

Spring 2021

STS 312-002: Technology and Policy

James Holbrook

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STS 312 – Technology and Policy

Spring 2021
TR 7:30am – 8:50am
CKB 116

Dr. J. Britt Holbrook
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Office: Cullimore 418

Office Hours: TR 10:30 – 11:30am

Generic Course Description

A study of technology and politics in recent America. Focuses on the role of the federal government in shaping technology, especially through funding technological innovations and applications. Topics will include the origins of technology policy in World War II, the influence of the Cold War, the science and technology policy advisory system, and political and cultural influences on technology policy.

Prerequisites

HUM 102 with a grade of C or higher, and one History and Humanities GER 200 level course with a grade of C or higher.

Specific Course Description

This course explores the interconnections among science, technology, society, and human values and the ways they mutually shape one another. We will approach these interconnections in terms of the use and value of knowledge in the context of science and technology policy making, with special attention to the relation between universities and science and technology funding agencies. We will also examine contemporary issues in science and technology policy, beginning this semester with the current controversy surrounding trust in science.

Student Learning Outcomes

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

- restate the arguments contained in assigned readings
- identify the conclusions of arguments
- identify the premises of arguments
- evaluate arguments
- write while reading
- construct their own arguments
- develop and defend a position about a current issue in science and technology policy

Classes

Classes will revolve around discussion of assigned readings. I will talk; however, I expect questions and contributions from students. I also expect you to have done the assigned readings *before* class. I encourage you to go back and re-read assignments after class.

Many of the readings are challenging, and you will have to work to understand them. Often, this will require *hard work*.

One of the best ways to begin to understand the readings is to write about them. Try to restate the author's claims and arguments in your own words. Again, you may find this difficult. Keep working at it, and please do come see me during my office hours when you have trouble.

Another good way to begin to understand the readings is to discuss them, both inside and outside of class. I have chosen readings that are likely to provoke thought and discussion. For this reason, I expect regular attendance in class. I also expect everyone to show respect for the opinions of others. I encourage you, however, to find respectful ways to disagree. The point of the class is not to reach a consensus, but rather to provoke thinking.

I encourage you to participate actively in discussion. It is in your own interest if I know your name. There will also be opportunities for discussion (as well as writing) on the class Canvas site. The class will have its own discussion forum to which students will be expected to contribute.

Attendance Policy and Participation

I expect you to attend all classes and to have legitimate excuses for any classes missed. I also expect you to catch up on whatever you miss if you are absent for any reason.

You will receive a **class participation grade**, described in detail below. Failure to attend class or participate actively will negatively affect your grade for the course.

Makeup Policy

In the event of an unexcused absence, you will *not* have the opportunity to make up any graded assignments. If you show up late for an exam, you will *not* be given more time to complete the exam.

Other Course Policies

I expect you to arrive on time to class and keep disruptions during class to a minimum. Do *not* use phones, tablets, and other similar devices to chat/text/or talk with family and friends during class.

Please bring some sort of electronic device that will allow you to access the internet on campus. Since I may ask you to do some writing in class, it will be better if you bring a laptop or tablet, rather than a smartphone, unless you're some sort of texting whiz.

Phone/tablet/laptop use is permitted in class only for class purposes (taking notes, Googling something I said, carrying out a writing assignment, etc.). If you choose to use your device for purposes other than those related to the class (watching Netflix, say) it is your loss. If you distract other students in doing so, it is also their loss, which is unacceptable. I expect you to respect your fellow classmates and your instructor enough not to distract yourselves and others. With this policy, I am attempting to treat you as an adult. As with all other policies, I reserve the right to change my mind or make exceptions for specific individuals.

The best ways to contact me are via email or to visit me during office hours. I check email less frequently on the weekends. You are, of course, encouraged to ask questions before, during, or after class or schedule a time to meet.

NJIT Code on Academic Integrity

You are expected to abide by the NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity at all times (for details, see: <http://integrity.njit.edu/index.html>).

You must write and sign the following pledge on your exams:

On my honor, I pledge that I have not violated the provisions of the NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity.

In the context of this course, unless group work is specifically authorized by me, all work should be completed on your own without any unauthorized aids. *All* writing, including on your Canvas entries, is expected to represent your own work, completed on your own specifically for this course. This means that you cannot copy text from other papers, websites, encyclopedias, or any other source without quoting any copied material and fully and accurately citing your sources. In addition, if you refer to, use, or build upon ideas from other work, even if you don't quote that work exactly, you should fully acknowledge your sources. When citing an online article, a link to the relevant webpage will suffice as a full citation on Canvas.

I take plagiarism and citations very seriously and do not enjoy having to question whether a document constitutes plagiarism. For all our sakes, please take care to cite all referenced material. For any questions involving these or any other Academic Integrity issues, please consult me.

Students with Disabilities

NJIT offers accommodations to students with disabilities. If you need some sort of academic accommodation, please provide me with the appropriate paperwork before/after class, during my office hours, or email me to schedule a meeting.

