Schedule of Topics and Readings

Week 1: Introduction

8/24 Course Overview
8/26 Cultural Attitudes toward Technology -- Introductory Examples: Utopianism, Determinism, and Romanticism

Assignment: Two-Page Introductory Essay [Due 9/2]

Week 2: Views of Technological Change: Looking at the Distant Past

8/31 Ancient Technologies: Contemporary Values and Reconstructing the Past
9/2 The Dark Ages? Technological Worlds around the Globe in the Medieval Era [Two-Page Introductory Essay Due at the Beginning of Class]

Reading: Pacey, *Technology in World Civilization*, pp. 1-57; Alexander Stille, “The Sphinx, Virtual and Real” – excerpt from *The Future of the Past* [handout]

Week 3: Conquest, Empire, and Industry: Technological Considerations

9/7 The Technologies of Renaissance and Revolution
9/9 The Circulation of Technical Knowledge, Products, and Power in the Modern Era


Week 4: Technological Encounters across World Regions

9/14 Case Study of How Technology “Moves”: Railroads
9/16 *Workshop*: Political, Commercial, and Ethical Questions in the Development of 21st-century Technologies from a Global (rather than National) Perspective

[Take-Home Essay Exam #1 Questions Given Out / Due 9/23]


Week 5: Classic Themes: Technology and War

9/21 Industrial Development and the Future of War in the 19th Century
9/23 Ironclad Icons

[Take Home Essay Exam #1 Due at the Beginning of Class]

Reading: Mindell, *War, Technology and Experience*, pp. 1-60

Week 6: Classic Themes: Technology and “the Modern”


Reading: Mindell, *War, Technology and Experience*, pp. 61-150; excerpt from David Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History since 1900* (Oxford U Pr, 2007) [access on e-reserve]
Week 7: The Social and Cultural Contexts of Modern Technologies

10/5  Workshop: Comparing “War, Technology, and Experience” in the Light of Recent History -- The Persian Gulf War (1990-1991)
[Take-Home Essay Exam #2 Questions Given Out / Due 10/14]

10/7  Responses to New Technologies in the post-Civil War US: Edison’s America

Reading: Carroll Pursell, “War in the Age of Intelligent Machines,” from White Heat: People and Technology (UC Pr, 1994), pp. 144-167 and Samuel C. Florman, “War, Peace and Freedom,” from The Introspective Engineer (St. Martin’s Pr, 1996), pp. 67-80 [access both on e-reserve]


Week 8: The Inventor as Culture Hero

10/12  America’s Edison
10/14  The Independent Inventor circa 1900: Comparison of Edison and the Wright Brothers (Film: The Wright Stuff / PBS)
[Take-Home Essay Exam #2 Questions Due at the Beginning of Class]

Reading: Collins and Gitelman, Thomas Edison, pp. 36-127

Week 9: Machine-Made America

10/19  The Independent Inventor circa 1930: Comparison of Edison, the Wrights, and Philo Farnsworth (Film: Big Dream, Small Screen / PBS)
10/21  Workshop: Edison Documents
[Take-Home Essay Exam #3 Questions Given Out / Due 10/28]

Reading: Collins and Gitelman, Thomas Edison, pp. 128-187; Strasser, Waste and Want, pp. 21-52

Week 10: Work and Waste: Taylored Lives

10/26  Technology and the Push for Efficiency, Productivity, and Systems
10/28  Social Ramifications: Waste and Want (Film: The Electric Home / Buster Keaton, 1922)
[ Take-Home Essay Exam #3 Questions Due at the Beginning of Class]


Week 11: Technologies of Abundance and Affluence

11/2  Technology & Consumption: The Rising Standard of Living
11/4  Comparative Case Study: China (Film: World in the Balance: China Revs Up)

Week 12: The Global Dynamics of the After-effects of Technological Innovation and Mass Consumption

11/9  Computer Lab Session – Exploring Global Garbage
11/11 Workshop: Waste on a World-wide Scale
[Take-Home Essay Exam #4 Questions Handed Out / Due on 11/18]


Week 13: What’s New about “New” Media?

11/16  From “Do Not Fold, Spindle or Mutilate” to Personal Computing
[Take-Home Essay Exam #4 Due at the Beginning of Class]

Reading: Vaidhyanathan, Anarchist in the Library, Introduction and pp. 1-64

Week 14: Binary Options?

11/23  The Open Source Movement: More than Digital? (Film: Revolution OS)
[Two-Part Take-Home Final Essay Exam Questions Handed Out / Due on 12/15]

11/25  NO CLASS -- THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Reading: Vaidhyanathan, Anarchist in the Library, pp. 65-95

Week 15: Technology’s Children: Growing Up Digital

11/30  Utopianism, Determinism, and Romanticism Revisited. Case Study: Film: digital_nation / PBS
12/2  Workshop: Using Historical Concepts to Reflect on Current Realities

Reading: Vaidhyanathan, Anarchist in the Library, pp. 97-130 & Conclusion (chapters 9-11 optional); David Nye, “Not Just One Future” pp. 209-226 from Technology Matters: Questions to Live With (MIT Pr, 2006) [access on e-reserve]

Week 16: The Past and Future of Technological Change: Conclusions

12/7  Conclusions: Where Do We Go From Here?
12/9  Final Essay Consultations

Final Take-Home Essay Exam Due:
WEDNESDAY, December 15th 1:30-3:30
in our classroom