University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies (COMS) 623 S-01
Social Contexts of Technology

Winter 2017
SS 202
Monday, Jan 13 – Monday April 6
Monday 11:00 am – 1:45 pm

Instructor: Gregory Taylor
Office: SS308
Office Phone: (403) 220-6206
E-Mail: gregory.taylor2@ucalgary.ca
Office Hours: Wednesday, 10 -12:00 or by appointment
Webpage: https://commfilm.ucalgary.ca/manageprofile/profiles/gregory-taylor

Course Description

This course will investigate key theories, issues and debates concerning the origins, roles, uses and governance of technology in contemporary societies. Through a series of instructor and student-mediated discussions, student presentations and individual research projects, students will explore key arguments and approaches relating to technology as a central issue in the analysis of social, political and cultural concerns. Students will discuss these ideas critically and contextualize them against current social issues and debates.

Objectives of the Course

- To familiarize students with seminal theoretical and empirical perspectives on technology and society from a variety of influential intellectual perspectives.
- To enable students to formulate original critical perspectives and arguments about technology in contemporary society that are informed by knowledge and evidence.
- To build a solid multidisciplinary foundation drawn from different intellectual perspectives including communications studies, science and technology studies, political economy, and philosophy, among others, that will equip students to pursue advanced research related to technology and society.

Course Organization:
Through lectures, readings, presentations, class discussions, and course assignments, students will participate in:

- Instructor-mediated discussions
- Student-led Seminars

Textbooks and Readings

Harris, M. (2015). *The End Of Absence: Reclaiming What We've Lost In A World Of Constant Connection*: HarperCollins.

Students may also wish to purchase a copy of Andrew Feenberg's *Questioning Technology*; however, it is available online via the library website.

Students are expected to have all readings completed prior to scheduled class times in order to contribute effectively during class discussions and activities.

Additional required readings to be posted or linked on D2L throughout the semester.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops are permitted for note taking only. **iPods, cellphones and gaming devices may not be used at all during class.** Please respect the instructor and your fellow students. Improper use of electronic devices will impact your participation grade.

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation	(ongoing)	10%
D2L Short Writing (2 X 10%)	**First by Feb 6**	20%
	Second by April 3	
Presentation		20%
Midterm (closed book)	**March 13**	20%
Final Essay	**April 10**	30%

All assignments and exams must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Participation—10%: Due date—ongoing

Students are expected to not only be in attendance every week, but to contribute significantly to the class discussions via individual comments, in-class group

work activities, and presentations. In a small class such as this, it is imperative that students attend each class. Students can help each other by participating in discussions led by their colleagues.

Desire2Learn Short Writing Assignment —20% (2 X 10%): Due date— various

Throughout the course, students will be required to write a total of two (2) responses to course readings. The first assignment must be completed **within the first four weeks of class (by Feb 6).** This assignment is about your reflections on the readings – therefore the responses are due before the class in which the reading will be discussed. Assignments will not be accepted after the class. Students should strengthen and develop their analysis by drawing upon their own experiences while demonstrating clear knowledge of the work cited. Suggestions for topics are posted with the weekly readings but student may choose another perspective. The class on April 3 is the final class to submit the second short writing assignment.

Each response must be between 600 and 800 words, equivalent to approximately three (3) pages double-spaced. Responses must critically interrogate the text and analyze its implications. Avoid excessive summary. *Responses must demonstrate sound analysis of the ideas from assigned readings and include specific quotes.* Other sources may be used if formally cited but are not required.

These assignments are to be uploaded to D2L.

Midterm—20%: March 13

A midterm examination will test knowledge on all course readings up to this point in the course and content presented in lectures. It is essential that students stay up to date on all course material, even if not covered in detail in class. Midterms must be taken in class unless documentation is provided for a legitimate absence. Possible testing formats include short answers, and/or essay questions. The exam is closed book.

Presentations – 20 %: Various dates

All students will be asked to lead a class discussion on the readings for an assigned week. There are two parts to this assignment: a 15-20 minute presentation on the week's readings; and leading the class discussion for approximately 30 minutes providing leading questions and facilitating discussion among the students.

Presentations should highlight major themes of the reading, identify and analyze the author's key points, and offer an informed reflection of the piece in the context of contemporary communication.

Final Essay—30%: Due date —April 10 (start of class)

Students will submit a 2000 - 2500 word, eight (8) to ten (10) page research essay, excluding bibliography. The final essay must be printed in a double-spaced format (12 font), paginated, and with your name, course & professor, a title and a properly cited bibliography. Essays must have a clear thesis statement to be argued throughout the body of the text. Essays must demonstrate strong research in support of the thesis.

Students will ask one critical question about the relationship between technology and society and establish a clear thesis they will defend. The essay should build upon a theme identified in class discussion or in one or more of the articles/works under examination throughout the course. The point must be unified throughout and introduced by a clear thesis statement in the introduction.