Basic Needs Security

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so.

Requirements and Grading

This course is graded according to the requirements specified and weighted below.

Class participation (50%): participation includes discussion in class, occasional quizzes, in-class assignments, attendance, and Canvas discussion forum/blog postings.

I may occasionally (or perhaps often, if things work out that way) ask you to do some independent research either inside or outside of class. I'll also expect you to bring your findings to class (or the class Canvas) and share them.

Canvas Discussions

Students will post entries on the assigned readings for each class, unless otherwise noted. Presume, in other words, that I want you to write for each class. Entries should generally consist in reflections on and analyses of the assigned readings: What is this person saying? What is their conclusion? What premises do they use to support their conclusion? What is at stake in their argument? Whom/what are they arguing against? How does their position relate to what others have said? Do I agree or disagree with their point? Why?

Entries must be completed *before the beginning* of each class. Entries will be graded on the basis of whether students have successfully engaged the assigned reading, and whether they have been turned in on time. So, missing a deadline will mean no credit for the assigned entry. Not engaging the reading will mean no credit for the assigned reading. Addressing the assigned reading and posting your entry before the beginning of each class will earn credit for the assigned reading. At the end of the semester, the discussion forum portion of your participation grade will be calculated as a percentage of assignments turned in. If you complete and turn in all assignments on time, you will receive 100% for 50% of your participation grade, or 25 points toward your final course grade. If you skip the discussion forum altogether, the highest grade you can receive for the class is a C.

Canvas for Honors Students

If you are taking this class for Honors credit, you must also complete the following assignment each Tuesday before class. Find a current event that is related to S&T policy, provide a link to (or describe) your source, and discuss how what we are reading/discussing for class relates to the current event. This should be a separate entry, so that Honors students will have 50% more entries than others (typically, 3 per week, instead of 2).

N.B. – Plagiarism will be severely punished. Copying and pasting someone else’s work is cheating. Allowing someone to copy and paste your work is cheating. Googling “Socrates” and copying and pasting from a website is cheating. Copying and pasting from anywhere is cheating, if you present it as your own work. If you don’t understand plagiarism, we can discuss it in class. **You must read each assignment and write your own Canvas entry on that assigned reading before each class for which there is an assigned reading.**

The remainder of your participation grade will be based on your contributions in class. I should definitely know your name well before the end of the semester.

Midterm Exam (25%): the midterm exam for this class is scheduled for **March 4.**

Final Exam (25%): the final exam for this class is scheduled for **April 29.**

Both the midterm and the final exams will consist of a combination of short answer and essay questions. I will provide you with sample questions before each exam. Some of these questions *will appear* on the midterm and the final.

Letter and numerical grades are translatable on the following scale:

A = 90%+
B+ = 87-89.99%
B = 80-86.99%
C+ = 77-79.99%
C = 70-76.99%
D = 60-69.99%
F = 0-59.99%

Required Texts

There are no required books for this class. Reading assignments can be found on the course Canvas site (either as links or as attached documents). Because this class deals with current policy formation, reading assignments will be added to Canvas approximately 1 week before they are due.

Class Schedule (assignments are on Canvas)**Wk 1:** (Jan 19/21)

T: Class intro and expectations

R: “This week I resigned ...” (<https://archive.fo/68e8R>)**Wk 2:** (Jan 26/28)

T: Humboldt, “On the Spirit and the Organisational Framework of Intellectual Institutions in Berlin” (read up through page 250, where it says ‘Here the manuscript ends’).

R: Bush, “Science – The Endless Frontier”

Wk 3: (Feb 2/4)

T: Class meets

R: Class meets

Wk 4: (Feb 9/11)

T: Class meets

R: Class meets

Wk 5: (Feb 16/18)T: Peter Suber, “[Gratis and Libre Open Access](#)” (make sure to click on the link to the Budapest Declaration and read it!)

R: Class meets

Wk 6: (Feb 23/25)

T: Class meets

R: Class meets

Wk 7: (Mar 2/4)

T: Review for midterm

R: MIDTERM EXAM

Wk 8: (Mar 9/11)

T: Class meets

R: Class meets

Wk 9: (Mar 16/18)

T: SPRING BREAK

R: SPRING BREAK

Wk 10: (Mar 23/25)

T: Class meets

R: Class meets

Wk 11: (Mar 30/Apr 1)

T: Class meets

R: Class does not meet (April fools!)

Wk 12: (Apr 5/6/8)

M: LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW

T: Class meets

R: Class meets

Wk 13: (Apr 13/15)

T: Class meets

R: Class meets

Wk 14: (Apr 20/22)

T: Class meets

R: Class meets

Wk 15: (Apr 27/29)

T: Review for Final

R: FINAL EXAM

N.B. – Tuesday, May 4, FRIDAY CLASSES MEET INSTEAD

N.B. – Everything on the syllabus is subject to change. When changes are made, a new version or corresponding changes will be posted on the course Canvas site.