

Fall 2019

HIST 214-101: Technology and Culture in American History

Florencia Pierri

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.njit.edu/hist-syllabi>

Recommended Citation

Pierri, Florencia, "HIST 214-101: Technology and Culture in American History" (2019). *History Syllabi*. 9.
<https://digitalcommons.njit.edu/hist-syllabi/9>

This Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the NJIT Syllabi at Digital Commons @ NJIT. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Syllabi by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ NJIT. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@njit.edu.

HIST 214: Technology and Culture in American History

Professor: Florencia Pierri

Classroom: Kupfrian Hall 211

Time: Tuesdays, 6:00-8:50 pm

Office: Cullimore 321

Office Hours: Mondays 3:00-5:30 pm and by appointment

Contact: fpierri@njit.edu

Course Description:

This course examines the relationship between technology and society throughout the history of the United States. We will analyze the roles and impacts of major technological innovations within their cultural and historical contexts seeking to understand how these contexts shaped and were shaped by these technologies including electricity, railroads, computers, the internet, among others. In doing so, we will highlight the ways in which technologies articulated, exacerbated, and undermined social identities and relationships of power.

Learning Objectives:

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

- Identify, analyze, and deploy secondary sources to make historical arguments
- Practice the skills necessary to analyze, discuss, and write about primary and secondary sources related to the study of American culture and technology
- Identify, analyze, and differentiate key terms and ideas in the history of technology
- Demonstrate understanding of the relationship between technology and American society at various points in US history

Course Materials:

- All course materials are available on Canvas

Grading :

You must complete all assignments to pass the course. Failure to do so will result in an automatic F.

1. Assignments: 10%

There will be a total of 4 short writing assignments due over the first half of the course. See the course schedule for due dates, and Canvas for detailed prompts.

2. Paper 1: 20%

Due in class on Oct 29

3. Paper 2: 20%

Due in class on Dec 3

4. Final Exam: 35%

On scheduled exam day. Will consist of one long essay (for which you'll get the question beforehand), and several shorter essays and identifications.

5. Participation + quizzes: 15%

Students are expected to have completed all readings before class, participate actively in all class discussions and activities, to be respectful to the instructor and their fellow classmates, to arrive to class on time, and to stay focused on what is happening in our classroom not on chatting or using digital devices.

Participation will be assessed on the quality of contributions to class discussions. Quality participation demonstrates the following:

- Understanding of the historical context as gleaned from lectures and readings
- Completion of that week's assignments such as readings and reading responses
- A willingness to engage in critical assessment of course texts and lectures

Since we only meet once a week, students are expected to attend all classes and to be punctual both to the start of class, and after our mid-class 10-minute break. Students are allowed no more than 3 unexcused absences. Chronic lateness will count toward absences. Excused absences must be either arranged in advance or have a doctor's note submitted.

Assignment Submission Guidelines:

Late Assignments: Papers will lose 1/3 of a grade for every day late (A to A-; A- to B+; etc.). Papers will not be accepted more than 1 week late.

Paper Formatting: All papers must be typed, double-spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman, 1" margins, and be submitted as in a hard copy in class, as well as a digital copy on Canvas.

Grading Scale (for assignments only, course grades will not include: A+, A-, B-, C-, D+):

100	A+
93-99	A
89-92	A-
86-88	B+
83-85	B
79-82	B-
76-78	C+
73-75	C
69-72	C-
66-68	D+
60-65	D
0-60	F

Academic Integrity: An essential part of NJIT's policy of academic integrity is that students demonstrate honesty and integrity in their courses. It is also a policy that

will serve you in good stead in the rest of your personal and professional life. Turning in a paper that includes plagiarism, was written by someone else and passed off as your own work, or cheating on an examination will result in a 0 for that assignment. All cases of suspected plagiarism/cheating will be reported to the office of the Dean of Students for investigation. If you're unclear on what constitutes an honor code violation, please see the university policy on academic integrity at:

