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SOC 208
TECHNOLOGY: PROGRESS, POWER, AND PROBLEMS
WELLESLEY COLLEGE

Spring 2019, Monday's, 6:30-9:10pm, PNE 139
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Dr. Ethel Mickey
Department of Sociology
Pendleton East 334
emickey@wellesley.edu

Office Hours: Monday's 4:30-5:30pm; Thursday's 1-2pm; and by appointment

Course Description

This course examines technology as a dynamic yet fundamental force in our society – shaping progress, power relations, and social problems and inequalities. Students will be introduced to sociological perspectives on technology, exploring the changing nature of technology and its impact on society both historically and in the contemporary world. By examining specific kinds of technologies, including digital media and the Internet, military technologies, technologies of production, and medical and reproductive technologies, we will address the question of how technologies are shaped by the social context in which they developed. Key to this course will be understanding the relationship between technology and various forms of social inequalities – including race, gender, disability, and class. We will explore how technology shapes civic engagement, examining the role of social media in current social movement organizing, as well as the relationship between technology and work in an era of increasing automation. We will examine the relationships between technology, the body, media, war & economy.

Learning Goals:
1) To understand the societal implications of technology within historical and contemporary contexts
2) To identify the social forces affecting the creation of technologies and innovation
3) To develop a critical understanding of how specific forms of technology shape inequalities in society
4) To communicate clearly and effectively the key issues in sociology of technology to a general audience both in writing and oral communication
5) To engage in active and collaborative learning

Course Materials:

Required reading materials will include newspaper op-eds, podcasts, book chapters, and journal articles. All materials will be posted on Sakai.

Course Requirements:

1. **Attendance and participation (25%)**
   You are expected to attend class, to have completed required readings ahead of time, and to participate in class discussions. You will be most successful in the course if you participate in active

reading. As you read, identify the main argument(s) the author is making, key concepts and their definitions, and examples. Avoid highlighting and instead take reading notes that summarize the material in your own words. Making outlines of the chapters and articles is often helpful. Prepare questions you want to raise in advance of class discussions.

Attendance: I will not be grading your attendance but keep in mind that more than 2 unexcused absences will negatively impact your participation grade. As we only meet once per week, our class time is valuable. Powerpoint slides and handouts will be posted on Sakai, but I will not review course materials outside of class. If you will be missing class for a religious day of observance, please fill out the new College form online [here](#) by February 8 and we will arrange for your missed work.

Participation: **This is not a lecture course!** *At times, I will provide key course concepts and information during short lectures, but you are expected to be actively engaged in discussion. Failure to participate and contribute to the class discussion will impact your overall grade assessment negatively. Please come and see me right away if you anticipate any concerns with participation. I encourage you to ask questions in class. Please try to remember that if you have questions, other fellow students are likely to have the same question. Thus, no question is too basic! You can also post your questions on the class blog (and I encourage you to do so!).*

2. **App Analysis Paper (20%)**
   For this 3-4-page paper, you will choose one mobile app, tool, or text messaging service to analyze, reimagine, and reflect upon. You will describe a piece of software's key features, imagine a new additional feature, write scenarios projecting potential uses of the software, and pose critical questions about society, culture, and/or politics that your scenario intends to raise. I will provide you with more information in class. **The App Analysis Paper will be due Monday, March 11 in class.**

3. **Blog posts (20%)**
   Our class will use a blog to communicate with each other as well as outsiders on the web via social media and technology. Our blog can be found at www.techsocblog.com. You will complete four short blog entries throughout the semester that will ask you to link current events, popular debates and personal experiences with course materials. I will provide you with the prompts no later than one week in advance of the due date. **Blogs must be posted by <u>4pm</u> on the day of class they are due.**

4. **Final research paper (20%), presentation (10%), and peer review (5%)**
   Choose an issue, theme, or topic related to the course to investigate in more depth and write a 10-12-page research paper. You must get approval from the instructor on your selected topic. You will be required to give a short oral presentation with Powerpoint to the class on your paper, as well as participate in a peer review process. More information to follow. **There is no final exam.**

Grades

Attendance, participation & discussion questions	25%
App Analysis Paper	20%
Blog Posts	20%
Final Paper	
Paper	20%
Peer Review	5%
Presentation	10%

