Understanding Technological Society: Fall 2024

Professor Stanik
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Instructor's Contact Information:	**Course Information:**
Professor Stanik Email: stanik@njit.edu Subscribe to Receive Texts (optional): Text: @sts201-009 To: 81010 or (415) 780-9457 Or visit: remind.com/join/sts201-009 (Standard text messaging rates apply to anyone receiving messages.) Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays (by appointment)	STS 201 Section 009 Fall 2024 Tuesdays & Thursdays: 8:30am-9:50am Kupfrian Hall 105 Mode: Face-to-Face Students must bring a laptop or tablet to class. If you do not have access to adequate equipment, please contact the Office of the Dean of Students. Course Materials: http://canvas.njit.edu

People often talk about society, technology, and the environment separately. This course will question that perspective. Data repeatedly confirms the difficult reality that our society is not living sustainably. So, can we - and should we - talk about the creation and use of technologies, the human and natural environment, and the development of social and cultural institutions separately? In what ways is the relationship between technology and society reciprocal? How might society drive technological changes, and how might technologies in turn shape us, society, and the future that is possible?

This class will introduce you to the social sciences and help you apply social scientific theories and concepts from anthropology, communication, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, sociology, and sustainability. You'll learn how to approach topics and formulate questions like a social scientist, which will help you better examine and understand complex human activities - including some of the biggest issues in contemporary culture.

Throughout the semester, you'll analyze technology's role in addressing and improving local, national, and global issues. You'll also evaluate and propose solutions, taking into consideration:

- the positive and negative relationships between technology and environmental changes;
- the effects of technology on the world of information, knowledge, and well-being;
- the ethics, equity, and responsibility of technological decision-making; and
- the competing priorities and trade-offs of societal, policy, and individual behavior changes (in addition to purely technological solutions).

Course Catalog Description
A problem-centered and task-oriented course that integrates social science theory and practice into the leading public issues of a technological society. Students learn critical thinking through hands-on assignments. The course emphasizes student understanding of social institutions that directly affect technological development and professional careers. This course can be used to satisfy either the three credit 200 GER in History and Humanities or the three credit GER in Social Sciences, but not both.

Prerequisites: None

Course Goals
By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze course materials and relate them to authentic situations;
2. Apply social scientific theories and concepts when examining human activities and aspects of societies and cultures;
3. Create, articulate, and defend cohesive, well-organized arguments (individually and as a group) based on evidence in course materials;
4. Develop solutions to complex societal problems, and justify the solution based on an analysis of criteria and constraints, available resources, likely trade-offs, and relevant environmental and cultural concerns; and
5. Evaluate the relationships between the creation and use of technologies, the human and natural environment, and the development of social and cultural institutions.

Required Course Materials:
Most course materials will be available in Canvas. You will need to have a valid UCID to access Canvas. See schedule and Canvas for the order of assigned course materials. In addition to the materials available in Canvas, during the semester, you will also need to access the following materials:

Orlowski, Jeff. *The Social Dilemma.* Exposure Labs, 2020. Netflix, netflix.com/title/81254224.

Ptolemy, Barry. *Transcendent Man.* Docurama. 2009
(https://transcendentman.com/product/transcendent-man-documentary rent as low as $2.49)

Schlosser, Eric, Richard Pearce, Melissa Robledo, Robert Kenner, Elise Pearlstein, Kim Roberts, Michael Pollan, Gary Hirshberg, Joel Salatin, and Mark Adler. *Food, Inc.* Los Angeles: Magnolia Pictures, 2008. (https://digitalcampus-swankmp-net.libdb.njit.edu:8443/njit387129/play/470a05185adf4795?referrer=marc)

All other materials will be provided in class or via Canvas. Any changes or additions to required course materials will be distributed in class or via Canvas.

Course Assignments
STS 201 is a highly interactive class that uses problem- and project-based learning. The goal is for you, with my help, to develop your own solutions and conclusions based on evidence in assigned readings and videos, course lectures, in-class discussions, and multimedia presentations.

