Effective policy analysis, program design, implementation, and management often depend on understanding cultures, organizations and technologies and how they interact with one another.

Whether we are talking about the culture of transportation, technological, military, or business systems, or the processes of organizational, societal or technological change, lack of knowledge of cultures and organizations frequently results in conflict or program or policy failure.

This course is designed to provide practical and intellectual skills, not only to help minimize such failures, but to maximize success in organizational and societal contexts.

We will focus on the role of culture, organizations and technologies in societal, political, and economic processes, nationally and internationally. These three domains are seen as dynamic and interactional, often shaping and being shaped by one another, and by the processes of globalization.

Thus, the objectives of the course include learning to:

- Understand the framing of policy questions
- Observe and describe culture and organization at micro and macro levels
- Observe and describe the role of technologies and their interactions with organizations and culture in global context
- Identify cultural enablers and barriers to effective policy development, program design, and implementation

Students will also be introduced to various methodological skills and will participate in selected exercises:

- Organizational and cultural observation and analysis
- Open-ended interviewing
- Participant observation
- Social network analysis
- Negotiation

The course teaches students pertinent approaches to the study of technologies, organization and culture, from the analysis of technologies and organizational structures, to social networks, to that of belief systems and identities.

One aspect of the course examines culture and cultures in terms of two primary units of analysis: cultures as nations or social-political-economic identifiable sub-societies (e.g., “American,” “Muslim” or “Amish” culture); and cultures as social-political-economic organizations,
communities or groups embedded or situated in national or trans-national units (e.g., the culture of digital society, of business consultants or engineers, of the FBI or the Department of Transportation).

Finally, the course will look at the dynamics between technologies, organizations and culture through a close look at how technologies underpin work and social life. We’ll also look at how technologies shape and are shaped by organizational forces, culminating in an introduction to how powerful but hazardous technologies challenge economic and social arrangements, and how they become embedded in familiar national patterns of industrial, social and cultural life. We will emphasize the issue of control of technology as a policy matter.

**Requirements, Grades and Examinations**

There are three main requirements for the course: three assignments, a final exam, and participation in class discussions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing assignments (2)</th>
<th>30%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackboard posting and discussion</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in class discussions</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assignments**

The first assignment is to analyze the social properties of technologies by doing without a artifact or system that is clearly an expression of energy, transportation or communications technologies. Examples include (and there are countless others) electricity, telecommunications, television, computers, payment systems, automobiles, motors, and the like, for two weeks. Individual self-observation and analysis of technical systems in contemporary use is the focus of this assignment.

The second assignment is to interview colleagues in your workplace, an organization you work in, or a school you have attended, to discover how it works as an organization. You will be looking at the organization from the point of view of a manager or an external evaluator. Therefore, you will learn to be attentive to such aspects as how formal and informal organization structure affects functioning, how decisions are made, who has authority and how it is maintained, and what the norms are that govern the behavior of its members.

These aspects are critical to a thorough understanding of how an organization works, and will be essential not only to helping organizations perform better, but will also be critical to you as you progress in your own career.

Participant observation techniques will be used in this assignment, including establishing an interview protocol, negotiating permission to interview where necessary, keeping detailed interview notes, and analyzing your data to find patterns and gain insight.

Detailed guidance about how to do these assignments will be provided in class.

**Participation in class discussion is essential.** You will be expected to review carefully in advance the material assigned for each class and be prepared to discuss the important aspects of the readings in class (see “Blackboard Posting and Reading Discussion” section below). My role in this process will be to get the discussion started, assist the class in laying out the facts of the case, pose
questions, and help the class to discover general principles running through the case that might be applicable in other situations.

The final will be an open-book, open-note, take-home exam. It will emphasize mastery of the materials in the cases and the readings, particularly your ability to synthesize the material and analyze cases and examples.

**Texts**

The course is based on the following course texts, available at the Arlington Campus Bookstore. However, I recommend looking first at used book websites, such as Alibris: [http://alibris.com](http://alibris.com). Also try Addall, which searches about 30 new and used books sites and lists results by price: [http://www.addall.com](http://www.addall.com).

