? Please direct all emails about the course content and assignments, and requests for writing and research assistance to our TA, Rebekah, who is happy to help.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

What is technology? How does everyday tech, from Tinder to our tea kettles shape our society and how do we, in return, shape our technologies? In this course we will apply a Science, Technology and Society (STS) lens to understand how digital technologies from iPads, to Instagram, to Furby toys, change our culture: from how we interact with each other, to how we work (and what work is available to us, once we graduate), and how we play. We will “unbox” the black box of select technologies, investigating who made them, why the developers made the design choices they did, and how users push back. We’ll further investigate the blurring line between work and play in the digital age, asking questions such as “As we become more technological and digital, are we becoming less playful?” and “Does all work and no play make Jack a dull boy?”. *Even if you’re not playful you’ll still be allowed to enjoy this course.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this course, you’ll be able to:

- Synthesize complex written arguments, summarize core ideas effectively, pull out key concepts, and teach these concepts to others.
- Situate the introduction of new digital technologies (e.g. Virtual Reality) within in a larger historical trajectory, starting with Stone Age Tools.
- Discuss key STS theories in the context of social *versus* technological determinism (do we control our tools, or do they control us?), and relate them to theories of technological utopias and dystopias.
- Assess how specific technologies are designed for specific bodies (e.g. gendered, able, adult etc.) and how people are often divided by the politics, economics, and lack of access to new technologies.
- Understand the physical shape of digital tech, and the global journey a digital object takes before arriving in your hands, from hardware components mined in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to factories in China, to striking game developers in California.
- Define and discuss what makes a digital product “innovative”, from production cycle to end-user adoption.
- Develop a nuanced argument on the impact of digital technologies on our interpersonal relationships and communities.
- Unpack some of the complex ethical choices and moral codes built into our digital tools, including our game consoles.

RESOURCES:

- Each week, we’ll be reading one chapter from *Technology and Society* (2015), along with one other weekly podcast, video-clip or article.
- Required Textbook: Quan-Haase, Anabel. 2015. *Technology and Society: Social Networks, Power, and Inequality*. Second Edition edition. Don Mills, Ontario, Canada: Oxford University Press. You can find it online for purchase or at our campus bookstore.

ASSESSMENT:

Deliverable	Date of Evaluation (if known)	Weighting
Quote Round-up	Weekly (1%/week)	10%
Online forum participation	Weekly (0.5%/week)	5%
Term Project – Precis and Proposal	Feb 7	10%
In-Class Debates	Throughout term	10%
Debate Reflection	Due 1 week after your debate	10%
Midterm Take-Home Assignment	Assigned Feb 14, Due Feb 28	30%
Term Project	April 4	25%
Total		100%

Quote Round-up (10%) Weekly

All students are responsible for doing all readings and attending each class on time, period. Each class, students will come prepared with a written quote or question from the readings that they thought was significant, controversial, or remarkable. If there were parts of the article you didn't quite understand, this is a good opportunity to ask about them. You will submit these quotes along with your names at the beginning of class. Each week's readings will require about two hours to get through (depending on the length/ complexity of each reading).

- Each weekly quote is worth 1% of your final grade up to 10%.
- For full marks, you must submit your quote, the proper citation for the quote AND a 1-3 sentence explanation as to why you selected that quote.
- For part marks (0.5%), you may submit your name without the quote.

Online Participation (5%) Weekly

There will be a discussion board on LEARN (starting this class) where you can post comments and responses to posted topics that relate to the readings, lecture and/or class discussion. We will post weekly discussion questions to a specific discussion board. You can respond to these questions or post your own comments regarding the week's material. These comments/questions should be at least several sentences long and demonstrate an engagement with the material and an attempt to employ a sociological perspective.

Unless otherwise noted, each week you post, you will earn 0.5% of your final grade, up to 5%.

Please remember that these online spaces are a virtual extension of our classroom, and therefore, subject to the University's conduct regulations. At all times, you must respect your fellow classmates, and try to keep the discussion relevant to our course goals. When in doubt, follow The Golden Rule of Netiquette: Don't post any comment you wouldn't read aloud in class.

