

ATCM 2300.001

Introduction to TechnoCulture

Weekly Lecture Syllabus

TERM: Fall 2025

Credit Hours: 3

Instructor

Dr. Anne Balsamo

Email: Anne.Balsamo@utdallas.edu

Weekly Lecture: Tuesdays 11:30 – 12:45 pm CDT

Location: HH 2.402 (Karl Hoblitzelle Hall)

Course Description

This course introduces the concept of “TechnoCulture” – a term that aptly describes the culture we live in now when technology infuses every aspect of daily life.

We spend upwards of 9 hours a day consuming media through various devices. Smart phones provide on-the-go entertainment. Social media apps enable us to share experiences with people at a distance. We have become just-in-time learners who rely on digital assistants and “how-to-videos” to fill in knowledge gaps. We easily habituate to new devices. As our personal habits synch with the device habits of other people, new ways of interacting spawn new rituals of connection and communication. These habits become the foundation of enculturation – the process whereby we become members of a culture.

Digital networks enable the wide circulation of ideas by providing opportunities for information exchange and creative expression. Memes function as cultural viruses by transmitting information from host to host to host. When a joke, outrageous behavior, or social commentary goes viral, it infects networked populations with fresh ideas, language, and visual imagery. When we share memes, we participate in creating a common culture.

Global telecommunication networks, international banking operations, geographic energy distribution, local water purification, food production and delivery...these all require massive efforts of integration and coordination. Our daily lives rely on the maintenance of these complex technological systems, yet we rarely think about them until they fail. When that happens, we are forced to confront the technocultural reality that these systems provide the life-support infrastructure of human existence.

Throughout the course we will investigate the many ways in which technology and culture are intertwined, to consider how technologies shape cultures, and how cultures transform technologies. We will read historical accounts of the development of significant technologies to understand the cultural contexts that influenced their use. We will discuss the intimacy of personal technologies, as well as the social impact of large-scale technological projects. We will analyze the role of popular culture and science fiction in shaping our technological hopes, dreams, and nightmares. This material will inform our discussions about the distribution of power, the expression of identity, and the ethics of our contemporary technoculture.

The course is organized around 5 key questions:

- What is culture?
- What is technology?
- How have the relationships among humans, technologies, and culture changed over time?
- How do we understand the multiple and (often) contradictory effects of technology?
- How do we imagine the cultural possibilities (both positive and negative) of emerging technologies?

Learning Goals - Through participation in course activities students will learn how to:

- They will be able to *recount* the technocultural history of a significant object or process
- They will *create* new understandings about the complex relationship among human beings, technology, and culture
- They will *read* difficult academic writing to sharpen concentration and understanding of complex ideas
- They will *pose* questions to generate insights about a media or technological object
- They will *engage* open-ended questions to demonstrate their thinking process
- They will *synthesize* information from multiple sources to develop informed opinions about pressing technocultural issues

ATCM 2300 is approved for General Core 090 that has these learning objectives:

- **Critical Thinking (CT)**—to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information
- **Communication (COM)**—to include effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication
- **Empirical and Quantitative Skills (EQS)**—to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions
- **Teamwork (TW)**—to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal
- **Social Responsibility (SR)**—to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities
- **Personal Responsibility (PR)**—to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making

Required Texts and Screenings

(1) **Introduction to TechnoCulture**, 2nd Ed. by Dr. Anne Balsamo

(Kendall-Hunt Publication, 2022)

<https://he.kendallhunt.com/product/introduction-technoculture>

Students must purchase a subscription for the web textbook for their individual use.

Subscriptions cannot be shared. Each web textbook module includes a pre-test and a post-test that must be completed before the next module is unlocked. Completion of these tests are part of the course participation grade.

(2) SCREENING: **Hidden Figures** (Film Directed by Theodore Melfi, 2016)

Available for rent at the following sites: YouTube, Vudu, Amazon Prime Video, Google Play

Rental fee: \$3.99

(3) SCREENING: **Gattaca** (Film Directed by Andrew Niccol, 1997)

Available for rent at: YouTube, Amazon Prime Video, Google Play, Apple TV

Rental fee: \$3.99

Course Platforms

eLearning platform

<https://ets.utdallas.edu/elearning>

ATCM 2300.001 eLearning site

- This is the eLearning site for LECTURE announcements.

