

**L A K E H E A D U N I V E R S I T Y**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**Sociology 2455 FA**

**Computers and Society**

**Fall Term 2010**

**Wednesday 7:00 - 10:00 p.m. RC0005**

**Sociology web-page address: <http://sociology.lakeheadu.ca>**

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

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| 4. Computer Consumer & the User<br>The Impact of Advertising<br>Children & Advertising on the Net  | Rose, chapter 4<br>Film: “ <i>The Ad &amp; the Ego</i> ”<br>Recommended: Armstrong & Casement, chapter 8     |
| 5. Computer Users & Technical Knowledge<br>Scholarly Analyses of Computer Anxiety,<br>Technostress, & Computer Phobia  | Rose, chapter 5<br><br>Rose, chapter 6   |
| 6. The Youthful User & the Mythology of<br>Computer Use<br>The Use of Computer Technology in our<br>Children's Early Education & Computer Use<br>Learning, the Natural World & Computer Use  | Rose, chapter 7<br><br>Armstrong & Casement, chapter 10<br>Armstrong & Casement, chapter 11                  |
| 7. The Future of Canadian Education<br>& Computer Technology<br>The Future User &<br>Responsible Action  | Couture, Jean-Claude, pp:139-166<br><br>Rose, Conclusion   |
| 8. Employment & the Development<br>of the New Computer Technology<br>Visions of Technological Utopian<br>Women’s Work in the IT<br>Employment & the Global Economy   | Rifkin, Chapter 5<br>Rifkin, Chapter 3<br>Scott-Dixon, Introduction & chapter 1<br>Menzies, Heather, pp:3-19 |
| 9. Theorizing about Women’s Work Choices<br>in IT & Structural Relations of Gender,<br>Class & Race<br>Great Promises versus Material Realities<br>New Work versus Same Old & the Inequity<br>of the Labor Market<br>Looking Ahead | Scott-Dixon, chapter 2<br>Scott-Dixon, chapter 3<br><br>Scott-Dixon, chapter 4<br>Scott-Dixon, chapter 5     |
| 10. The Dawn of the Post-Market Era<br>Globalizing the Social Economy  | Rifkin, chapter 18   |
| 11. Perspectives on the Information Society<br>The Impact of Globalization<br>on Developing Countries—Pendakur & Harris (P & H)--R. Harindranath, pp:56-64   |  |
| 12. Citizenship & Democracy<br>Networks for Social Change:<br>the Anti-NAFTA Challenge<br>Resistance to World Trade Talks<br>Cyber-Activism Across National Borders  | P & H—S. Huyer, pp:300-309<br>P & H—M. Lemire, pp:310-321<br>P & H—K. O’Neill, pp:322-336                    |

## **Course Requirements:**

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

1. ***One assignment. Due November 3<sup>rd</sup> .....20%***

Every student chooses 1 article (around 10 pgs.) on any topic about computers and society 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 3<sup>rd</sup>**.

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 three 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 computers & society 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 main argument(s)/viewpoint or idea(s) of the article, 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 short 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.***

***Plagiarism*** 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.

**Reading Package for Sociology 2455--Computers and Society**

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.