ENGL 6008/MALS 6000: Rhetoric of Technology

Fall 2017

Dr. Aaron A. Toscano (atoscano)
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Class: Fretwell 219, Tuesdays 6:30 – 9:15 pm
Office hours: Mon. & Tues. 3:00 – 5:00 pm (and by appt.)

Course Description and Purpose

This course will introduce students to research and theories of the rhetorical construction of technology in history and culture. This course analyzes technologies to understand how they reflect the ideologies of the cultures from which they come. Students will engage with rhetorical analyses of technology and focus on the discourse surrounding technologies. We will also discuss how the field of technical communication should recognize historical, cultural, and rhetorical analyses of technologies not as tangential but as essential to the field. This course meets in a computer lab, and we will use computer-based technologies for assignments and discussions.

Texts and Materials

Required: Barker, Chris and Emma A. Jane. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. 5th ed., Sage, 2016. {9781473919457}
Noble, David F. *The Religion of Technology*. Penguin, 1999. {9780140279160}
Paper for taking notes in class and for the readings—preferably a spiral notebook or composition book
Selected Readings on Canvas

Expectations

I expect students to be prepared when they come to class. **There is quite a bit of reading in this course, but it's manageable if you plan your school-work-life needs. Again, there is quite a bit of reading in this course.** Have the readings completed for the class meeting prior to coming to class and post a reflection on Canvas (weekly) after class. This is a graduate-level seminar that demands active, critical engagement with the texts. Although one's tastes and convictions, often mistaken as "opinions," are appropriate for personal ways of knowing, we will emphasize identifying (as accurately as possible) broader cultural patterns that will help guide our analyses of technology. Our experiences should help us (re)think our assumptions about technology. Critical thinking is expected. Also, I expect you to point to specific passages in our discussions. Be ready to do so every class period.

Work Requirements

Students in this course are expected to be able to compose unified, coherent documents nearly free of mechanical, logical, or structural errors. Students should also strive for writing clear and concise prose. The ability to read advanced college-level texts critically is also a requirement. I will provide additional requirements on the class website. The final exam period will be used as a presentation day for students' to present their projects. Time (limits) will be based on enrollment. Our final exam day is Tuesday, December 12, 2017 from 6:30-9:15 pm. Please let me know ASAP if there are any other exam conflicts with your schedules.

Assignments and Grading Policy

Assignments	pts.		pts.	Grading Scale
Technology and You, a reflective essay	100	Canvas Posts	150	A= 90 – 100
Social Construction of Technology essay	200	Participation	150	B= 80 – 89
Leading Class Discussion	100	Class Notes	100	C= 70 – 79
Technology Project	150			D= 60 – 69
Technology Project Presentation	50			F= Below 60
		Total	1000	

Definition of A, B, C, D, and F Grades

Remember, your final grade is a combination of the eight assignments above. An 'A' means your work was excellent—not mediocre, average, or just good. A 'B' means your work was good—not quite excellent but definitely above average and thoughtful. A 'C' means your work was barely adequate enough to satisfy the assignment—showing a lack of effort or thought for the assignment guidelines. A 'D' or 'F' usually means assignments were late, missing, or incomplete—often this work does not demonstrate appropriate college-level work for a 6000-level course.

Late Work

An assignment is due at the beginning of the class for which it was assigned. Honestly, there is no excuse for assignments being late in a 6000-level class, but I have a policy anyway: All late work will reduce the assignment by 10% (an entire letter grade) for each class period it is late. Late Canvas posts will not be accepted. If you will not or cannot be in class on the day a paper assignment is due, you should make arrangements to get the paper to me via another student, turn it in early, or put it in my mailbox. I will not accept assignments attached to e-mails. Please discuss any problems you may have regarding attendance or late work before class if at all possible. Remember, you are responsible for making up all work missed. Something I've learned from past semesters is that if you don't turn things in on time early in the semester, you end up not turning other things in on time (or at all). Do your best to get all your work in to me on time. If you are absent, get the information from another student. Do not expect me to e-mail the class notes to you. Of course, never e-mail me and ask, "so...like, Dr. Toscano, man...did we...like...you know...do anything the other day in class?"

Participation

This is not a drill-and-skill type of course. I expect everyone to be involved in class discussions, which are extremely important for critical thinking. You must contribute to class discussions. Fifteen percent (15%) of your grade is based on participation. The is no supplement for engaging in class discussions. If you're concerned about your participation grade because you're shy, get over it now, or reconsider your enrollment in this course. Telling me at the end of November that you didn't participate because you're the quiet type or because you didn't understand what "thoughtful" meant will be too late. Even worse, e-mailing me after the semester is over to complain that participation isn't a "valid" class assignment is too late. The purpose of discussions is for students to have control over their own learning and to reinforce critical thinking generally and dialogic exchange of ideas specifically. Participation is an extremely important component of critical thinking. Taking good notes on the reading (which is required in this class) will help you recall important aspects of the text to discuss in class.