In-Class Debates - (20%) Throughout the Term

There will be 8 debates held throughout the term. You will each participate in one debate in which you will explore in depth a specific topic related to the course. First, sign up for a debate topic and a position (i.e., "side") in weeks 1 and 2 of this seminar. You might end up arguing a position you do not personally agree with. For each debate, one team of 2-3 students will debate another team on a given topic, the following week an individual written reflection is due along with the debate materials. Please see LEARN for further details.

Critical Précis and Term Project Proposal (10%) Due Feb 7

As preparation for your Term Project, you will select one of the weekly themes throughout the course. Each theme is accompanied by a few readings relating to that theme, providing you with an entry point to learn more about that topic. Your first task will be to write Critical Précis of this set of articles, discussing how it relates to the associated book chapter, along with abstract introducing and outlining your proposed topic and accompanying bibliography which includes at least 5 additional peer-reviewed articles.

Take Home Midterm (30%) – Assigned Feb 14, Due Feb 28.

On February 14 you will be given a case study about a current affairs news issue relating to the themes of our course. This case study will include introductory news articles, a game or media object, a list of recommended readings, and a set of questions to which you will be asked to respond. Ultimately, you will use this material to assess a controversial issue and pose potential solutions. Your response should be approximately 1750-2000 words in length.

Final Term Project - Due April 4

On April 4, you will submit a full dossier for your multimedia video project (e.g mp4, youtube video, slideshow with integrated audio, etc.) of approximately 5-8 minutes in length. Along with the video, you will submit a transcript, as well as a full bibliography for each of the sources you used, including images and sound clips. There is no restriction on the type of format of the project (e.g. you can choose to cover the material in an interview style format or you might want to create a drawn storyboard supported by spoken word). You are required to integrate AT LEAST 5 peer-reviewed academic articles, beyond those covered in the assigned course readings.

*Any other formats for the final term project must be approved in writing by the instructor by the first week of February.

TOPICS:

- Assigned readings and playlists may change through the term. Please consult LEARN for the final listing.

	Topic	Assigned Viewings/Listening	Notes
Jan 3	Introduction to the Course	No assigned readings. Purchase required textbook.	
Jan 10	The History of Technology: Is digital tech fundamentally new, or more of the same?	Quan-Haase. Chapter 2. Technology in Society Thernstrom, Melanie. 2016. "The Anti-Helicopter Parent's Plea: Let Kids Play!" <i>The New York Times</i> , October 19. http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/23/magazine/the-anti-helicopter-parents-plea-let-kids-play.html .	Select your presentation topics and dates today.
Jan 17	What is Science, Technology and Society studies (STS), anyways?	Quan-Haase Chapter 3. Theoretical Perspectives on Technology Norman, Don. 2013. "The Psychopathology of Everyday Things." In <i>The Design of Everyday Things: Revised and Expanded Edition</i> , Revised, Expanded ed. edition, 1–36. New York, New York: Basic Books.	Carefully do the readings. We have an in-class assignment that relies on them.

