

Rhetoric of Technology **CMST 7966**

Professor: Stephanie Houston Grey, PhD

Office Hours: 3-4pm Wed.

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Objectives:

Around two million years ago early hominids generated a revolution in mammal behavior when they began to chip fist sized stones into hand axes. This would mark a watershed for our biosphere because it generated new forms of rationality, an abiding belief that nature could be controlled and a brain capable of projecting invisible cause and effect relationships between objects and events. As we progress to our own age we are beginning to grapple with the effects of this evolutionary adaptation that has made humans so successful. Human technology systems now permeate every aspect of our lives. They mediate our relationships, constitute our identities and regulate our actions. Technology is seen as both a site for liberation and an apparatus for control. We often find ourselves caught between two polarities. The first links technology to our collective fantasies of progress in which we see machines as a means toward achieving material wealth, social equality and salvation. On the other hand technology is also seen as the curse that we brought with us from the metaphorical garden. In these accounts it becomes a shadow force that inserts itself in our lives and separates us from the natural conditions that spawned us. This class will explore the ways that technology is seen to mediate our relationship to the world, to one another and even our own bodies. Here are our specific goals during the semester:

- Develop a theoretical understanding of technology as a mediated force in our world
- Understand the meaning of technology along the axis of liberation and control
- Develop critical frameworks for understanding the presence of technology in our lives
- Actively engage the literature of rhetoric and technology
- Engage in original research in the field of rhetoric and technology

Readings:

Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Arthur Kroker, *Exits to the Posthuman Future*. Cambridge: Polity, 2014.

Lewis Mumford, *Technics of Civilization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934.

Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. New York: Vintage, 1993.

Jim Ridolfo and William Hart Davidson Eds., *Rhetoric and the Digital Humanities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2015.

Robert Scharff & Val Dusek Eds., *Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition*.
UK: Blackwell, 2003.

Assignments:

Facilitations: Each class member will do one facilitations of the class readings. These will involve generating a set of discussion questions and observations directly pertaining to the readings. You should provide an outline of your thoughts about the readings and a very brief outline of the readings themselves. The facilitation will be worth 200 points.

Paper Proposal: For the assignment you will provide a breif description of your proposed final paper project. 50 points.

Literature Review: This short paper of 5-6 pages will contain a literature review of 15-20 sources relevant to your final research paper topic. 150 points.

First Draft: Each participant will write a convention level paper in association with the class. This rough draft of 15-20 pages will be worth 200 points.

Final Paper: The final paper of 25-30 pages will be submitted near the end of the term. It will be worth 200 points.

Presentation: Participants will present their papers in a convention style format at the end of class and field Q&A. The presentation will be worth 50 points.

Paper Feedback: You will be required to provide formal, written feedback on the papers and presentations of your colleagues twice during the term. The will occur after the draft stage and afte the final paper presentation. 75 points each for a total of 150 points.

I hope to arrange for us a Saturday tour of Cancer Ally. Details to follow. Not graded but I expect you all to attend.

Grading:

1000-980: A+
979-929: A
928-900: A-
899-880: B+
879-829: B
828-800: B-
799-780: C+
779-729: C
728-700:C-
699-680:D+
679-629:D
628-600: D-
599 and below F

Policies:

For LSU's policies on disability, explore this website:

<http://students.lsu.edu/disability>

For LSU's policies on plagiarism, explore this website:

<http://students.lsu.edu/saa/students/plagiarism>

Late Work:

Work more than 3 days late will receive a one letter grade reduction, and another letter grade reduction for each additional three days. Please keep up with your work

Schedule:

Aug 26: Introduction to Class

Sept. 2: Movie and Conversation: *Surviving Progress*. **Paper Proposal Due.**

Sept. 9: Read Scharff and Dusek, *Philosophy of Technology* (Part 1-2).

Sept. 16: Read Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*. Student Discussion Leader_____.

Sept. 23: Read Postman, *Technopoly*. **Literature Review Due.** Student Discussion Leader_____.

Sept. 30: Read Scharff and Dusek, *Philosophy of Technology* (Part 3-5).

Oct. 7: Read Haraway, *Simians, Women and Cyborgs*. Student Discussion Leader_____.

Oct. 14: Read Scharff and Dusek, *Philosophy of Technology* (Part 6). **Draft Due.**

Oct. 21: Workshop. **Feedback Responses Due.**

Oct. 28: Read Ridolfo and Davidson, *Digital Humanities*. Student Discussion Leader_____.

Nov. 4: Read Koker, *Exits to the Posthuman*. Student Discussion Leader_____.

Nov. 11: Individual Conferences/Toxic Tour TBA

Nov. 18: NCA Convention

Nov. 25: Thanksgiving

Dec 2: **Final Presentations. Final Papers Due.**

Finals Week: **Feedback Responses Due, Date TBA.**