<https://www.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>

Technology Policy: I fully understand the irony inherent in banning laptops from a course that deals with the history of technology. That being said, I ask that you take notes on paper and leave your laptops and cell phones in your bags during class. Texting, using Twitter, playing games, etc. interrupts the flow of discussion, distracts other students, and will inevitably embarrass you when I have to call you out and confiscate your device for the remainder of the lecture. If you need to send an important text or take an important call, please excuse yourself from the room and reenter when you can return your attention to the course. Students are also prohibited from using headphones or keeping headphones in their ears during class. Essentially, you are in class once a week for approximately 3 hours. Please be present and prepared while you are here.

Cell phones: Use of a cell phone in class for unauthorized activity will result in student's choosing either:

1. Immediate expulsion from class
2. Placement of the student's cell phone at the front of class with the instructor for the remainder of that class and each class for the remainder of the semester.

Students with Disabilities or Special Needs:

Students who have disabilities or special needs should contact NJIT's Student Disability Services to help procure accommodations in completing coursework. The center can be found at <http://www.njit.edu/counseling/services/disabilities.php>.

Other Resources:

There are several writing assignments both big and small for this course, and if you need them, the [Writing Center](#) can provide you with help on every part of the writing process. Also, please don't hesitate to drop by my office hours or send me an email if you're having difficulties.

We all need a support network. If you need them, the [Center for Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (C-CAPS) in Campbell Hall, Room 205, is available to listen and to help.

Course Schedule

Week 1 - Tuesday, September 3 - What is technology and how do you study it?

Part I: Introduction

Part II: Theories of Technology

[S] Langdon Winner, "Do Artifacts have Politics?" *Daedalus*, Vol. 109, No. 1, (Winter, 1980), pgs. 121-136.

Unit 1: Early America

Week 2 - Tuesday, September 10

Part I: Technology in Revolutionary America

Part II: Early Print Culture

[P] Read **one** of these early broadsides, and come prepared to discuss it in class

- If your last name starts with A-B: "The last Speech and dying Advice of poor Julian, Who was Executed the 22d of March, 1733"
- If your last name starts with C-E: *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 1745
- If your last name starts with F-H: *The Virginia Gazette*, November 1759
- If your last name starts with I-L: "By His Excellency William Shirley, Esq;...A Proclamation," 1745
- If your last name starts with M-N: *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, July, 1776
- If your last name starts with O-R: "The Gerry-mander : a new species of monster, which appeared in Essex South District in Jan. 1812"
- If your last name starts with S-Z: "Remarks on the slave-trade", 1807 AND "\$150 Reward", 1838

[S] Heather A. Haveman, *Magazines and the Making of America: Modernization, Community, and Print Culture, 1741-1860*, pp. 57-86

** Assignment 1 due in class**

Week 3 - Tuesday, September 17

Part I: Steam Power in America

Part II: The Rise of the Factory

[P] *Lowell Offering*, 1840-1841; read 1 of the 4 issues, your choice

[S] Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn*, Ch. 3

** Assignment 2 due in class**

Week 4 - Tuesday, September 24

Part I: Slavery and Technology

Part II: The Civil War and Railroads

[S] Richard Follett, "Slavery and Technology in Louisiana's Sugar Bowl," pp. 68-97, in Susanna Delfino and Michelle Gillespie, eds., *Technology, Innovation, and Southern Industrialization: From the Antebellum Era to the Computer Age*.

[P] "How Cotton Was Raised on a Louisiana Plantation," in *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northrup* (Auburn, N.Y., 1853) at

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=483

[P] The Regimen on a Tobacco Plantation, in Charles Ball, *Fifty Years in Chains; or, the Life of an American Slave* (New York, 1858) at

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=478

Week 5 - Tuesday, October 1

Part I: Scientific Management and the Organized Workplace

Part II: Labor and Unions

[P] Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1910), chapter 2, selections

[S] Paul Krause, *The Battle for Homestead: Politics, Culture, and Steel, 1880-1892*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press), 1992, Ch. 2, 12, pp. 12-45; 177-192.