Jan 24	Who are digital worlds and technologies designed for?	<p>Quan-Haase Chapter 4. Gendered Technology</p> <p>Norman, Don. 2013a. "Excerpt: Designing for Special People." In <i>The Design of Everyday Things: Revised and Expanded Edition</i>, Revised, Expanded ed. edition, 243–47. New York, New York: Basic Books.</p> <p>And</p> <p>Hempel, Jessi. 2015. "Siri and Cortana Sound Like Ladies Because of Sexism." <i>WIRED</i>. October. https://www.wired.com/2015/10/why-siri-cortana-voice-interfaces-sound-female-sexism/</p>	
Jan 31	Where does my iPhone come from? Tracking the lifecourse of digital tools and those that make them.	<p>Quan-Haase Chapter 5. Technosocial Design.</p> <p>Watch: Blum, Andrew. 2016. <i>Discover the Physical Side of the Internet</i>. Accessed December 12. https://www.ted.com/talks/andrew blum what is the internet really</p>	Your turn! In-class feedback session.
Feb 7	Is "innovation" an empty buzzword, or the secret to money and success?	<p>Quan-Haase. Chapter 6 Adoption and Diffusion of Tech Innovation</p> <p>Watch: Introducing the Lean Startup – Eric Ries @Google. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEvKo90qBns (note – this is an hour long.)</p>	Precis and Proposal is due.
Feb 14	From Luddites to Makerspaces : The relationship between technology and work.	<p>Quan-Haase Chapter 7. The Labour of Technology</p> <p>Parkin, Simon. 2016. "Was Gamification a Terrible Lie?" <i>How We Get To Next</i>. November 18. https://howwegettonext.com/was-gamification-a-terrible-lie-3e845b97bb93-.dwjbb4i6l.</p>	Your take-home midterm is assigned this week.
No classes Feb 21	Spring Break.	Relax: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAYer9ZH0PY	
Feb 28	Charting the Digital Divide, and predicting who is "most likely to succeed".	<p>Quan-Haase Chapter 8. Technology and Inequality.</p> <p>Watch: RSA Animate. 2016. "The Internet in Society" https://www.thersa.org/discover/videos/rsa-animate/2011/03/rsa-animate---the-internet-in-society.</p>	Your MidTerm is Due.

Mar 7	“Together, Alone” or “Alone, Together”? Does the digital build deeper communities or foster the superficial?	Quan-Haase. Chapter 9. Community in the Network Society Watch: Turkle, Sherry. 2012. <i>Connected, but Alone?</i> TedTalks. https://www.ted.com/talks/sherry_turkle_alone_together .	
Mar 14	“You looked better on Facebook”. How does the digital change how we connect?	Quan-Haase. Chapter 10. Technologically-Mediated Social Relationships Listen: Johnson, Steven. 2016. “Babbage and the Dancer. (Or, Can You Fall in Love with a Robot?).” <i>Wonderland Podcast</i> . https://soundcloud.com/wonderland-podcast .	
Mar 21	The Viewer Society	Quan-Haas. Chapter 11. The Surveillance Society. Zuboff, Shoshana. 2016. “Google as a Fortune Teller: The Secrets of Surveillance Capitalism.” <i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</i> , March 5. http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/the-digital-debate/shoshana-zuboff-secrets-of-surveillance-capitalism-14103616.html .	
Mar 28	Do Game Designers Need a Code of Ethics? The politics of regulating software.	Quan-Haase Chapter 12. Ethical Dimensions of Technology Listen: Radiolab. 2015. <i>The Trust Engineers</i> . http://www.radiolab.org/story/trust-engineers/?utm_source=sharedUrl&utm_medium=metatag&utm_campaign=sharedUrl	Your final project is due April 4 th .

HOW TO HAND IN ASSIGNMENTS:

- All assignments must be submitted electronically via LEARN. **They are due by 11:30 pm.**
- Keep an electronic and paper copy of any assignments you submit. If I cannot find my copy of your assignment and you cannot immediately provide another copy I will presume that the assignment was not handed in.
- Papers should employ proper APA format. This should include a cover sheet that indicates your name, student number, title, instructor's name, course number, and word count. Word count should not include your references. Papers should have page numbering, one inch margins, be double spaced, and use 12 point, Times New Roman (default) font.
- Make sure your bibliography on submitted work is perfect, including citing any images, sound clips, or visual elements incorporated in your work. If you are unfamiliar with APA citation style you should consult one of the many books in the library that will provide guidance on academic

styles. Purdue also has online guides found here:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

- Be sure to back up your work (both locally and to network drives) and print out hard copies regularly as you write. That way, if your computer fails, you can always locate another computer at the University to finish your work.

Late Work

- All assignments are expected to be submitted on time, unless you have: i) a medical note from a doctor explaining that you could not complete the assignment; or ii) special permission for an extension from the instructor.
- Written assignments submitted late will be docked 5% each day (including weekends), up to a maximum of 35%. Assignments handed in more than 7 days past the due date will not be accepted, and will score 0. In other words, plan ahead, develop a work schedule, and stick to it.
- Any non-medical request for an extension must be submitted by email to the instructor at least one week before the due date.
- Failure to complete or hand in a written assignment earns a zero on that project.

COMMITMENT EXPECTATIONS:

- **Workload.** Please note that you are expected to do approximately 30 pages per week of readings as well as view/listen to podcasts and course videos. However, you should also be doing additional reading each week for your Term Project assignment. Plan for this to take *at least* 3 hours/week, plus the additional time you will need to spend completing your other course assignments.
- **Attendance.** You are responsible for knowing the material and announcements presented during seminars whether or not you attend class. Please arrange with another student to get missed notes and announcements. An excellent way to get in touch with fellow students on LEARN.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

- **Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. The [Office of Academic Integrity](#) provides relevant information for students, faculty and staff. Students are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. Completion of the [Orientation to Academic Integrity Tutorial](#) is encouraged and familiarity with [Policy #71](#), (Student Discipline) is expected. Students who are unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or need help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or understand 'rules' for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from their course instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean of Science for Undergraduate Studies. For information on typical Policy 71 penalties, students should check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

- **Grievance:** Students, who believe that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable, may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Students should read [Policy #70](#), Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4. When in doubt, students must contact the departmental/school administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.
- **Appeals:** A decision or penalty imposed under Policy 33 (Ethical Behavior), grievances under Policy #70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) or Policy #71 (Student Discipline) may be appealed, if there is a ground. Petitions may not be appealed. Students who believe they have a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy #72](#) (Student Appeals).

COURSE RULES/CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Students with Disabilities:** [AccessAbility Services](#), located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If students require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of their disability, they should register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.
- **Changes to Course Outlines**
 - Revised course outlines will be posted/provided, if course details change (e.g., topics covered, emphasis on certain topics, etc.)
 - Course elements that will **not** change after JANUARY 17th are the:
 - Grading scheme
 - Course elements related to evaluation
- **Electronic Device Policy.** Laptop computers and other portable technologies should be used in class only as learning-facilitation tools. During class, it is not acceptable to answer email, surf the web, answer cell phones, text message, or engage in other non-class-related activities. Your participation grade will be penalized if you break this rule. Why? Not only do these practices negatively affect your learning and participation, but they also distract others and create an environment of disrespect.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OF COURSE CONTENT:

Students should be aware that this course contains the intellectual property of their instructor, TA, and/or the University of Waterloo, as well as intellectual property belonging to current and past students. Intellectual property includes items such as:

- Lecture content, spoken and written (and any audio/video recording thereof);
- Lecture handouts, presentations, and other materials prepared for the course (e.g., PowerPoint slides);
- Questions or solution sets from various types of assessments (e.g., assignments, quizzes, tests, final exams); and

- Work protected by copyright (e.g., any work authored by the instructor or TA or used by the instructor or TA with permission of the copyright owner).
- Content created by current and past students, which belongs to those students.

Course materials and the intellectual property contained therein, are used to enhance a student's educational experience. However, sharing this intellectual property without the intellectual property owner's permission is a violation of intellectual property rights. This is a particular issue when these contents are posted online and shared beyond the University of Waterloo community. For this reason, it is necessary to ask the instructor, TA and/or the University of Waterloo for permission before uploading and sharing the intellectual property of others online (e.g., to an online repository such as OneClass or ScribD). **As a rule of thumb, if you didn't create the content DO NOT post it online, anywhere, without express permission from the content creator(s).**

Permission from an instructor, TA or the University is also necessary before sharing the intellectual property of others from completed courses with students taking the same/similar courses in subsequent terms/years. In many cases, instructors might be happy to allow distribution of certain materials, particular with other enrolled University of Waterloo students. However, doing so without expressed permission is considered a violation of intellectual property rights.

Please alert the instructor if you become aware of intellectual property belonging to others (past or present) circulating, either through the student body or online. The intellectual property rights owner deserves to know (and may have already given their consent).