

L A K E H E A D U N I V E R S I T Y
D E P A R T M E N T O F S O C I O L O G Y
T e c h n o l o g y a n d S o c i e t y
S o c i o l o g y 2 7 5 5 F A 2 0 1 4

Brian McMillan
RB 2036
brian.mcmillan@lakeheadu.ca
Office Hours: Tues. 1:30-2:20 PM & Thurs. 1:30-2:20 PM
Sociology Department Website: <http://sociology.lakeheadu.ca>

Fall 2014
Wed. 7:00-10:00 PM
AT 2001

Course Description

This course of study examines the reciprocal relationship between technological change and social structure. It identifies and describes numerous sociological theories and concepts which help us understand the dynamics of technological development and diffusion, as well as the impact of technology on social interaction, community, medicine, organization of work, the industrial food system, the natural environment, transportation, communications, and more. Special attention is given to the effects of technological change in northern Aboriginal communities with case studies in telehealth, TV broadcasting, web-based education, social networking, the digital divide, and so on. The course of study also places special emphasis on the relationship between technological advance and social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

Required Reading Material

Volti, Rudi. 2014. *Society and Technological Change, 7th Edition*. New York: Worth Publishers

Examinations

There are 2 examinations scheduled throughout the course of study. The exams will be based on the required readings, aspects of the recommended readings, and all classroom activities (lectures, videos, discussions). The exams may include short-answer, essay, and multiple-choice questions. Please see the Grading Scheme for the weighting of examinations, and the Course Schedule for examination dates.

Assignments: Headlining Technology

You must prepare and submit for grading 2 assignments throughout the course. For each assignment you are required to find a brief article in a newspaper, magazine, or internet news service that pertains in some way to technology. You must then write 250-300 words in which you demonstrate how the article relates to any important course concept covered in our textbook. I suggest the following 3 paragraph format:

1. Identify and briefly define/describe your chosen course concept according to our textbook.
2. Briefly paraphrase your chosen article.
3. Show how the article reflects/represents your chosen course concept.

You must submit hard copies of your assignments (including a copy of the original article) by the deadlines indicated in the Course Schedule. Each assignment is worth a maximum of 4% of your final course grade. No electronic submissions will be accepted. A penalty of 5% per day applies to all late submissions. No exceptions.

Grading Scheme

Assignments.....	8%
Midterm Exam.....	46%
Final Exam.....	46%

Course Schedule

Sept. 10

What is Technology?

Required reading:

Volti, ch. 1, "The Nature of Technology"

Recommended reading:

Marx, Leo. 1993. "Does Improved Technology Mean Progress?" Pp. 3-14 in *Technology in the Future*, edited by Albert H. Teich. New York: St. Martin's Press

Sept. 17

The Two Faces of Technology

Required reading:

Volti, ch. 2, "Winners & Losers: The Differential Effects of Technological Change"

Recommended reading:

McMahon, Robert et al. 2011. "Digital Divides and the 'First Mile': Framing First Nations Broadband Development in Canada," *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*. Vol. 2, Issue 2
<http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1048&context=iipj>

Sept. 24

Theories of Technological Change: Part 1

Required reading:

Volti, ch. 3, "The Sources of Technological Change"

Volti, ch. 6, "Technology, Energy, and the Environment"

Recommended reading:

Mignone, Javier et al. 2008. *Information and Communication Technology in Aboriginal Communities in Canada: Increasing Aboriginal Social Capital* <http://www.academia.edu/166502/>

Oct. 1

Theories of Technological Change: Part 2

Required reading:

Volti, ch. 4, "Scientific Knowledge and Technological Advance"

Recommended reading:

Ramirez, R., and Richardson, D. 2005. "Measuring the impact of tele-communication services on rural and remote communities". *Telecommunications Policy*, Vol. 29

Oct. 8

Theories of Technological Change: Part 3

Required reading:

Volti, ch. 18, "Technology and its Creators: Who's in Charge of Whom?"

Volti, ch. 8, "Genetic Technologies"

Recommended reading:

Baltruschat, Doris. 2004. "Television and Canada's Aboriginal Communities Seeking Opportunities through Traditional Storytelling and Digital Technologies," *Canadian Journal of Communication*. Vol. 29, Issue 1
<http://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/viewArticle/1403/1495>

Oct. 8

Deadline: *Headlining Technology Assignment #1* (class time & location; no e-versions accepted; late penalties apply; maximum 4% final course grade)

Oct. 15

Theories of Technological Diffusion

Required reading:

Volti, ch. 5, "The Diffusion of Technology"

Recommended reading:

Canada Health Infoway. 2011. *Telehealth Benefits and Adoption: Connecting People and Providers Across Canada*. <http://celarc.ca.ezproxy.lakeheadu.ca/cppc/229/229248.pdf>

Oct. 22

MIDTERM EXAMINATION (regular class time/location; 46% final course grade)

Oct. 29

Technology and Jobs: Part 1

Required reading:

Volti, ch. 10, "Technology and Jobs: More of One and Less of the Other"

Recommended reading:

Volti, ch. 9, "Work in Non-industrial Societies"

Nov. 5

Technology and Jobs: Part 2

Required reading:

Volti, ch. 11, "Technological Change and Life on the Job"

Recommended reading:

Ritzer, George. 2008. "Control: Human and Non-human Robots". Pp. 115-139 in *The McDonaldization of Society*, George Ritzer. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge

Nov. 12

Surveillance Technologies

Required reading:

Volti, ch. 13, "The Electronic Media"

Volti, ch. 14, "The Internet Age"

Recommended reading:

Monahan, Torin. 2009. "Questioning Surveillance and Security". Pp. 537-557 in *Technology and Society: Building our Sociotechnical Future*, edited by Deborah G. Johnson and Jameson M. Wetmore. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press

Nov. 19

Technology and Organizations

Required reading:

Volti, ch. 19, "Organizations and Technological Change"

Nov. 19

Deadline: Headlining Technology Assignment #2 (class time & location; no e-versions accepted; late penalties apply; maximum 4% final course grade)

Nov. 26

Technology and Government

Required reading:

Volti, ch. 20, "Governing Technology"

Recommended reading:

Bereano, Phillip. 2003. "Technology is a Tool of the Powerful." Pp. 85-90 in *Computers, Ethics, and Society*, edited by M. David Erman and M. S. Shauf. NY: O.U.P.

FINAL EXAMINATION: location/date/time TBA; 46% final course grade