Throughout the semester we will be working to explore the question: Can a technological society live sustainably? To help you answer this question by the end of the semester, we will examine aspects of technological society in each course module. For each module, you will be expected to:

1. complete the assigned course prep (as detailed in the schedule) prior to class (research questions recommended but optional)
2. come to class with the reading and any notes you have - ready to ask questions, share your reflections, and apply what you've learned
3. complete a quiz for each reading/video to demonstrate you are prepared for class (quizzes will be in-class multiple choice and/or short answer – open book and notes)
4. apply course materials to authentic situations (complete an assigned in-class project, using course materials and your notes, to help you master the content and understand its application)
5. reflect on the problem of the module, and relate it to the problem of the semester

Originality of Your Work, Etiquette, AI Usage, and Academic Integrity:
This course is highly interactive and facilitates a great deal of reflection, collaboration, and debate. Although you are encouraged to collaborate with classmates as you work through problems and course materials, all of the work you submit in this course for credit must be entirely your own. You will have every opportunity to provide your best work; all assignments will be open book and open notes because the goal is for you to apply and evaluate what you are learning - not memorize and restate it.

Although you are expected to build on, react to, criticize, and analyze the ideas of others, when you do, you must follow NJIT's Code of Student Conduct and Code on Academic Integrity.

Class participants must arrive on-time, remain engaged, and be respectful of one another's time and turn to speak, even when opinions may differ. Scholarly debates are okay. Personal attacks are not.

When stating facts, you must provide a citation that names the original source where the idea was expressed (even if you are not directly quoting from the source or if you reworded the original idea). This policy includes if/when you choose to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Although you may use AI tools when generating ideas or discussing topics in class, you must cite the AI used as shown within the NJIT Library citation page. You may not use AI tools when completing any graded assignments, as doing so would undermine your learning and achievement of course learning outcomes. If you ever have questions about drawing the line between others' work and your own or about the use of AI technology in this class, ask me for guidance or visit the NJIT Student Handbook (current edition).

Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing, or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu.

Grading Policies
The evaluation of student proficiency in this course is based on the following components:

1. **In-class quizzes (30%):** For each of the assigned readings (and in some cases videos) you will complete an in-class quiz. The quiz will be open book and notes and include multiple choice and/or short answer questions. All quizzes must be completed in person in class. There will be a total of 7 quizzes during the semester, each worth 20 points. Your highest 5 grades will count towards your semester grade. All grades and comments will be provided via Canvas. *Because your lowest two quiz grades will be dropped, no late submissions will be accepted, no make-up quizzes will be given, and failure to submit a quiz will result in zero points.*

2. **In-class projects (20%):** During the semester, there will be 7 in-class projects. You will use course materials, answers to research questions, and your notes to complete projects that will help you apply what you're learning to authentic situations. These projects are mandatory and require you to be present in class and engaged in the project. Instead of a formal grade, however, these projects are pass/fail (i.e., you will receive all 20 points or zero points) so you have the opportunity to safely explore topics and practice applying classroom knowledge to solve real-world problems on a local, national, and global scale. These projects will help you deepen your understanding of course concepts and develop stronger problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. If you stay engaged, complete the project, and reflect on what you experienced and learned from it, you will receive full credit for the assignment. If you arrive late, do not come prepared, do not participate, and/or do not stay engaged during the project, you will receive zero points for the assignment. Out of these assignments, your highest 5 grades will count towards your semester grade. *Because your lowest two pass/fail grade will be dropped, no late submissions will be accepted, no make-up projects or assignments will be given, and failure to complete a project will result in zero points.*

3. **Midterm Exam (20%):** Based on course lectures, assigned readings, multimedia presentations, notes, projects, answers to the problems of the modules, and in-class discussions and projects, you will complete an in-class exam to demonstrate that you have mastered the foundational course content and understand its applications. This exam will be open book and notes and must be completed in person in class on the date assigned using a laptop or tablet (no phones). *No late submissions will be accepted, no make-up exam will be given, and failure to submit your exam will result in zero points.*

4. **Final Project Presentations (30%):** Based on course lectures, assigned readings, multimedia presentations, notes, in-class projects, answers to the problems of the modules, and in-class discussions, you will work with a group to solve a real-world problem and present your analysis and solution(s) to the class. Assignment details will be provided in class and available in Canvas. Each group member will receive a separate grade for their portion of the assignment. The final presentation must be completed in person in class on the date assigned. You must arrive on time, come prepared with your preparation complete, present with your group, be present for the duration of all final presentations (on all days), and participate as an audience member. *No late submissions will be accepted, no make-up final will be given, and failure to give your final presentation or be present for all presentations will result in zero points.*

Aggregate Grading Scale for Final Grades (based on percentage of points earned):

A = 100%-90% B+ = 89.99%-86% B = 85.99%-80% C+ = 79.99%-76% C = 75.99%-70% D = 69.99%-60% F = <60%	*Final grades are not subject to post-semester rounding or adjustment–with the exception of the change of a grading error. Under no circumstances will students be given the opportunity to complete extra-credit papers or other assignments to bolster their final grades.*

Course Content and Schedule*
This semester you will be exploring the question:

Can a technological society live sustainably?

