

LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
Technology and Society
Sociology 2755WA

Brian McMillan
UC0038
brian.mcmillan@lakeheadu.ca
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:00-2:00pm
Sociology Department Website: <http://sociology.lakeheadu.ca>

Winter 2014
Thurs. 7:00-10:00 PM
RC0005

Course Description

This course of study examines the relationship between technological change and social structure. The course identifies and describes various sociological theories and concepts which inform our understanding of technological development and diffusion. Special attention is given to the causes and consequences of specific technologies in areas such as transportation, communications, work, food, and medicine.

Required Reading Material

- Mugenyi, Bianca and Yves Engler. 2011. *Stop Signs: Cars and Capitalism on the Road to Economic, Social and Ecological Decay*. Vancouver: Red Publishing.
- Quan-Haase, Anabel. 2013. *Technology and Society: Social Networks, Power and Inequality*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Examinations

There are 2 examinations scheduled throughout the course of study. Both exams will be based on the required 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 exams, and the *Course Schedule* for examination dates.

**Lakehead University has a very strict policy regarding the failure to write formal examinations at the prescribed time. Please note that make-up examinations will only be offered when missed exams are due to medical and/or compassionate reasons, for which detailed supporting documentation must be submitted. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the University's policy regarding missed examinations.*

Assignments

There is one assignments based on the required readings. Details will be announced at a later date.

Grading Scheme

Midterm Exam.....	35%
Assignment.....	20%
Final Exam.....	45%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Jan. 9: *The Technological Society* (Quan-Haase ch. 1)

Jan. 16: *Technology in Society: A Historical Overview* (Quan-Haase ch. 2)

Jan. 23: *Theoretical Perspectives on Technology* (Quan-Haase ch. 3)

Jan. 30: *Techno-Social Designing* (Quan-Haase ch. 4)

Feb. 6: *The Adoption and Diffusion of Technological Innovations* (Quan-Haase ch. 5)

Feb. 13: Midterm Examination

Feb. 17-21: Study Break

Feb. 27: *The Labour of Technology* (Quan-Haase ch. 6)

Mar. 6: *Technology and Inequality* (Quan-Haase ch. 7)

Mar. 13: *Community in the Network Society* (Quan-Haase ch. 8)

Mar. 20: *Technology-mediated Social Relationships* (Quan-Haase ch. 9)

Mar. 27: *The Surveillance Society* (Quan-Haase ch. 10)

Mar. 27: Assignment Deadline

Apr. 3: *Ethical Dimensions of Technology* (Quan-Haase ch. 11)

FINAL EXAMINATION: location, date and time TBA

Stop Signs Assignment

This assignment is based on the book *Stop Signs: Cars and Capitalism on the Road to Economic, Social and Ecological Decay*. (Bianca Mugenyi and Yves Engler, 2011). Your task is to write a brief essay on one of the topics found below, drawing exclusively from Part 1 (pp. 9-138) of the *Stop Signs* book. You must support each point you make in your paper with a brief quotation (preferably 1 sentence in length only, with page #) from the book. For example, using the topic “Cars and Social Stratification”:

Mugenyi et al. argue that the advent of the private automobile has not only enabled the creation of suburbia, but has also made it possible for the wealthy (those who can afford to own and operate automobiles) to escape the inner cities. This has given rise to the concentration of poverty in the inner city areas of many major metropolitan centres across the US and, subsequently, the under-funding of public services for the poor. The authors write: *“When wealthier people move into enclaves, they strip inner cities of the tax base required to adequately fund public schools and other social services.”* (p.86) In this way, cars both create and perpetuate social inequality.

You must select 1 of the following topics:

- Cars and Social Stratification
- Cars and Personal Autonomy
- Cars and the Natural Environment

This assignment should be the exclusive product of your own individual effort. It is not meant to be a group project. Your final submission must be 5-6 pages of discussion (not including your title page or References page). Your paper must be typed, double-spaced, with 12 pt regular font, and 1 inch margins. This assignment is worth 20% of your final course grade. The assignment deadline is Thursday March 22nd, class time and location. You must submit a hardcopy of your assignment. No e-versions will be accepted. A penalty of 5% per day applies to all assignments submitted after the deadline.