ATCM 2300 DISCUSSION SECTION eLearning sites:

- Check the course number for your discussion section
- Find the eLearning site for that course number
- This is the eLearning site for your section
 - The place to contact you TA
 - Find INSTRUCTIONS and ANNOUNCEMENTS for your section
 - UPLOAD ASSIGNMENTS and ACTIVITIES.
 - MIDTERM exam instructions posted here
 - FINAL exam instructions posted here
 - Other reading materials
 - **POST YOUR ASSIGNMENTS/EXAMS to your discussion section eLearning site**

Access to Course Materials

- Students may download course materials from eLearning sites; however, these materials are to be used only by the students registered in the course that semester.
- Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with other people.
- Materials MAY NOT be uploaded to other online environments
- Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Student Participation and Assessment

Requirements

- **Readings:** Assigned on a weekly basis.
- **Video Screenings:** one or two per semester. View out-of-class time.
- **Participation and Engagement with TEXTBOOK**
 - Students read ONE module per week
 - Students complete a Warm-Up quiz and a Wrap-Up quiz for each module
 - Textbook modules are available on a week-by-week schedule
 - Students must complete the quiz for the previous module before gaining access to the next module

- Completion of textbook modules during assigned week is recorded
- Record of completion of textbook readings contributes to participation grade for course
- **Participation and Engagement with LECTURE: ENTRANCE / EXIT questions**
 - Attendance at weekly Tuesday lecture is mandatory
 - Attendance is recorded using an ENTRY / EXIT question
 - Students submit their ENTRY/EXIT questions through eLearning
 - The ENTRY/EXIT questions encourage engagement with readings and lectures
- **Participation and Engagement in DISCUSSION SECTIONS**
 - Attendance at weekly DISCUSSION SECTION is mandatory
 - TAs record attendance every week
 - Participation may involve posting to eLearning blog, completion of a creative exercise, or an in-class activity

Exam Dates

- **Mid-Term Exam: Oct 7, 2025**
 - **IN-CLASS test**
 - **(No discussion sections this week)**
- **Final Exam: TWO PARTS**
 - Assigned Monday, **Nov 10, 2025**
 - PART 1 DUE: **NOV 17, 2025**
 - PART 2 DUE: **DEC 9, 2025**

Course Grade Determination

Engagement: 25%

Quality of Contribution in Discussion Sections (250 pts)

Textbook Exercises: 15%

Module Wrap-Up Quizzes (150 pts)

Mid-Term Exam: 30%

In Class exam: (300 pts)

Final Assignment: 30%

Final project: (300 pts)

Final Grading Scale: A, A- B+, B, B- C+, C, C- D+, D, D- F

Student Commitments and Responsibilities

- Students are expected to complete weekly assignments before the next week's lecture.
- Students are expected to turn in required assignments on time
- Students are expected to conduct themselves in a courteous manner in the use of speech, language, images, video, games, and audio
- Students are expected to protect their intellectual integrity: no plagiarism and no "freeloading" in group projects
- Students will include proper citations for the use of media make by other people in their own work
- Students will abide by the policies for *fair use* when they use media materials made by other people
- Students will communicate with the instructor or teaching assistant through email
- Students will respect their peers and instructors, and refrain from harassment, name-calling, or strident arguments
- Student will respect their peers and instructors, diversity in terms of sex, gender, race, national origin, language, physical ability, age, and cultural experiences enriches and inspires learning from one another

Classroom Technology Policy

Students should come to class prepared to write on paper with an ink or pen.

Mobile phones, tablets, or laptops will be used for some activities in lecture and discussion sections.

Student will not use mobile phones, tablets, and laptops for activities other than what is needed for an activity.

Your instructors reserve the right to ask a student to stop using any device at any time during class if it is not contributing to class discussion and/or activity.

Student Conduct

Weekly lecture:

- Although this is a large class, I value your engagement and participation
- Every week we will have in-class activities and time for discussion
- I welcome comments and questions

Trigger warnings and safe spaces:

- Your professor and instructors understand that the students in this course have different backgrounds and are at different points in their education
- The learning process sometimes requires the discussion of difficult topics
- As your professor, I will not do things intentionally to shock, traumatize, or belittle students in this class or other groups of people
- No one can predict the effect that a topic or material will have on someone in the class.
- We need to give everyone the benefit of the doubt that they did not intend to provoke or insult.
- This class is a space for learning for all of us (including the professor and teaching assistants).

Communication Protocols

- Indicate the name and pronoun you prefer
- Use your UTD email address for any correspondence
- For any message, use the subject heading: **ATCM 2300**
- Do not send messages through text, social media, or phone
- Talk with your TA about questions, concerns, and insights
- Speak up in discussion sections

THINK about the identity you create for on-line communication.

- Using your name helps instructors recognize your contributions.
- It also enables accountability for your comments.

RESPECT your peers and instructors.

- People at UTD have diverse backgrounds and identities, in terms of sex, gender, race, national origin, language, physical abilities, age, and cultural experiences.
- This diversity is a rich source of inspiration.

Violence, harassment, name-calling, or any other disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated, and instances will be addressed immediately. Snarky or sarcastic comments on chat channels are easily made public and when taken out of context can have negative consequences for the person who posts the comment.