** Assignment 3 due in class**

Unit 2: The Electric Age

Week 6 - Tuesday, October 8

Part I: Electrifying the Nation

Part II: Long Distance Communication

[S] David Hotchfelder, *The Telegraph in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), chapter 1 and conclusion, pp.1-31; 176-180

[P] "Edison's Newest Marvel," *New York Sun*, September 16, 1878

Week 7 - Tuesday, October 15 -- From Telegraph to Telephone in the Late 19th Century

Part I: A Better Telegraph

Part II: The Rise of AT&T

[S] David Hotchfelder, *The Telegraph in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), chapter 5, pp. 138-164; Robert MacDougall, *The People's Network: The Political Economy of the Telephone in the Gilded Age* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), chapter 2, pp. 60-91

[P] "Impolite New York," *New York Times*, January 6, 1907

** Assignment 4 due in class**

Week 8- Tuesday, October 22

Part I: The Radio Craze

Part II: Rise of the Radio Corporation of America

[P] "War of the Worlds," radio broadcast on *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, October 31, 1938, <https://archive.org/details/OrsonWellesMrBrunns>

[S] Daniel Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind* (University of North Carolina Press, 1982), chapter 3, pp. 60-88

Week 9 - Tuesday, October 29

Part I: Television

Part II: Household Appliances

[P] *The Honeymooners*, "TV or Not TV," 1955,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeDcNTZiR0s>

[S] Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), Ch. 2-3, pp -98.

** Paper 1 due in class**

Unit 3: The Atomic Age

Week 10 - Tuesday, November 5

Part I: Birth of the Manhattan Project

Part II: Thin Man, Fat Man, Little Boy

[P] Einstein-Szilard Letter, August 2, 1939 <https://www.atomicheritage.org/key-documents/einstein-szilard-letter>

[S] James Kunetka, *City of Fire: Los Alamos and the Birth of the Atomic Age* (University of New Mexico Press, 1978), pp. 41-89; pp. 107-57

Week 11 - Tuesday, November 12 -- Atomic Optimism, Atomic Fears

Part I: The Bomb and its Aftermath

Part II: Atomic Culture

[P] "Our Friend the Atom," *Walt Disney Presents* 1957

[S] Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture At the Dawn of the Atomic Age*. (University of North Carolina Press) 1994, Ch. 16, pgs 181-196.

Week 12 - Tuesday, November 19 - Dr. Strangelove Screening and Discussion

Screening in class: *Dr. Strangelove; Or How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964)

Part II: Hydrogen Bomb and Dr. Strangelove discussion

[S] "Edward Teller: the Real-Life Dr. Strangelove,"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=8&v=qfiSERuroGE

[S] Fred Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), chapter 5, pp. 74-84

Tuesday, November 26 - Thanksgiving Break - No Class

Unit 4: The Computer Age

Week 13 - Tuesday, December 3

Part I: The Rise of the Business Machine

Part II: Mainframes

[P] "It was to have been the Nuclear Age. It became...The Computer Age," IBM, 1976

[S] Martin Campbell-Kelly, *Computer: A History of the Information Machine* (Westview Press, 2013), chapter 5-6, pp. 97-139

** Paper 2 due in class**

Week 14 - Tuesday, December 10

Part I: From mainframe to minicomputer

Part II: Personal Computers

[P] Bill Gates, "An Open Letter to Hobbyists," *Homebrew Computer Club Newsletter*, 1976

[S] Paul Ceruzzi. "From Scientific Instrument to Everyday Appliance: The Emergence of Personal Computers, 1970-77," *History and Technology*. V.13, 1996, pp. 1-31.

I have read, understood, and will abide by the course policies for HIS 214

Name:

Signature: