STS 201 Understanding Technological Society

Fall 2025

Class Instructor: Tyler Leli
Email: tyler.leli@njit.edu
Office hours: Thursday 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.
Office location: Cullimore 315
Class Meeting Location: Central King Building 114
Class Meeting Dates and Time: Tuesday and Friday, 4:00-5:20 p.m.

Requirements

(1) Attend class and actively participate in discussions.

(2) Come to class with questions, examples, objections, and so on.

(3) There will be no books that you will need to buy for this course. Links to all readings will be posted on

Canvas.

Grading Structure

1. Attendance – 10%

2. Participation – 10%

3. Short Essay Assignments (250 words, four assignments) – 20%

4. Peer Review – 5% (split 2.5/2.5 for mid-term and final assessment)

5. Mid-Term Essay (1000 words) – 20%

6. Debate – 10%

7. Final Essay – 25%

Grading Scale

Grading Scale:

A = 100-90	B+ = 89-87	B = 86-80	C+ = 79-77	C = 76-70	F = 69-0

**If a rough draft is found to contain 20-40% AI-generated or assisted written work,
15 points will be deducted from the student's final grade on that assignment.**

**If a final draft is found to contain 20-40% AI-generated or assisted written work,
30 points will be deducted from the student's final grade on that assignment.**

**If a rough or final draft is found to contain 40-100% AI-generated or assisted written work, the work will be
reported to the Dean of Students who will meet with the student and determine the final grade on that
assignment and if any further action needs to be taken.**

**If a student uses AI generation or assistance on both a rough and a final draft for one assignment, this is reported
to the Dean of Students for determination of final grade.**

Late Work

Late work will not be accepted (except in the case of an excused absence). Students should contact their instructor in advance of due dates when having difficulty completing an assignment.

Technology
Canvas is NJIT's learning management system.
Students use their NJIT email as the primary method of communication and maintain an appropriate tone.   Include an appropriate subject line and name in all emails for more efficient correspondence.

Students should not use cell phones during class unless needed for a specific activity. Resist the distraction and focus on one thing at a time - classroom lessons, activities and discussion. Active engagement in class leads to better outcomes in grading. Everyone should set phones to silent as a courtesy.

NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity

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 that is found at:
http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf.

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 be reported. Per university policy, an initial violation of the code results in a zero for the flagged assignment and a second violation leads to a failing grade for the class. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu.

All assignments submitted shall be considered "graded work" and all aspects of your coursework are covered by the Code on Academic Integrity. All projects and homework assignments are to be completed individually unless otherwise specified.

Chat GPT and other Large Language Models (LLMs)

STS 201 follows the guidelines from the NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity:

"Artificial intelligence usage is not permitted in this course. The expectation of this course is for students to work through the course without assistance from any type of artificial intelligence to better develop their own skills in this content area. As such, artificial intelligence usage is not permitted throughout this course."

Any and all use of LLMs will be treated the same as any other violation of NJIT's University Code on Academic Integrity.

Accessibility Needs
Every attempt will be made to accommodate qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a documented disability, please see me as early in the semester as possible to discuss the necessary accommodations, and/or contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services at 973-596-5417.

The Writing Center
The Writing Center (Central King Building G17) is available for in-person and virtual sessions. This resource is free and intended to help you improve your writing and communication skills with tutors who help with planning assignments, improving your writing, refining an essay or multimedia project, for classes, personal statements, etc. For more information or to make an appointment, please visit https://www.njit.edu/writingcenter/.

