



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology 2455 FA

Computers and Society

Fall Term 2014

Mondays: 7:00 - 10:00 p.m., AT-1001

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 include in our examination recent technological advances, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology and surveillance. We will draw on case studies from around the world and use a variety of sociological perspectives.

Required and Recommended Readings (Available at Lakehead University Bookstore)

- 1) Reading Package for *Sociology 2455FA—Computers and Society*.
- 2) Recommended (for the purpose of improving your writing skills): Northey, Margot, Lorne Tepperman and Patrizia Albanese. 2012. *Making Sense in the Social Sciences: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Date	Course Topics	Required Readings	Recommended Readings & Case Studies [Reserve]
Sept. 8	1) Introduction Theorizing about the Computer Technology		
Sept. 15	2) Political Economy Theories & the Social Context of the Digital Technology Sociology, Science & Computer Technology	McChesney, Chapter 1	Bauchspies et al, Preface & Chapter 1
Sept. 15	3) Cyber-Activism across National Borders Resistance to World Trade Talks	Hill, pp:11-15; 59-83.	<b>How Facebook Changed the World:</b> The Arab Spring (parts1-4): < <a href="http://vimeo.com/45410957">http://vimeo.com/45410957</a> >; < <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EnUzdkLWU">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EnUzdkLWU</a> >; Case Studies [Reserve]: Pendakur & Harris—M. Lemire, (pp:310-321); Pendakur & Harris—K. O'Neill, pp:322-335.
Sept. 22	4) The Use of Computer Technology in our Children's Early Education	Armstrong & Casement, Chapter 10	

	Learning, the Natural World & Computer Use The Future of Canadian Education & Computer Technologies	<b>Armstrong &amp; Casement</b> , Chapter 11	Case Study: The Future of Education: Reboot Required—Q & A: Don Tapscott' (CBC News, August 12, 2010): <a href="http://www.cbc.ca/news/story/2010/08/11/f-school-tapscott.html">http://www.cbc.ca/news/story/2010/08/11/f-school-tapscott.html</a>
	5)Technology-Mediated Social Relationship & Interaction Language, tech and Indigenous peoples	Living the Language - Canada: The Ktunaxa: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIPzR6_o4pI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIPzR6_o4pI</a>	<b>Anabel Quan-Haase</b> , pp:167-189  Case Study: Living the Language - Bolivia: The Aymara: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrAFT4NbG7k">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrAFT4NbG7k</a>
Sept. 22, 29	<i>Alone Together</i> —Digital tech & Social Relationships	<b>Turkle</b> , pp: 1X-XII	<b>Turkle</b> , 279-296
Sept. 29	6) Employment & the Development of the Computer Technology Visions of Technological Utopian	<b>Rifkin</b> , Chapter 3  <b>Rifkin</b> , Chapter 5	
Oct. 6	7) Women's Work in the IT Employment & the Global Economy <b>Review for the Test</b>	<b>Scott-Dixon</b> , pp:11-29; 30-40; <b>Menzies</b> , pp:3-19.	
Oct. 20	<b>Test 1</b>		
Oct. 27	8) Theorizing about Women's Work Choices in IT & Structural Relations of Gender, Class & Race Great Promises versus Material Realities New Work versus Same Old & the Inequity of the Labor Market Looking Ahead	<b>Scott-Dixon</b> , Chapter 2 (pp: 63-81).	Case Studies [Reserve]: Scott-Dixon, chapter 3 Scott-Dixon, chapter 4 Scott-Dixon, chapter 5
Nov. 3	9) Perspectives on the Information Society Capitalism, Democracy & the Internet Globalization & Markets & Inequality Globalizing the Social Economy	<b>Rifkin</b> , Chapter 18	Case Studies: McChesney, Chapter 2 [Reserve] <b>J. Stiglitz</b> (pp: 52-82); Winston—J. Stiglitz, "Making Globalization Work" (pp: 174-181).
Nov. 3 & 10	10) International Forum on Globalization The Impact of Globalization on Developing Countries Neo-Liberal Globalization & Markets & Inequality in Canada The Way Forward: Another World is Possible	<b>Winston</b> , "What Should be off-Limits to Globalization" (pp: 182-195). <b>McBride &amp; Whiteside</b> , pp: 58- 79; 106-111; <b>J. Stiglitz</b> , pp: 265-290.	Case Study: M. Pendakur & R. Harris — R. Harindranath <i>Citizenship and Participation in the Information Age</i> (pp:56-64) [Reserve]
Nov. 10	11) The Mythology of Computer Use The History of Computing The Culture of Software Production Computer Consumer & the User The Impact of Advertising Children & Advertising on the Net Analyses of Computer Anxiety, Technostress The Youthful User & Computer Use	<b>Rose</b> , Chapter 1 (pp:15-42).	Case Studies [Reserve]: Rose, Chapter 2; McChesney, Chapter 4 Rose, Chapter 3 Rose, Chapter 4 <i>"The Ad &amp; the Ego"</i> film Armstrong & Casement, chapter 8 Rose, Chapter 6 Rose, Chapter 7
Nov. 17	12) The Roots of Digital Culture The Political Economy of Communication & the Internet Current Theorizing about Digital Technology & Race, Class, & Gender <b>Review for the Test</b>	<b>Millar</b> , Chapter 1  <b>Millar</b> , Chapter 2	Case Study: McChesney, Chapter 3 [Reserve]
Nov. 24	<b>Test 2</b>		

