

COMM 345 Social and Economic Implications of Communication Technologies
Spring 2008
Syllabus

Class meets: Tuesdays, Thursdays 9:30-10:50am
Instructor: Araba Sey
Office: ASC 227
Contact: sey@usc.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays, Thursdays 11 – 12noon

Course Objectives

This seminar is designed to critically examine past and ongoing developments in the creation, deployment and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the US and around the world. Our discussions will be guided by two broad considerations – issues of inequity in ownership, access and use of ICTs, as well as the challenges of predicting the outcomes of ICT use. At the end of this course, students should have a solid understanding of the diverse ways in which ICTs affect and are affected by society, and should be able to apply this understanding to their personal and professional lives.

Course Structure

The course will be organized into three sections. The first section will ground our discussions in theoretical perspectives on the relationship between technology and society. In the second section we will focus on perceptions of the impacts of ICTs on society. Section three will turn our attention to a selection of issues that characterize debates about the social and economic impacts of ICTs.

Course Requirements

Attendance

You are expected to attend classes regularly. Attendance will be taken but you will not be penalized for missing classes. However, attendance will be taken into account when assigning your final grade, especially for borderline cases. If you miss a class it is your responsibility to find out from your colleagues what was covered that day, and to keep up to date on any assignments or changes in schedules.

Participation

You should come to class having done the readings assigned for the day and prepared to contribute to class discussions and exercises. Participation will constitute 15% of your final grade.

Required Reading

Ithiel de Sola Pool (1983). *Technologies of freedom*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap.

Additional readings will be distributed in class or made available online.

You should also follow ICT-related news each week using your preferred source of news.

Assignments

Midterm exam: There will be a midterm examination on Thursday, March 13.
Group report: In groups of two or three, you will research and summarize news reports on ICTs in a selected part of the world. Further details will be discussed in class.

Term Paper: You will prepare a 10-12 page paper on a research topic related to the subject matter of this class. Your topic should be cleared with me in advance in the form of a one-page proposal. The proposal will carry 5% of the total grade for the paper.

One-page proposal is due in class on April 1

In-class presentations on April 22, 24, 29, and May 1.

Final paper is due on May 13.

In-class exercises: We will conduct a number of exercises in class related to the lecture material. This will contribute to your participation grade.

Evaluation

Participation: 15%
Midterm exam: 25%
Group report: 30%
Term paper: 30%

Grade Structure

A = 90 – 100%
B+ = 85 – 89%
B = 80 – 84%
C+ = 75 – 79%
C = 70 – 74%
D = 60 – 69%

Academic Integrity

The University is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct in all academic pursuits. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers, or other assignments, will receive a failing grade in the course and may be dismissed as a major in communication. See section 11 of Scampus.

Students with Disabilities and Academic Accommodations

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776. For additional information, see the Web page of the Disabilities Services Program at:

<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/asn/DSP>

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

Tues, Jan 15 Introductions, syllabus overview, goals and expectations
Thur, Jan 17 Technologies of freedom?: ICTs through the ages Readings: <i>Technologies of Freedom</i> , Chpt 1

WEEK 2

Tues, Jan 22 Theories of technology and society Readings: R. Heilbroner, (1994). Do machines make history? In M. R. Smith & L. Marx. (Eds.). <i>Does technology drive history? The dilemma of technological determinism</i> (pp. 54-65). Cambridge, MA: MIT
Thur, Jan 24 Theories of technology and society Readings Thomas Hughes, (1994). Technological momentum. In M. R. Smith & L. Marx. (Eds.). <i>Does technology drive history? The dilemma of technological determinism</i> (pp.102-113). Cambridge, MA: MIT

WEEK 3

Tues, Jan 29 Theories of technology and society Readings Robin Williams and David Edge, (1996). The social shaping of technology. <i>Research Policy</i> , 25, 865-899. (Read sections 1 and 2)
Thur, Jan 31 Theories of technology and society Readings J. Carroll, et al (2002). A field study of perceptions and use of mobile phones by 16-22 year olds. <i>JITTA</i> , 4(2), 49-61 Group Report 1

WEEK 4

Tues, Feb 5 Perspectives on ICTs and society Readings Ian Miles (1996). The information society: Competing perspectives on the social and economic implications of information and communication technologies. In W. Dutton (Ed.). <i>Information and communication technologies: Visions and realities</i> (pp.37-52). NY: Oxford University Press.
Thur, Feb 7 Perspectives on ICTs and society Readings Roger Silverstone (1996). Future imperfect: Information and communication technologies in everyday life. In W. Dutton (Ed.). <i>Information and communication technologies: Visions and realities</i> (pp.217-231). NY: Oxford University Press. Group Report 2

WEEK 5

Tues, Feb 12 Perspectives on ICTs and society Readings: Lord Boers (2005). <i>The triumph of technology</i> . Reich Lecture.
Thur, Feb 14 Implications of technological change: New ICTs Readings <i>Technologies of Freedom</i> , Chpt 3 Group Report 3

WEEK 6

<p>Tues, Feb 19 Implications of technological change: Globalization</p> <p>Readings</p> <p>Christine Ogan, (2007). Communication technology and global change. In C. A. Lin & D. J. Atkin (Eds.). <i>Communication technology and social change: Theory and implications</i> (pp17-35). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.</p> <p>Terry Flew & Stephen McElhinney, (2002). Globalization and the structure of new media industries. In L. Lieuvrouw & S. Livingstone (Eds.). <i>Handbook of new media: Social shaping and consequences of ICTs</i> (pp304-319). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.</p>
<p>Thur, Feb 21 Implications of technological change: Globalization</p> <p>No new readings</p> <p>Group Report 4</p>

WEEK 7

<p>Tues, Feb 26 Digital divides: Access and usage</p> <p>Readings</p> <p>Castels et al (2007). <i>Mobile Communication and society: A global perspective</i>. Cambridge, MA: MIT.</p> <p>Chpt 1 – The diffusion of wireless communication in the world.</p>
<p>Thur, Feb 28 Digital divides</p> <p>Readings</p> <p>Castells et al (2007). <i>Mobile Communication and society: A global perspective</i>. Cambridge, MA: MIT.</p> <p>Chpt 2 – The social differentiation of wireless communication users.</p> <p>Robin Williams and David Edge, (1996). The social shaping of technology. <i>Research Policy</i>, 25, 865-899. (Read section 3.3)</p> <p>Group Report 5</p>

WEEK 8

<p>Tues, Mar 4 Digital divides</p> <p>Readings</p> <p>Lisa Servon & Randal Pinkett (2006). Narrowing the digital divide: The potential and limits of the US community technology movement. In Castells (Ed.). <i>The network society: A cross-cultural perspective</i> (pp319-338). Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.</p>
<p>Thurs Mar 6 Media and ICT industries</p> <p>Readings</p> <p>William H. Kling (2006). <i>Preserving public media in an era of change</i>. The James L. Loper Lecture in Public Service Broadcasting, November 16, Los Angeles, California.</p> <p>The Economist (October 14, 2006). <i>A survey of telecoms convergence</i>.</p>

WEEK 9

<p>Tues Mar 11 Review</p>
<p>Thur Mar 13: Midterm exam</p>

[MARCH 17 – 21 SPRING BREAK]

WEEK 10

<p>Tues Mar 25 ICTs and the new economy</p> <p>Readings</p> <p>Christopher Freeman (1996). The two-edged nature of technological change: Employment and unemployment. In W. Dutton (Ed.). <i>Information and communication technologies: Visions and realities</i> (pp.19-36). NY: Oxford University Press.</p>
<p>Thur Mar 27 ICTs and socioeconomic change</p> <p>Readings</p> <p>Brian Winston (2007). Let them eat laptops: The limits of technicism. <i>International Journal of Communication, 1</i>, 170-176</p>

WEEK 11

<p>Tues Apr 1 ICTs, the workplace, and the home</p> <p>Readings</p> <p>James Stewart (2003). The social consumption of information and communication technologies (ICTs): Insights from research on the appropriation of new ICTs in the domestic environment. <i>Cogn, Tech Work, 5</i>, 4-14.</p> <p>Revisit the sections of the readings for Week 4 [Miles (1996) & Silverstone (1996)] that relate to the workplace and the home</p> <p>*One-page term paper proposal due</p>
<p>Thur Apr 3 ICTs, politics, and civic engagement</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Sara Bentivegna (2002). Politics and new media. In L. Lieuvrouw & S. Livingstone (Eds.). <i>Handbook of new media: Social shaping and consequences of ICTs</i> (pp50-61). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.</p> <p>Castells et al (2006). Electronic communication and socio-political mobilization: a new form of civil society. <i>Global Civil Society 2005/6</i>, 266-285</p>

WEEK 12

<p>Tuesday, Apr 8 ICTs and privacy</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Lawrence Lessig (2006). <i>Code Version 2.0</i>. Chpt 11.</p> <p>Louise Story & Brad Stone (November 30, 2007). Facebook retreats on online tracking. <i>The New York Times</i>.</p>
<p>Thur Apr 10 ICTs and intellectual property</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Lawrence Lessig (2006). The internet under siege. In A. Teich (Ed.). <i>Technology and the future</i> (pp.282-292). 10th Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.</p> <p>Additional Reading:</p> <p>Lawrence Lessig (2006). <i>Code Version 2.0</i>. Chpt 10</p>

WEEK 13

Tues Apr 15 Regulating ICTs

Readings:

Tom Forester (2006). Computer ethics. In A. Teich (Ed.). *Technology and the future* (pp.265-281). 10th Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Thur Apr 17 Forecasting ICT-related change

Readings

David Nye (2004). Technological prediction: A promethean problem. In M. Sturken, D. Thomas & S. Ball-Rokeach (Eds.). *Technological visions: The hopes and fears that shape new technologies* (pp. 159-176). PA: Temple University Press.

P. Ceruzzi (2006). An unforeseen revolution: computers and expectations, 1935-1985. In A. Teich (Ed.). *Technology and the future* (pp. 253-264). 10th Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Additional reading

Carolyn Lin, (2007). An integrated communication technology and social change typology. In C. A. Lin & D. J. Atkin (Eds.). *Communication technology and social change: Theory and implications* (pp.283-307). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

WEEK 14

Tues Apr 22 Student presentations

Thur Apr 24 Student presentations

WEEK 15

Tues Apr 29 Student presentations

Thur May 1 Student presentations

***May 13: Term paper due**