

ATCM 2300

Introduction to TechnoCulture

Fall 2017

Course Information

Class meeting times:

Lecture: Thursday, 4:00 – 5:15 pm

Discussion Sections: See separate handout

Location: ATEC Auditorium

Credit Hours: 3

Instructor

Dr. Anne Balsamo
Dean, ATEC

Email: Professor.Balsamo@utdallas.edu

Dean's Office Hours: By appointment only

Teaching Assistants

Contact information and office hours: See separate handout

- Leticia de Souza
- Murilo Homas
- Sean Landers
- Stephen Mallory
- Veena Somareddy
- David Wilson

Communication Protocols:

- Indicate the name and pronoun you would like us to use
- Use your UTD email address for any correspondence
- Use the subject heading: ACTM2300

- No messages through text, social media, or phone
- Talk with your TA about questions, concerns, and insights
- Speak up in discussion sections

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the study of arts, technology, and emerging communication through a focus on five key questions:

- (1) What is culture?
- (2) What is technology?
- (3) How has the relationship among humans, technologies, and culture changed over time?
- (4) How do we understand the multiple and (often) contradictory implications of our engagement with technologies?
- (5) How does the ATEC curriculum pathways provide opportunities for students to explore these questions, critically and creatively?

To elaborate these questions, weekly LECTURES are focused on an evocative object. The object might be an *artefact*—such as “the camera” – or a *process* – such as “the Census.” Each object tells multiple stories, of technological invention and of cultural transformation. Each object offers insight into the way in which technology and culture are inextricably linked.

in·ex·tri·ca·bly

ˌɪnəkˈstri:kəblē, ɪnˈɛkstrəkəblē/

adverb

in a way that is impossible to disentangle or separate.

Weekly DISCUSSIONS SECTIONS engage students in activities to explore cultural aspects of common technologies and media forms. Through readings, individual writing, media screenings, and creative exercises, students investigate and analyze the promises and perils of emergent technocultural realities.

This aim of this course is to encourage students to think more complexly about technology, about culture, and about the many ways in which the two are always entangled. This will be the foundation for the development of a rich and nuanced technological imagination, which is, in turn, the foundation for learning and research in ATEC.

Course Goals: Students Learn How To

- Reconstruct the techno-cultural histories of significant objects and processes
- Describe how an object evokes meaning
- Analyze an object to elaborate how technology and culture are related
- Create an original analysis of an object that illustrates the complex relationship of human beings, technology, and culture
- Identify key questions that could be explored in each of five ATEC curriculum pathways

Required Texts and Screenings

Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Ballantine Books (2008)

Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore. *The Medium is the Massage*. (original 1968)
Republished. Gingko Press, 9th edition (2001)

Sherry Turkle, *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With*. MIT Press (2001)

Langdon Winner. *The Whale and the Reactor*. University of Chicago Press (1989)

Viewings

Ridley Scott, *Bladerunner* (the U.S. theatrical release - 1982)
Will be screened at ATEC on October 5th: 6:30-8:30 pm

Ridley Scott, *Bladerunner* (director's cut – 1992)
Will be screened at ATEC on October 5th: 9:00 – 11:00 pm

Denis Villeneuve, *Bladerunner 2049* (Oct 6, 2017)
Special screening for ATEC students TBD

Online Materials

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*. Four-part TV series
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pDE4VX_9Kk

Steven Pinker, Matt Ridley, Alain De Botton, Malcolm Gladwell.

“Do Humankind’s Best Days Lie Ahead?” (2016)
<https://www.hoopladigital.com/title/11663053>

Student Participation and Evaluation

Non-graded requirements

- Attendance: Mandatory
- Screenings: Assigned on a weekly basis
- Readings: Assigned on a weekly basis
- Creative exercises: Mandatory, but not graded

Graded Activities

- Mid-Term Exam: October 13, 2017
- Final Group Project: December 8, 2017

Grade Scale

Intangibles: 40%

- A: Perfect attendance, insightful contributions to discussions, completes every creative exercise
- B: Perfect attendance, contributes to discussions, completes every creative exercise
- C: Imperfect attendance, infrequent contributions to discussions, creative ambivalence
- D: Inconsistent attendance, little contribution to discussions, doesn’t even try the creative exercises
- F: Excessive absences, lack of participation in discussion or creative exercises

Mid-Term Exam: 30%

- A: 100 – 90
- B: 89 – 80
- C: 79 – 70
- D: 69 – 50
- F: Below 49

Final Project: 30%

- A: 100 – 90
- B: 89 – 80
- C: 79 – 70
- D: 69 – 50
- F: Below 49

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

Attendance

Weekly Lectures

Attendance will be taken at every session by checking in with one of the Teaching Assistants. Lectures will not be available for viewing at other times.