NJIT
New Jersey's Science & Technology University

NEED HELP?
KNOW WHO TO CALL

Please note following important numbers that will come in handy in case of emergency:

EXTERNAL RESOURCES	AVAILABILITY	CONTACT NUMBER
Suicide Prevention	24 hrs/ 7 days a week	(973) 623-2323 (University Hospital-Newark)
Drug/ Alcohol Addiction	24 hrs/ 7 days a week	(877) 630-8262
Crime Victim Compensation Office	Monday – Friday 8 AM – 8 PM	(877) 658-2221
Rape Care Center	24 hrs/ 7 days a week	(877) 733-2273 (Essex County)
Sexual Assault Hotline	24 hrs/ 7 days a week	(800) 656-HOPE (National)
Psychiatric Emergency	24 hrs/ 7 days a week	(973) 924-7416 (Newark Beth Israel Hospital)
NJIT RESOURCES	AVAILABILITY	CONTACT NUMBER
NJIT Public Safety	24 hrs/ 7 days a week	(973) 596-3111 (Emergency) (973) 596-3120 (Non-Emergency)
Dean of Students (TITLE IX – Sexual Misconduct Report/Response)	Monday – Friday 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM	(973) 596-3466
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)	Monday – Friday 8:30 AM - 5 PM	(973) 596-3414
Student Health Services (SHS)	Monday – Friday 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM	(973) 596-3621

Reading list

These will be pre-assigned readings for each class. This schedule is subject to be modified based on progress in class. Readings will average about ten pages before each class.

Week 1: Orientation and Intro to Technology and Society

Tuesday, September 2

- Syllabus Review

Friday, September 5: *Primary causes of technological growth*

- https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/news-guns-germs-steel-jared-diamond-interview
- https://www.brookings.edu/articles/technology-and-the-innovation-economy/

Week 2: Capitalism and society

Tuesday, September 9: *Examining the US economy*

- https://www.adamsmithworks.org/documents/chapter-1-of-the-division-of-labour
  Adam Smith , *The Wealth of Nations* ch. 1

- https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/031815/united-states-considered-market-economy-or-mixed-economy.asp

- https://www.newyorker.com/news/john-cassidy/pikettys-inequality-story-in-six-charts

Friday, September 12: *How do humans make choices?*

- https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2018/12/why-do-econ-classes-barely-mention-behavioral-economics/578092/

- https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-two-friends-who-changed-how-we-think-about-how-we-think

- https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2016/11/decision-science-daniel-kahneman-amos-tversky

Week 3: Surveillance

Tuesday, September 16: *Government Surveillance Powers Overview*

- https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/21/opinion/fisa-section-702-fbi-privacy.html

- https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/20/us/politics/senate-passes-surveillance-law-extension.html?searchResultPosition=5

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDai5Ntb-bg

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saGAUe-dVXc

Friday, September 19: *How far should policing surveillance go?*

- https://www.propublica.org/article/police-body-cameras-video-ai-law-enforcement

- https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/09/nyregion/newark-surveillance-cameras-police.html

- https://www.newarkpublicsafety.org/npd/citizen-virtual-patrol/

Week 4: The Future of Work

Tuesday, September 23: *Technology and Work*

- https://hbr.org/2022/11/research-roundup-how-technology-is-transforming-work

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ukvd4adVcHw

- https://rooseveltinstitute.org/publications/good-labor-policy-is-good-technology-policy/

Friday, September 26: *Universal Basic Income* + Conditional vs. Unconditional Assistance

- Bidadanure, Juliana Uhuru. "The political theory of universal basic income." *Annual Review of Political Science* 22.1 (2019): 481-501.
  https://www.annualreviews.org/content/journals/10.1146/annurev-polisci-050317-070954
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzPoDCmYmwI
- https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2021-03-06/stockton-study-universal-basic-income

Week 5: Environmental Justice

Tuesday, September 30: What is environmental justice and where does the public stand on climate issues?

- https://www.nrdc.org/stories/environmental-justice-movement#:~:text=Environmental%20justice%20essentially%20means%20that,policies%20that%20shape%20their%20communities.
- https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/08/09/what-the-data-says-about-americans-views-of-climate-change/

Friday, October 3: Contemporary US Climate Policy + Congestion Pricing

- https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/09/climate/biden-environmental-rules-epa.html
- https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2022/7/28/23281757/whats-in-climate-bill-inflation-reduction-act
- https://e360.yale.edu/features/trump-second-term-climate
- https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/14/nyregion/congestion-pricing-nyc.html