**any changes to the required course prep or schedule will be announced in class and/or via email*

COURSE INTRODUCTION | Defining Terms & Expectations

Course Dates:	**Sept 3 & 5**
September 3	Prep: N/A In-class: project, sociological perspective, systems approach, syllabus introduction
September 5	Prep: Read syllabus & bring at least one question about the course In-class: syllabus clarification, understanding the status quo, definitions
In-Class Quiz	N/A By September 9th, take Syllabus Quiz via Canvas on your own
In-Class Project	September 3

MODULE 1 | Why are we so focused on growth, and what are the impacts of it?

Course Dates:	**Sept 10, 12, 17, 19**
September 10	Prep: Richard Wilkinson TED talk, Can the Economy Grow Forever?, Clean Coal & Fracking articles In-class: quiz, industrialization, technological society, capitalism, rise of American consumer
September 12	Prep: N/A In-class: oil & American Dream
September 17	Prep: N/A In-class: impacts (e.g., psychology, well-being)
September 19	Prep: N/A In-class: project
In-Class Quiz	September 10
In-Class Project	September 19

Course Content and Schedule (continued)

MODULE 2 | Why do we design and make things we can't sell?

Course Dates:	**Sept 24, Sept 26, Oct 1**
September 24	Prep: Bill McDonough TED talk (full), Janine Benyus TED talk (4:45-14:53) In-class: quiz, sustainable approaches, equity, unintended consequences
September 26	Prep: N/A In-class: sustainable approaches, equity, unintended consequences
October 1	Prep: N/A In-class: project
In-Class Quiz	September 24
In-Class Project	October 1

MODULE 3 | What is the solution for a society in an environmental crisis?

Course Dates:	**Oct 3, 8, 10**
October 3	Prep: "Can We Cool The Planet" (PBS NOVA) In-class: quiz, causes, confusion, equity, responsibility, solutions, trade-offs
October 8	Prep: N/A In-class: causes, confusion, equity, responsibility, solutions, trade-offs
October 10	Prep: N/A In-class: project
In-Class Quiz	October 3
In-Class Project	October 10

MIDTERM EXAM:

In-Class Exam	**October 15**

Course Content and Schedule (continued)

MODULE 4 | Should farms be factories?

Course Dates:	**Oct 17, 22, 24**
October 17	Prep: "Food, Inc." In-class: quiz, industrial agriculture, impacts, alternatives, equity
October 22	Prep: N/A In-class: industrial agriculture, impacts, alternatives, equity
October 24	Prep: N/A In-class: project
In-Class Quiz	October 17
In-Class Project	October 24

MODULE 5 | Should humans strive for immortality?

Course Dates:	**Oct 29, Oct 31, Nov 5, Nov 7**
October 29	Prep: Assigned articles in Canvas, Eythor Bender TED Talk, "Transcendent Man" In-class: quiz, human enhancement vs. environmental enhancement, equity
October 31	Prep: N/A In-class: human enhancement vs. environmental enhancement, equity
November 5	Prep: N/A In-class: human enhancement vs. environmental enhancement, equity
November 7	Prep: N/A In-class: project
In-Class Quiz	October 29
In-Class Project	November 7

Course Content and Schedule (continued)

MODULE 6 | Can humans design perfection?

Course Dates:	**Nov 12, 14, 19**
November 12	Prep: "The Social Dilemma" In-class: quiz, social media, AI, ethics, equity, responsibility
November 14	Prep: N/A In-class: social media, AI, ethics, equity, responsibility
November 19	Prep: N/A In-class: project
In-Class Quiz	November 12
In-Class Project	November 19

COURSE WRAP UP | Reflections & Final Project Prep

Course Dates:	**Nov 21 & 26**
November 21	Prep: come ready to discuss one thing you learned and one question you have In-class: wrap up, final project prep
November 26	Prep: come ready to continue working on final project In-class: final project prep
In-Class Quiz	N/A
In-Class Project	N/A

FINAL PROJECT

In-Class Presentations	**Dec 3, 5, 10 (as assigned)**