Discussion Sections:

During these sessions you will have opportunities to discuss class topics in a small group setting. It is expected that you have ATTENDED the Weekly Lecture, that you have READ / VIEWED assigned materials, and you have COMPLETED assigned activities.

You are allowed **2 absences a semester**. This does not include absences for religious purposes. If you are absent FOR ANY REASON, you must contact your Teaching Assistant, preferably before you miss a session.

In the event of weather-related class cancellations, you will be notified as far in advance as possible. All coursework is still due according to prior deadline.

All work must be submitted according to the deadlines stated.

Remember:

Technical difficulties always happen when you work at the last minute. The printer WILL FAIL; it can smell your stress. Plan for it.

Lateness is disrespectful. It is noticed. Leaving early is also disrespectful. Don't do it.

I expect your presence and your attention. Everyone values your engagement and learns from your contributions.

SILENCE your phones; unplug from social media and email; enjoy the time to be here now.

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. ALL DISCUSSIONS ARE CONFIDENTIAL.

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

- Office phone: 972-883-6104

- Email: studentaccessability@utdallas.edu
- Location: Student Services building.

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, or worse

During this course we will discuss the difference between “citation,” “sampling,” and plagiarism. We will describe how to create a “digital sources” file.

Basic Tip #1: Always make a note of where you found something (an image, a quotation, a song lyric, a piece of music, a person’s photograph)

Basic Tip #2: Learn to love citations! Give credit where credit is due!

Basic Tip #3: Use Wikipedia SPARINGLY

Basic Tip #4: Protect your integrity as a thinker and a writer.

Classroom Conduct: Virtual and Actual

THINK about the identity you create for on-line communication. Many ATEC courses require students to write or post to online spaces, some are closed to the class, others are public. I encourage students to use the name they prefer for face-to-face interactions. It helps instructors learn names. It enables accountability.

RESPECT your peers and instructors. ATEC brings together people from 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. Consequences are significant.

COLLABORATE. Everyone has a superpower. Choose to work people who are not part of your in-group. Form study groups. Compare notes. Discuss ideas. Assemble your team well in advance of the final project.

University Policies

Please visit <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 Services

WEEKLY OUTLINE

Aug 24

Week 1 *Educating the Technological Imagination*

Opening Lecture

Instructor introduction
TA introductions
Review of Syllabus

Assignment for Discussion Sections on August 25th:

Write a *A LOVE LETTER TO AN OBJECT*

AUG 25 DISCUSSION SECTION AGENDA

- DISCUSS THE LOVE LETTERS
- ASSIGN SCREENING FOR NEXT WEEK:
John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

Aug 31

Week 2 *Evocative Objects, Multiple Meanings*

The CAMERA
[signification]

KEY QUESTIONS: How does an object acquire meaning?

- What is its history?
- What is its cultural significance?
- What is its alternative story?
- What are its social and political implications?

KEY CONCEPTS: *Symbolism, myth, alternative histories, representation, signification, art form, recording vs interpreting, documentation, witnessing, framing, visual culture*

SEPT 1 DISCUSSION SECTION AGENDA

- DISCUSS John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*
- ASSIGN the ACTIVITY FOR NEXT WEEK: *View-A-Point*
- ASSIGN READING FOR NEXT WEEK: ??

Sept 7

Week 3 *Making Meaning*

The BOOK and the TURN-TABLE
[consumption]

KEY QUESTION: **what is culture?**

KEY CONCEPTS: *identity, practices of meaning making, oral culture, written culture, digital culture; modes of expression; rituals and literacies; dominant culture, subcultures; audiences, taste cultures; copyright, sampling, remix, citation, quotation, plagiarism*

Sept 8 **DISCUSSION SECTION AGENDA**

- **DISCUSS ACTIVITY**: View-A-Point
- **ASSIGN the ACTIVITY FOR NEXT WEEK**: How to Read Wikipedia
- **ASSIGN READING FOR NEXT WEEK**: ??

Sept 14

Week 4 *Socio-Technical Systems*

The LOOM and the INTERNETS
[production]

KEY QUESTION: **what is technology?**

KEY CONCEPTS: *form, function, tools, invention, device and processes, networks, code, programs, programming languages, procedural literacies; industrialization; Fordism, the assembly line; deskilling; gendered labor; workers as machine attendants; cybernetics*

Sept 15 **DISCUSSION SECTION AGENDA**

- **DISCUSS ACTIVITY**: History of a wikipedia
- **Demonstrate an expert reading of a specific wikipedia (of your choosing)**
- **ASSIGN the ACTIVITY FOR NEXT WEEK**: Tracking your Info Footprint
- **ASSIGN READING FOR NEXT WEEK**: Langdon Winner, "Do Artifacts have Politics?"