Week 5: Social Determinants of Health + Obligations to Future Generations

Tuesday, October 7: Social Determinants of Health

- https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1325672/1/1325672.pdf
- https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health
- The Glasgow Effect

Friday, October 10: *What duties do we have to future generations?*

- https://aeon.co/essays/having-children-is-not-life-affirming-its-immoral
- https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/22552963/how-to-be-a-good-ancestor-longtermism-climate-change

William MacAskill (University of Oxford) discussing what we owe future generations:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shGhMUbdDc4

https://aeon.co/essays/elon-musk-puts-his-case-for-a-multi-planet-civilisation

Week 6: Writing Essays and Peer Review

Tuesday, October 14:

- "A Brief Guide to Writing the Philosophy Paper" Jim Pryor

chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://philosophy.fas.harvard.edu/files/phildept/files/brief_guide_to_writing_philosophy_paper.pdf

- Purdue MLA Writing Style

   https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_overview_and_workshop.html

Friday, October 17:

- No readings. Submit your midterm essay by the end of class.

Week 7: Algorithmic Bias

Tuesday, October 21: *Can algorithms be biased?*

- Fazelpour, Sina & Danks, David (2021). Algorithmic bias: Senses, sources, solutions. Philosophy Compass 16 (8):e12760.

   https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/share/ATJKT4P3G9WQCSPJ6WGV?target=10.1111/phc3.12760

Friday, October 24: Contemporary Issues in Technology (TBD based on current events)

Week 8: Animal Ethics

Tuesday, October 28: *Animal Testing*

- Singer, Peter (1989). All Animals Are Equal. In Tom Regan & Peter Singer (eds.), Animal Rights and Human Obligations. Oxford University Press. pp. 215--226.

   chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://spot.colorado.edu/~heathwoo/phil1200,Spr07/singer.pdf

Additional Optional Reading

- Nagel, Thomas. "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 83, no. 4, 1974, pp. 435–50. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/2183914. Accessed 16 Aug. 2023.

Week 9: Finance and Society

Friday, October 31: *Breaking down the blockchain*

- https://www.ibm.com/topics/blockchain#:~:text=IBM-,What%20is%20blockchain%3F,patents%2C%20copyrights%2C%20branding).
- https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/mckinsey-explainers/what-is-blockchain

Friday, November 7: *Bitcoin and competitors*

- https://www.vox.com/the-goods/23071245/bitcoin-price-crypto-ethereum-nfts-defi-stablecoin
- https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/05/technology/cryptocurrencies-bitcoin-explainer.html?searchResultPosition=4
- https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/18/technology/bitcoin-halving-countdown.html?searchResultPosition=2
- https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/05/business/bitcoin-stock-market.html?searchResultPosition=1

Week 10: Conspiratorial Thinking

Tuesday, November 11: *Conspiracy Theories*

- Why people fall for conspiracy theories, Kaleigh Rogers and Jasmine Mithani, *FiveThirtyEight*, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/why-people-fall-for-conspiracy-theories/
- Nguyen, C. Th (2018). Escape the echo chamber. Aeon. https://aeon.co/essays/why-its-as-hard-to-escape-an-echo-chamber-as-it-is-to-flee-a-cult

<u>Optional Reading</u>

What Do Conspiracy Theorists Do When Proven Wrong?, *NY Times*, 2024, Stuart A. Thompson

https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/07/technology/biden-conspiracy-theories-misinformation.html?searchResultPosition=1

Friday, November 14: Open day

- Watch *Feels Good Man* –

  https://www.peacocktv.com/watch-online/movies/feels-good-man/46afd55f-2818-3ab8-8c32-69c2df85dffd

Week 11: Prep Day and In-Class Debate

Tuesday, November 18: Debate groups formed, topics released, research done and roles organized.

Friday, November 21: In-class debate

Week 12: Final Essay Prep!!

Tuesday, December 2: Finalize topic for second essay and in-class writing session (leave with outline, roughly 500 words to turn into draft before class on Friday)

Friday, December 5: Peer Review #2 (1000 words, paper outline)

Week 13: Final Essays Due

Tuesday, December 9: Final essays due