Academic Honesty

Academic Honesty is required, without exceptions, without excuses.

Plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of Students.

UTD Handbook policy statement:

"The university expects from its students a high level of responsibility with respect to academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends on the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student maintains a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work. The Dean may initiate disciplinary proceedings under subchapter C against a student accused of scholastic dishonesty upon complaint by a faculty member or a student."

(<http://www.utdallas.edu/dept/graddean /gsPolDishonesty.htm>)

Disciplinary actions by the University may include:

- failing the assignment
- failing the course
- expulsion from the program

Class Recordings

RECORDING OF LECTURES is prohibited.

- The only exception is for those whom the Office of Student AccessAbility has approved to record instruction.
- These recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with people outside of class.
- These recordings may not be shared in on-line platforms except for an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation.

If the instructor or a UTD school/department/office records any part of a classroom lecture, consent of the students identifiable in the recordings is required prior to its use unless an exception is allowed by law.

Accessibility

It is our responsibility to enable the full participation of all students in terms of access to course materials, lectures, and other activities.

If you require accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act - 2008 (ADAAA), please present your **letter of accommodations from the Office of Student AccessAbility to your Teaching Assistant on the FIRST DAY of class.**

This is very important so that we can make appropriate arrangements to enable your participation. DISCUSSIONS regarding accommodations are CONFIDENTIAL.

For more information about the UTD, Office of Student AccessAbility:

Office phone: 972-883-6104

Email: studentaccessability@utdallas.edu

University Policies

<http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>

- Sharing Confidential Information about sexual misconduct
- Campus Carry policy
- Technical Support for your UTD account
- Field Trip Policies and Off-Campus Instruction
- Student Conduct and Discipline
- Academic Integrity
- Copyright Notice
- Email Use
- Withdrawal from Course
- Student Grievance Procedures
- Incomplete Grade Policy
- AccessAbility Services
- Religious Holy Days
- Success Service

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Aug 26

Lecture Topic: Hello World!

- Introduction to Course
- Introduction to Web Textbook
- How to Think About Technology and Culture

MEET in DISCUSSION SECTIONS: Week Aug 26-29

Sept 2

Lecture Topic: The iPod Case

Discussion Sections: Module 1 and love letters

ASSIGNMENT: For Week Sept 2-5

Module 1: Hello World!

Sept 9

Lecture Topic: Evocative Objects

When Old Technologies Were New

ASSIGNMENT: For Tuesday Sept 9

Module 2: Evocative Objects

Sept 16

Lecture Topic: Making Meaning for the Eye

Reading and Writing Culture

ASSIGNMENT: For Tuesday, Sept 16

Module 3: Making Meaning for the Eye

Sept 23

Lecture Topic: Making Meaning for the Ear

Sound Cultures and Our Audible Pasts

ASSIGNMENT: For Tuesday, Sept 23

Module 4: Making Meaning for the Ear

Sept 30**Lecture Topic: Hidden Figures**

Technologies as Socio-Technical Systems

ASSIGNMENTS: For Tuesday, Sept 30*Module 5: Hidden Figures***WATCH:** For Tuesday, Sept 30Movie *Hidden Figures* (Melfi, 2016)**Instructions for the Midterm****Oct 7: Midterm Exam – IN CLASS****(No Discussion Class this week)****Oct 14****Lecture Topic: Unintended Consequences**

Credit, At What Cost?

ASSIGNMENT: For Tuesday, Oct 14*Module 6: Unintended Consequences***Oct 21****Lecture Topic: Designed for Dreaming**

Entanglements of Technology & Culture

ASSIGNMENT: For Tuesday, Oct 21*Module 7: Designed for Dreaming***Oct 28****Lecture Topic: Montage of a Dream Deferred**

Mediated Witnessing (TV and Civil Rights)

ASSIGNMENT: For Tuesday, Oct 28*Module 8: Montage of a Dream Deferred***Nov 4****Lecture Topic: Cyberpunk Post-Futurism**

Living at the End of History

ASSIGNMENT: For Tuesday, Nov 4
Module 9: Science Fiction Imaginaries

Nov 11

Lecture Topic: Intelligent Machines and Terminal Subjects:
 Post-humanism

ASSIGNMENT: For Tuesday, Nov 11
 Watch the film: *Gattaca*

DIRECTIONS FOR FINAL PROJECT – Part 1 and 2

Nov 18

Lecture Topic: Algorithmic Culture
 The Ghosts in Our Machines

ASSIGNMENT: For Tuesday, Nov 18
Module 10: What Comes Next?

DUE NOV 18-21: FINAL PROJECT – Part 1

Nov 25: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dec 2

Lecture Topic: What Comes Next?
 Who Has Responsibility for the Future?

COURSE WRAP-UP

Dec 9th: FINAL PROJECTS DUE