Sept 21

Week 5 *Unintended Consequences*

The BRANDING IRON and CREDIT CARDS
[regulation]

KEY QUESTION: **Do technologies have politics?**

KEY CONCEPTS: *property, ownership, surveillance, globalism; consumers, markets; biometrics; compliance, agency; technology attitudes, the myth of progress*

Sept 22 DISCUSSION SECTION AGENDA

- DISCUSS ACTIVITY: Tracking your Info Footprint
- ASSIGN READING FOR NEXT WEEK: Langdon Winner, “Do Artifacts have Politics?”
- ASSIGN READING FOR NEXT WEEK: Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Sept 28

Week 6 ***Designed for Dreaming***

The CAR and the CINEMA
[identity]

KEY QUESTION: How are technology and culture entangled?

KEY CONCEPTS: *cultural imaginaries, conventions of science fiction genre, mobility and privatization, retrofuturism, representation of gender, sexuality, race, class; visual spectacle; extensions of the body in time and space*

Sept 29 DISCUSSION SECTION AGENDA

- DISCUSS ACTIVITY: Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
- DISTRIBUTE HANDOUTS: *How to Watch Bladerunner*

Oct 5

Week 7 ***More Human than Human***

BLADERUNNER

KEY QUESTION: What does it mean to be human?

Screening 1: *Bladerunner* (1982)

6:30 – 8:30 pm

ATEC Auditorium

Screening 2: *Bladerunner* (1992)

9:00 – 11:00 pm

ATEC Auditorium

Oct 6 DISCUSSION SECTION AGENDA

- DISCUSS *Bladerunner*
- Introduce mid-term exam format / topics

Oct 12

Week 8 ***Owning Your Own Learning***

Introduction to Pathways in ATEC

Introduction to Learning Portfolios in ATEC

KEY QUESTION: How do you know what you know? How to show what you've learned?

Oct 13 DISCUSSION SECTION AGENDA

- MID-TERM EXAMS
- ASSIGN materials on Mediated Communication pathway lecture
NOTE: midterm grades due Oct 14th

Oct 19

Week 9 *Mediated Communication*

The CENSUS and the SELFIE

Prof Kristin Drogos

Prof Angela Lee

Introduction to ATEC pathway in Mediated Communication

Oct 20 DISCUSSION SECTION AGENDA

- HAND BACK MID-TERM EXAMS /Discuss
- Discuss Mediated Communication materials
- ASSIGN materials on Games pathway lecture

Oct 26

Week 10 *Games Studies and Production*

CHESS and COS PLAY

Prof Monica Evans

Introduction to ATEC pathway in Games Studies and Production

Oct 27 DISCUSSION SECTION AGENDA

- Discuss Games pathway materials
- Introduction to Final Project
- ASSIGN materials on Animation pathway lecture (FLIPBOOK)
- ASSIGN materials on Critical Media Studies
- ASSIGN ACTIVITY: Make an Object Critical

Nov 2

Week 11 *Animation*

The PUPPET and the COMIC BOOK

Prof Eric Farrar

Introduction to ATEC pathway in Animation

Nov 3: NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS

- **SCREEN GATTACA**

Nov 9

Week 12 *Critical Media Studies*

The MAP and DNA

Prof Olivia Banner

Introduction to ATEC pathway in Critical Media Studies

Nov 10 DISCUSSION SECTION AGENDA

- Discuss Gattaca
- ASSIGN materials on Design and Production pathway
- REVIEW FINAL PROJECT PRE-PRODUCTION

Nov 16

Week 13 *Design and Production*

The WATER PUMP and the CRISPR

Prof Todd Fechter

Assoc Dean Dale MacDonald

Introduction to ATEC pathway in Design and Production

Nov 17 DISCUSSION SECTION AGENDA

- Discuss Design and Production materials
- Discuss FlipBooks
- REVIEW FINAL PROJECT Progress

Nov 20-24th Thanksgiving Week

Nov 30

Week 14 *Where to go from Here?*

Intentional Future Making & ATEC Futurism

Key Question: **Why Are you Here?**

Dec 8-14th

Final Projects Due

Group Project: *The Story of Technology and Culture as told by ##*