Extra Credit Opportunity
Alondra Nelson Lecture, Thursday, April 4, 4:30-6:30pm, Collins Cinema
We will be reading some of Prof. Nelson's work this semester. To earn extra credit that counts towards the participation portion of your grade, attend her lecture on campus and write a 500-word blog post reflecting on the event. Summarize what the event was about (100-200 words) and how it ties to your learning in SOC208. Link the event to concepts and theories in our class readings and discussions. Throughout the semester, I will post more community events on the blog that count towards extra credit. You are also welcome to suggest events such as seminars, conferences, workshops, protest meetings, art performances, etc. ***All extra credit papers must be submitted by 4pm on Tuesday, May 21.***

Ground Rules:
Courtesy and respect: I expect all of us to treat each other with courtesy and respect at all times. The classroom should be a comfortable learning environment for all of us. This necessitates that we each take responsibility for keeping the classroom free of discrimination, harassment, and intimidation. Debate and disagreements can (and should) occur during the collective learning process, as we will tackle some controversial issues. However, please be advised that all students are expected to respect each other's differing points of views. Students who are disruptive or disrespectful may be asked to leave the class meeting. In addition, arriving late and leaving early are distracting to those around you.

Laptops and Electronics: No laptops or electronics are allowed in this course, unless you have a documented need or injury that requires accommodation. I encourage you all to bring a notebook to class for note-taking, and we will often do in-class writing assignments. Please turn your cell phones off or on silent prior to the beginning of class. No audio or video recordings of class or photographs are permitted without the instructor's permission.

Lateness and extension policy: Work submitted late will be deducted one letter grade for each day late (B+→B, and so on), unless it is excused *in advance* via email.   In general, extensions will be granted only for serious, unexpected life events that are outside of your control, like medical or family emergencies, but not interviews, recruiting, or other school work, tests, or extracurriculars. Please plan ahead and communicate with me if you think you will have difficulty meeting a deadline.

E-mail etiquette: E-mail is one of the primary ways you will communicate with me outside of class when you have questions or need to set up a meeting time. I do my best to answer emails promptly, however, I am not available via email 24/7. If you email me after 6:00pm on weekdays, I will answer you by the next morning. If you email me on the weekends, I will answer by Monday morning. If it is an urgent matter, put "Urgent" in the subject heading.

Food: I recognize our class period is long, and I will take a mid-way break during each session for us to stretch, use the bathroom, or have a snack. Please try to avoid eating in class except during this break time, as it can be distracting to others.

Accommodations and Disability Access. All of us learn in different ways and with varying degrees of success. It is my job to help each and every one of you learn. Disabilities will always be accommodated. If you know of any factors that may hinder your ability to complete this course successfully, or if you will need accommodations for a documented disability or other appropriate reason, please let me know as soon as possible. Any student with disability accommodation needs should also contact

disabilityservices@wellesley.edu during the first two weeks of class. Disability Services, Clapp Library 316, Phone: (781) 283-2434.

Academic Support: I encourage you all to take advantage of the academic support resources provided by The Pforzheimer Learning & Teaching Center (PLTC). These resources include peer tutors, academic success coaches, and online materials with tips on test-taking, time management, etc. Visit the PLTC on the 3rd floor of the Clapp Library, or http://wellesley.edu/PLTC/. The Writing Program also has peer Writing Tutors who will work with you one-on-one to workshop papers: http://www.wellesley.edu/writingprogram/tutors. Finally, seek me out whenever you need help, by email or in person. Please make use of my office hours! We can arrange meetings by appointment if the regular office hours are not convenient for you. I am eager to help you with course material, but you must take the initiative and ask for assistance.

The Honor Code, Academic Integrity, and Plagiarism: All students are expected to abide by the Wellesley Honor Code, and any form of plagiarism, lying, cheating, or other academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and could result in a failing grade for the assignment or course or further disciplinary sanctions. We will discuss what kinds of actions constitute academic dishonesty in class, including plagiarism. To learn more about plagiarism, I also encourage you to read the Writing Program's statement and the library's Guide to Citing Sources.

Weekly Schedule
Updates to the weekly reading schedule will be announced in advance and posted on Sakai.

TOPIC	DATE	Reading Due	Assignment
Week 1: Introduction to the course	1/28	None.	
Unit I: PROGRESS/Understanding Technological Change			
Week 2: Technology, War, and the Military	2/4	Mills, C. Wright. 1959. "The Sociological Imagination." Daniels, Gregory & Cottom. 2017. "Introduction." *Digital Sociologies.* Carol Cohn. 1987. "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals."	Blog Post 1
Week 3: Technology and Work	2/11	Marx, Karl. "The Machine versus the Worker." Cockburn, Cynthia. 1985. *Machinery of Dominance* (Excerpt TBD) ***Continued on next page.***	

		Rosenblat, Alex. 2018. "Driving as Glamorous Labor: How Uber Uses the Myths of the Sharing Economy." Chp. 1 in *Uberland*.	
Week 4: Medical & Reproductive Technologies	**TUESDAY** 2/19	Nelson, Alondra. 2016. *The Social Life of DNA* (Excerpt TBD) Daniels, Cynthia and Erin Heidt-Forsythe. 2012."Gendered Eugenics & the Problematic of Free Market Reproductive Technologies." Lampbert, Natalie. 2015. "A Modern Woman's Burden." *The New Republic*.	Blog Post 2
Week 5: Household Technologies	2/25	Martin, Michèle. 1991. "*Hello, Central?*" (Excerpts) Wajcman, Judith. 2015. "Doing Domestic Time." Chp. 5 in *Pressed for Time*.	Blog Post 3
Week 6: Interpersonal Relationships and Technology	3/4	Ansari, Aziz and Eric Klinenberg. 2015. *Modern Romance*. (Excerpts) *For those of you unfamiliar with the Ansari sexual misconduct allegations, please read the addt'l articles on Sakai. boyd, danah. 2014. *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. (Excerpts)	
Unit II: POWER/Technology, Identities, and Inequalities			
Week 7: Gender & Sexuality	3/11	van Cleaf, Kara. 2017. "Our mothers have always been machines: The conflation of media and motherhood." Haber, Benjamin. 2017. "Queer Facebook? Digital sociality and queer theory." Davis, Jenny. 2017. "Rendering Bodies out of Rendered Machines." *The Society Pages*.	App Analysis Paper
Week 8: Racialized Technologies	3/18	Nakamura, Lisa. 2002. "CyberTyping and the Work of Race in the Age of Digital Reproduction." Chp. 1 in *Cybertypes*. ***Continued on next page.***	

		Noble, Safiya Umoja. 2018. "Searching for Black Girls." Chp. 2 in *Algorithms of Oppression*. Alexander, Michelle. 2018. "The Newest Jim Crow." *The New York Times*.	
Week 9: SPRING BREAK NO CLASS 3/25			
Week 10: Disability & Accessibility	4/1	Ginsburg, Faye. 2012. "Disability in the Digital Age." Goggin, Gerard and Christopher Newell. 2003. "Blind Spots on the Internet." Chp. 6 in *Digital Disability*.	Topics for Final Paper Due
Unit III: PROBLEMS/Social Problems, Ethics, and the Future of Technology			
Week 11: Technology & Global Development	4/8	Valle, Firuzeh Shookoh reading TBD. Gajjala, Radhika and Annapurna Mamidipudi. 1999. "Cyberfeminism, technology, and international 'development.'" Lee, Micky. 2006. "What's Missing in Feminist Research in New Information and Communication Technologies?"	Blog Post 4
Week 12: **NO CLASS**	4/15		
Week 13: Digital Communities, Activism & Citizenship	4/22	Castells, Manuel. 2015. *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age.* (Excerpts) Daniels, Jesse. 2009. "Rethinking Cyberfeminism(s): Race, Gender, and Embodiment." Stephen, Bijan. 2015. "How Black Lives Mater Uses Social Media to Fight the Power." *Wired*.	
Week 14: Surveillance, Automation, and Moving Forward in a Technological World	4/29	Roseblat, Alex. 2018. "Behind the Curtain: How Uber Manages Drivers with Algorithms." Chp. 5 in *Uberland*. Herrman, John. 2018. "Google knows where you've been, but does it know	Final presentations begin

		who you are?" *The New York Times Magazine.* Madrigal, Alexis C. 2018. "Could Self-Driving Trucks be Good for Truckers?" *The Atlantic.*	
Week 15: Final Class	5/6	None.	Final research presentations

Final Papers due by 6pm on Wednesday, May 15 uploaded to Sakai.