L A K E H E A D U N I V E R S I T Y
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
Sociology 2455 FB
Computers and Society
Fall Term 2010
Monday 7:00 - 10:00 p.m. RC 0005
Sociology web-page address: http://sociology.lakeheadu.ca

Instructor: Walid Chahal   *Office: UC 0037*
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Course Focus:

In this course, we will critically examine the social construction of computer culture, computer user identity, and consumer demand. We will discuss their links to software production and development, as well as to advertising and marketing strategies. We will also analyze the impact of new computer technologies on employment, education (especially children's early education), class, gender and ethnic relations in the context of the organization of work and the global economy. We will draw on case studies from around the world and use a variety of sociological perspectives.

Required Reading Materials:

There are two required textbooks and one course reading package for this course.

1) Rose, Ellen. 2003. *User Error: Resisting Computer Culture*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

2) Scott-Dixon, K. 2004. *Doing It: Women Working in Information Technology*. Toronto: Sumach Press.

3) *Reading Package for Sociology 2455--Computers and Society*.

Course Topics:	**Required Readings**
Introduction	Rose, Introduction
1. The Mythology of Computer Use	Rose, chapter 1
2. The History of Computing	Rose, chapter 2
The Origin of the User as a Social Concept	
Sociology & Computer Technology	Pendakur & Harris (P & H--pp:19-32)
3. The Culture of Software Production	Rose, chapter 3
The Roots of Digital Culture	Millar, chapter 1
Current Theorizing about Digital Technology	
& Race, Class, & Gender	Millar, Chapter 2

Course Requirements:

There are **four** (4**) requirements** for this course.

1. *One assignment. Due* **November 1ˢᵗ** *.................……………………………20%*
   Every student chooses 1 article (around 10 pgs.) on any topic about <u>computers and society</u> from specific social science journals or books, or select internet sites, and sums up and critically analyzes the article. The student is expected to rely on analyses covered in class and in the reading, and to use at least one of the sociological perspectives for the analytical part of the paper. You are strongly encouraged to select a topic of specific interest to you.

   The assignment should be no more than **1500 words (5 pgs, db-spaced)** and be submitted (along with the article) **no later than November 1ˢᵗ**.

   The assignment must be formatted according to the ASA (American Sociological Association) Style Guide for referencing and citations. For more information, see the following website:
   http://www.queensu.ca/sociology/files/styleguiderevised%20NOV06.pdf

   Make sure you keep a backup copy of the assignment.

2. *One presentation..20%*

   Students need to work together in groups and divide the work evenly among the members of their group for this assignment. Every group will consist of <u>three</u> students, and every group is required to do the following:

   (**A***) In-Class Article-Presentation*
   Every group will be provided with (or will be asked to choose) an article dealing with one of the areas of <u>computers & society</u> from specific social science journals or books. The group is expected to present at least one article. The presenters should not only sum up the <u>main argument(s)/viewpoint or idea(s) of the article</u>, but also provide analyses of the article by making use of the concepts, theories and other material covered in class. It is important that the presenters understand their article well and effectively communicate its content to the rest of the students. The presenters should be prepared to lead the discussion and answer questions regarding their topic. They may use overheads or any other prop that will improve their presentation.
   (**B***) Short Film*--In addition to the article, students may choose to include a <u>short </u>film, or parts of a film (up to 5 minutes) in order to facilitate understanding of a particular part of their topic.

3. *Final exam (TBA)……………………….……...………………………50%*

   The format of this exam consists of both short-answer and short-essay questions, and may include multiple-choice questions. The exam covers all class work, lecture and reading material to date. It is not the instructor's aim to reproduce the same material that is covered in the assigned reading. The lecture material and discussions will complement, expand, and shed more light on those issues that are covered in the text and reading package.

4. *Class participation & critical reflection...............………………………10%*

    Class attendance is expected: In order to do well in this course, you must attend
    class on a regular basis. There will be substantial in-class discussions and much of the
    material covered in lectures will not be found in the reading. In order to participate in
    class discussions, it is important that you do the readings before coming to class. You
    must come to class ready to contribute to discussion in a thoughtful way, to ask
    questions, as well as critically reflect on the assigned readings. Students are
    strongly encouraged not to engage in private conversations during class lectures.

PLEASE NOTE:

THERE WILL BE A PENALTY FOR ASSIGNMENTS HANDED IN LATE.

*<u>**Plagiarism**</u> will not be tolerated and will be dealt with according to the University regulations. For more
information, see University Regulations section "**IX Academic Dishonesty,**" Lakehead University Calendar
10/11*: http://calendar.lakeheadu.ca/current/contents/regulations/univregsIXacdishon.html

Further, the student will be given additional information concerning course topics, course
requirements, evaluation procedures and other relevant material on the first day of class.

<u>Reading Package for Sociology 2455--Computers and Society</u>

Armstrong, Allison & Charles Casement. 1998. Chapters: 10 and 11, pp: 167-199 in *The Child and the
Machine: Why Computers May Put Our Children's Education at Risk.* Toronto: Key Porter Books.

Couture, Jean-Claude. 1997. "Teacher's Work: Living in the Culture of Insufficiency." Pp: 139-166 *in
Globalization and the future of Canadian Education, edited by* Marita Moll. Halifax: Fernwood.

Menzies, Heather. 1996. Pp: 3-19 *in Whose Brave New World? The Information Highway & the New
Economy*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Millar, Melanie Stewart. 1998. Chapters: 1 & 2, pp: 28- 43; 53-68 in *Cracking the Gender Code: Who
Rules the Wired World?* Toronto: Second Story Press.

Pendakur, Manjunath and Roma Harris. 2002. Pp:19-32; 56-64; 300- 335 in *Citizenship and Participation
in the Information Age*. Aurora, Ontario: Garamond Press.

Rifkin, Jeremy. 1995. Chapters: 3, 5, & 18, pp: 42-56; 69-80; 275-293 in *The End of Work: The Decline
of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era*. New York: Tarcher & Putnam.