Sources should include eight (8) academic works that do not appear in the course syllabus. Other non-academic material may be used to support your thesis but must be from a credible source and should not form the foundation of your essay.

All references must be properly and fully cited in a consistent format (APA or Chicago preferred).

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Submission of Assignments: Please hand in your final essay directly to your instructor.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf .

Please note:
1.   Students seeking accommodations for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors directly. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
2.   When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
3.   For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calenda*r at http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html and http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html

Writing Skills Statement
Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see http://commfilm.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support

Grading & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film
Work in this course will be graded using letter grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department of Media, Communication and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted

to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Department grade scale equivalents	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	00 - 49.99%	0%

Plagiarism
Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436 . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor TFDL, http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support).

Academic Misconduct
For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html

Research Ethics
Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES	http://grad.ucalgary.ca/home or **403-220-4938**
CAMPUS SECURITY • **Calgary Police Service** • **Emergency Text Messaging** • **Emergency Evacuation & Assembly** • **Safewalk Program**	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ **403-220-5333** **403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911** http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (**220-5333). For**

	more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support • **IT help line**	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE • **Writing Support Services** • **Student Services Mobile App**	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION • **Student Ombudsman**	http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/ http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/ombudsperson **(403) 220-6420 or ombuds@ucalgary.ca**
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS • **Faculty of Arts Reps**	http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html
SU WELLNESS CENTRE • **Counselling Services** • **Health Services** • **Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE** • **Online resources and tips**	**403-210-9355** (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health **403-266-HELP (4357)** http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.

Week 1 (Jan 9): The End of Absence (Part One, pages 1-109)

Week 2 (Jan 16): The End of Absence (Part Two)

Week 3 (Jan 23): The Question of Technology

Feenberg, Andrew. Questioning Technology. Florence, US: Routledge, 2012. ProQuest ebrary. Chapter 1 Technology, Philosophy, Politics; Chapter Three: Environmentalism and the Politics of Technology.

Week 4 (Jan 30): Canada: Technological Nationalism

George Grant (1986) "Thinking about Technology" in *Technology and Justice*, Toronto: Anasi. Available as ebook in U of Calgary library.

Charland, M. (1986). Technological Nationalism. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory/Revue canadienne de theorie politique et sociale, X*(1-2), 196-220. Available via D2L

Week 5 (Feb 6): The Digital Divide

Haight, M., Quan-Haase, A., & Corbett, B. A. (2014). Revisiting the digital divide in Canada: the impact of demographic factors on access to the internet, level of online activity, and social networking site usage. *Information, Communication & Society, 17*(4), 503-519.

Skaletsky, M., Galliers, R. D., Haughton, D., & Soremekun, O. (2016). Exploring the Predictors of the International Digital Divide. *Journal of Global Information Technology Management, 19*(1), 44-67.

Week 6 (Feb 13): Technological Determinism (Toronto School)

Harold Adams Innis, "The Bias of Communication" in *The Bias of Communication*, Second Edition (2). Toronto, CA: University of Toronto Press, 2008. P 33-60. Available via ebook at U of Calgary library.

Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964. Introduction.

Feb 20 – No Class – Reading Week

Week 7 (Feb 27): Net Neutrality

Lawford, John, Lo, Janet, and De Santis, Michael (2009) *Staying Neutral : Canadian Consumers and the Fight for Net Neutrality*. Ottawa, CA: Public Interest Advocacy Centre. P 11-39

Marsden, C.T. (2010). *Net Neutrality: Towards a Co-regulatory Solution*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. Chapter One and Chapter Nine.

Week 8 (March 6): Technology and Democracy

Feenberg, Andrew *Questioning Technology*. Florence, US: Routledge, 2012. ProQuest ebrary. Chapter 6 Democratizing Technology

Barney, Darin (2006). Be Careful What You Wish For: Dilemmas of Democracy and Technology. *Canadian Journal of Communication, 30*(4).

Week 9 (March 13): ****Mid Term Exam***

Week 10 (March 20): Social Constructivism

Langdon Winner. "Do Artefacts Have Politics?" from *The Whale and the Reactor: a Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. pp 19-39.

Elam, Mark. "Anti anticonstructivism, or Laying the Fears of a Langdon Winner to Rest". Science, Technology and Human Values, Vol 19 (1994)

Langdon Winner. "Reply to Mark Elam".

Week 11 (March 27): Infrastructure Studies/ Technology and Gender

Star, S. L. (1999). The ethnography of infrastructure. *American behavioral scientist, 43*(3), 377-391.

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies, 14*(3), 575-599.

Week 12 (April 3): Individual Meetings on Final Papers

A schedule for meetings will be created March 27.

Week 13 (April 10): Revisiting Michael Harris

*****Final Papers Due*****