Dec. 1	13) Citizenship, Democracy & the internet Computers, Information & Surveillance Technology	Winston— <b>J. Stanley &amp; B. Steinhardt</b> , "Bigger Monster, Weaker Chains" (pp: 222-235).	Case Study: McChesney, Chapter 5 [Reserve]
Dec. 1	14) Artificial Intelligence, Robotics & Nanotechnology "Nanoscience, Nanotechnology & Ethics: Promise & Peril" Biotechnology & Nanotechnology & Weapons of Mass Destruction	Winston— <b>B. Joy</b> , "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us" (pp: 285-300).	Case Studies: Winston— <b>Rodney Brooks</b> , "Us and Them" (pp: 249-262); Winston— <b>Ray Kurzweil</b> (pp:301-309).

### Course Requirements

There are **three (3) requirements** for this course.

1. ***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 two 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.

**(C) Community Involvement/Observation (to be incorporated in the presentation)**

Further details will be provided in class.

2. ***Two in-class Tests: October 20<sup>th</sup> & November 24<sup>th</sup> (2 @ 35% each)***.....**70%**

The tests consist of short-answer and essay questions and may include multiple-choice questions. The tests cover all class work, lecture, student presentations, 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 textbook and reading package.

3. ***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.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

**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 14/15: <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 2455FA—Computers and Society**

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

Bauchspies, Wenda, Jennifer Croissant & Sal Restivo. (2006—Preface & Chapter 1, pp: VII-XI;1-18). *Science, Technology and Society: a Sociological Perspective*. Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell Publishing.

Hill, Simon. (2013—pp:11-15;59-83). *Digital Revolutions: Activism in the Internet*. Oxford: New Internationalist.

McBride, Stephen & Heather Whiteside. (2011—pp:58-79; 106-111). *Private Affluence, Public Austerity: Economic Crisis & Democratic Malaise in Canada*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

McChesney, Robert W. (2013—pp:1-22;33-40 &210). *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism Is Turning the Internet Against Democracy*. New York: The New Press.

Menzies, Heather. (1996—pp: 3-19). *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). *Cracking the Gender Code: Who Rules the Wired World?* Toronto: Second Story Press.

Quan-Haase, Anabel. (2013—pp: 167-189). *Technology & Society: Social Networks, Power, & Technology*. Toronto: Oxford U Press.

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

Rose, Ellen. (2003—Chapters: 1, pp: 15-42). *User Error: Resisting Computer Culture*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Scott-Dixon, K. (2004—Intro & Chapters: 1 & 2, pp: 11-29; 31-40;63-81). *Doing IT: Women Working in Information Technology*. Toronto: Sumach Press.

Stiglitz, Joseph E. (2012—pp:52-82; 265-290). *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Turkle, Sherry. (2011—pp: IX-XVII; 279-296). *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. New York: Basic Books.

Winston, Morton & Ralph Edelbach. (2012—pp:182-195; 222-235; 249-262; 301-310). *Society, Ethics, and Computer Technology*, Revised 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Toronto: Nelson Education Ltd.