Attendance

I will take attendance every day. It is very important that you attend every class in order to keep up with the work and reading. Your grade will be lowered after missing 2 classes. Your final grade will be lowered by a full letter grade for each day missed beyond 2 absences. After 4 absences you will receive a failing grade for the course. Please make an effort to come to every class on time. Don't just skip class because you feel you have two "free" days. Save your absences for emergencies. There are no such things as excused absences. Only students participating in UNCC sponsored activities (with the proper documentation) will not be penalized for missing class. I will ask you to request a meeting with the Dean of Students if you have situations that you feel should allow you an exception to missing more than 2 classes. Cars break down, parking is limited, students get sick, and traffic is brutal, but class still happens. Your participation may also be lowered for excessive tardiness.

Important Dates and Administrative Information

The syllabus schedule on the last two pages has important dates for readings, tests, and exams. Students are responsible for not only knowing course deadlines but also knowing UNC Charlotte deadlines (drop/add, billing, vacation, etc.). Please visit the following link for the registrar's calendar: http://registrar.uncc.edu/calendar.

Academic Integrity

All UNC Charlotte students have the responsibility to be familiar with and to observe the requirements of *The UNC Charlotte Code of Student Academic Integrity*. This Code forbids cheating, fabrication, or falsification of information, multiple

submission of academic work, plagiarism, abuse of academic materials (such as Library books on reserve), and complicity in academic dishonesty (helping others to violate the Code). **Any further specific requirements or permission regarding academic integrity in this course will be stated by the instructor, and are also binding on the students in this course.** Students who violate the Code can be punished to the extent of being permanently expelled from UNC Charlotte and having this fact recorded on their official transcripts. The normal penalty is zero credit on the work involving dishonesty and further substantial reduction of the course grade. In almost all cases, the course grade is reduced to "F." If you do not have a copy of the Code, you can view it on **UNC Charlotte's Academic Integrity** website at http://integrity.uncc.edu/. Standards of academic integrity will be enforced in this course. Students are expected to report cases of academic dishonesty they become aware of to the course instructor who is responsible for dealing with them.

If you try to pass off any work in full or part as your own without proper credit being given to the original source—you will receive an 'F' in this course.

In addition to the above identification of Academic Dishonesty, students should be aware of technology-mediated concerns related to Academic Integrity. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "integrity" as "The condition of having no part or element taken away or wanting; undivided or unbroken state; material wholeness, completeness, entirety." A second definition states that integrity means "The condition of not being marred or violated; unimpaired or uncorrupted condition; original perfect state; soundness." Therefore, anything that draws students' attention away from course activities and goals is a violation of academic integrity because it corrupts the soundness and condition of learning. For instance, engaging in critical thinking/awareness is a sound, perfect state activity for this course; on the other hand, **devoting attention to facebook, texting/messaging, non-class-related Web surfing or e-mailing, etc. violates or corrupts the learning goals of this course.** Although we may point to the Internet in general and social media sites specifically in our discussions of 21st-Century communication, engrossing oneself in them during class to "catch up with friends" divides your attention and may be distracting to members of this class. This violation is as serious as plagiarism and will result in an 'F' in this course. This syllabus section is your warning. Unless a student has a registered condition with disabilities resource center, you are not to use the lab computers, your laptops, or handheld devices to take notes.

You will also receive an 'F' in the course for other academic integrity violations specified on the UNC Charlotte Integrity website. **Do not expect another warning—this is it.** Please see me if you need further clarification regarding cheating, fabrication or falsification of information, multiple submission of academic work, plagiarism, or complicity in academic dishonesty. Again, so there's no confusion, you will most likely fail the course if you violate any part of the academic integrity code.

Statement of Academic Freedom

I strongly encourage students to use class as a place for free inquiry and intellectual growth. Although we as a class will not always agree or be comfortable with the views of others, every student has the right to his or her own tastes and convictions (but don't mistake those for sound, well-reasoned opinions). I promise to be fair and always support your right to look at the world from your own position, but I encourage all students to branch out and consider multiple perspectives. If you think texts have single, objectively reasoned meanings…well, you're about to get a radical new perspective in this course. Our biases filter our interpretations of the world around us. Family, culture, media, law, religion, etc. influence how we perceive the world. Your perspectives might be similar to those close to you, but your worldview isn't universally held. **I will not tolerate any harassment or abuse (emotional or physical) or any instance where others adversely affect students' learning. Remember, harassment isn't just verbal—making harassing or abusive posts won't be tolerated.**

Instructional Modifications

Students who have a condition that may impair their ability to complete assignments or otherwise satisfy course criteria are encouraged to meet with professionals to identify, discuss, and document any feasible instructional modifications or accommodations. Please inform me about circumstances as soon as possible. I don't need specifics, but I do need to know what accommodations to make. For information and assistance, contact the Disabilities Resource Center: http://ds.uncc.edu/.

