This course explores the different ways of thinking historically about the role that technology has played in western history. The underlying assumption is that technology is simultaneously a reflection of social and cultural values, and a factor in shaping the continuous developments and transformations of those values.

This is a graduate-level reading seminar. Our goal is to become familiar with the scholarly research traditions in the discipline, to explore relationships with other disciplinary sub-fields – particularly the history of science and the history of medicine, and to explore new historiographical horizons. Since a comprehensive survey of all technological developments – even in the modern industrial period and post-industrial – would be impossible to achieve in a single course, the syllabus has been constructed to focus on a few particular themes and issues.

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Revision Date: December 20, 2008
Course Format:
The seminar will meet weekly on Tuesday afternoons from 1:30-4:30 pm in Williams Hall, Room 306.

In addition to doing the readings and preparing for discussions, each participant will, over the course of the semester, be asked to provide a list of discussion points/questions with which to open the seminar. Students can work in small groups to prepare these discussion agendas, and they must be distributed to the group on the evening before the seminar. In addition, each student will select one supplementary readings to review.

All of the mandatory readings for this course are widely-read books. There should be lots of copies floating around the library, the department, and local bookstores. Rather than pay full, academic-press prices at the university bookstore, you should order them online at Amazon.com, Powells.com, Abebooks.com, etc. The articles will be made available online at the course Blackboard site.

Course Schedule:

I  Introduction (Jan 20)
   Reading(s):

II  Big Picture (Jan 27)
   Reading(s):

   Reports:

III  Defining the Field (Feb 3)
   Reading(s):
   For this week, we will be reviewing the major journals in the history of technology, which include Technology & Culture and History & Technology.

IV  Technology and Imperialism (Feb 10)
   Reading(s):

Reports:

V American Exceptionalism (Feb 17)
Reading(s):

Reports:

VI The Question of Determinism (Feb 24)
Reading(s):
Merritt Roe Smith and Leo Marx. Does Technology Drive History: The Dilemma of Technological Determinism. MIT Press Cambridge, 1994

Reports:
VII It's Electrifying! (Mar 3)
Reading(s):

Reports:
Claude Fischer. America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940. University of CA Press, 1992

VIII Spring Break (Mar 10)
Party on!

IX S.C.O.T. (Mar 17)
Reading(s):


**Reports:**


**X Users Matter (Mar 24)**

**Reading(s):**


**Reports:**


**XI Labor History (Mar 31)**

**Reading(s):**


**Reports:**


**XII History from Below (Apr 7)**

**Reading(s):**


**Reports:**


XIII  Technology & Gender (Apr 14)

Reading(s):

Reports:

XIV  Special Reports I (Apr 21)
This week each of you will be reading and reporting on a book of your choice.

XV  Special Reports II (Apr 28)
This week each of you will be reading and reporting on a book of your choice.