Inclement Weather/Building Issues

Some buildings can have HVAC problems. Occasionally, the powers that be close buildings and classes are canceled because it is too brutally hot to remain inside. If a building related "issue" cancels class, continue to keep up with the class webpage, readings, and Canvas posts. The library has lots of space and many computers. We'll pick up where we left off on the syllabus when we return to class. This also goes for inclement weather.

Right to Make Changes

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus when necessary to meet learning objectives, to compensate for missed classes, or to make our lives easier.

Schedule for Readings and Assignments
(have readings and assignments done before class)

August 22	Introduction to the Course. Say Hello. Go over the syllabus. Discuss the following readings: Asimov, Isaac. "Cult of Ignorance." *Newsweek*, 21 Jan 1980, p. 19. Bazerman, Charles. "The Production of Technology and the Production of Human Meaning." *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1998, pp. 381-387. McLuhan, Marshall. "The Medium is the Message." *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Signet, 1964, pp. 7-21. (on Canvas)

August 29*	Barker & Jane, Ch. 1 & 2

*August 28th—Big day for the semester:
- **Last day to add, drop with no grade * 11:59 PM**
  If you're not registered, you will not be allowed to continue in the course
- **Last day to submit a grade replacement request * 11:59 PM**

September 5	Barker & Jane, Ch. 3

September 12	Winner, Langdon. "Technologies as Forms of Life." *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986, pp. 3-18. (on Canvas) Winner, Langdon. "Do Artifacts have Politics?" *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986, pp. 19-39. (on Canvas)

September 19*	Barker & Jane, Ch. 5

*September 18th— Deadline for ALL students to apply for December 2017 graduation

September 26 ***Workshop***	Technology and You Essay workshop Barker & Jane, Ch. 6 Oudshoorn, Nelly. "The Decline of the One-Size-Fits-All Paradigm, or, How Reproductive Scientists try to Cope with Postmodernity." *The Social Shaping of Technology*. 2nd ed. Eds. Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman. Philadelphia: Open UP, 1999, pp. 325-340. (on Canvas)

October 3 ****DUE****	**Technology and You, a reflective essay Due** Kuhn, Thomas S. "The Route to Normal Science." *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1962, pp. 10-22. (on Canvas) Fallows, James. "The American Army and the M-16 Rifle." *The Social Shaping of Technology*. 2nd ed. Ed. Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman. Philadelphia: Open UP, 1999, pp. 382-394. (on Canvas)

October 9th & 10th: No Class—Fall Break

| October 17 | Noble, David F. *The Religion of Technology*. Penguin, 1999. (entire book) |

| October 24 | Barker & Jane, Ch. 7 & 8 |

*October 24th: Last day to withdraw from courses with a "W" grade
Please review the new Withdrawal Policy before considering withdrawing from any course: http://provost.uncc.edu/policies/withdrawals

| October 31 *Workshop* | Social Construction of Technology Essay Workshop
Barker & Jane, Ch. 9
Weber, Rachel N. "Manufacturing Gender in Military Cockpit Design." *The Social Shaping of Technology*. 2nd ed. Ed. Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman. Philadelphia: Open UP, 1999, pp. 372-381. (on Canvas) |

| November 7 **DUE** | **Social Construction of Technology Essay Due**
Barker & Jane, Ch. 11
Cowan, Ruth Schwartz. "The Industrial Revolution in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the 20th Century." Eds. Terry S. Reynolds and Stephen H. Cutcliffe. *Technology and the West: A Historical Anthology from Technology and Culture*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997, pp. 291-313. (on Canvas) |

| November 14 | Barker & Jane, Ch. 12 (moved Ch. 13 to 11/28)
Heinlein, Robert A. "All You Zombies—" *The Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction*. Arthur B. Evans et. al. Eds. Wesleyan UP, 2010, pp. 324-336. (on Canvas) |

| November 21 | Moved Ch. 14 to 12/05
Dean, Jodi. "Introduction." *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*. Duke UP, 2009, pp. 1-18. (on Canvas)
Dean, Jodi. "Technology: The Promises of Communicative Capitalism." *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*. Duke UP, 2009, pp. 19-48. (on Canvas) |

| November 28 | Barker & Jane, Ch. 13
Lay, Mary M. "Feminist Theory and the Redefinition of Technical Communication." *The Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1991, pp. 348-370. (on Canvas)
Warren, Thomas L. "Cultural Influences on Technical Manuals." *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2002, pp. 111-123. (on Canvas) |

| December 5 **DUE** | **Finish Technology Projects**
Barker & Jane, Ch. 14 (last chapter of the book)
Final Presentation Workshop |

| December 12 | **Final Exam—Technology Project Presentations**
Unless we have to change it, please come during the regular class time, 6:30-9:15 pm
https://registrar.uncc.edu/printable-calendar?field_semester_tid=9&field_school_year_tid=29 |

Commencement May 16th