**Required books**


**Class discussions**

I will ask students to compose one or two questions about the evening’s session before each class, and post them on Blackboard, to start off our discussions. The most useful questions are those that synthesize the material and connect it to the substance of previous class sessions.

Composing questions like this has a pedagogical purpose: it will help you review and summarize what was discussed during the previous class. It will be very helpful to take good notes to help formulate questions.

**Group work I**

*I strongly encourage you to join with students in your own study groups to discuss the material.*

**Writing expectations**

This course demands a lot of writing. Writing is essential in the policy world, and good writing will serve you well in your career. I offer the following observations to help focus your attention on the importance of good writing.

Most common writing problems:
- Poorly formed arguments. Citations and references used out of context.
• Failure to utilize concepts from course literature to make observations, frame arguments, etc.

Writing abilities I expect:
• Produce well-crafted paragraphs that work together to produce strong and clear arguments, well supported by facts, data, observations.
• Write succinct but lively sentences and paragraphs that are appropriate length for their purpose. Employ correct grammar and usage.
• Use the best literature or sources. Use citations and references to support non-trivial arguments. Use concepts from course literature in observations, framing arguments, etc.

The one writing skill all students should acquire: Write grammatically and logically. Don't make your reader work to understand what you are saying. If you yourself don't have a clear idea, your reader won't either.

Getting your mind in shape: How to read in graduate school

This will be (I hope) a fascinating but (I know) demanding class. There is a larger than normal reading load, as befits a 4-credit course. Video and audio program are also required from time to time; they break up the routine of readings. The material itself is compelling: time flies when the reading is good. Group work is strongly encouraged as a way to manage the workload, as well as to connect with fellow classmates. If you have concerns about the time required to get all this done, please let me know.

But there is a larger issue associated with the work this course demands: graduate school should be thought of as a way of getting your mind in shape. It is more about learning how pose cut-to-the-core questions than it is about finding specific answers. It is more about learning to learn, a skill that never loses its currency, and less about learning concrete but often time-limited information. It is more about making an investment in critical thinking than it is about the consumption of entertaining stories or factoids. And, in keeping with the remarks above reading well is critical for writing well.

Getting in shape intellectually takes a lot of work. Some activities help, others get in the way. Things that help include:

Read hard copies of the best daily newspapers. Digital editions are great, but they risk allowing you to over-tailor your exposure to the specific slants or issues news, which can contribute to intellectual myopia. There is nothing like flipping through actual pages of the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, or the Economist, glancing at stories you thought you’d never be interested in, and finding something that grabs your attention.

Read books and long-form journalism, not just summaries or newsfeeds. Reading sustained treatments of arguments, ideas or stories exercises the mind by exposing it to nuance, subtlety, and complexity. Thinking critically depends on knowing more, and more deeply, than thin or hypertextually-linked articles that give you little context or depth. Serious professionals don’t ignore less-demanding media, but they limit its reach. Skim the book review pages of the Times or the Journal, and make it a point to read the New Yorker or the Atlantic Monthly. Visit a good bookstore, sign up for their newsletter and attend author events from time to time. Frequent the University or your community library, and browse widely and borrow frequently.
Avoid substituting commercial television for serious journalism or academic writing. Commercial television is a wonderful medium in its place and time, but is a serious impediment to improved understanding of public issues. It attracts and distracts viewers by raising anxiety levels by surrounding news and reporting about ideas with sensationalist techniques, compresses information into extremely short sound and image bites, and tailors its coverage to the implicit, and sometimes explicit, interests paying advertisers.

Sign up for electronic newsletters for publications in your field. Every profession or occupation has a trade publication specializing in news and analysis pertinent to the field. Make it a point to subscribe and at least skim the contents on a regular basis. Watch for conferences or reports on specific topics that interest you, and develop an understanding of what experts consider the pressing issues of the day. This is the best route to becoming a leading participant yourself. The librarians here at GMU can help you identify which publications to subscribe to, and in many cases can provide access for free.

Use libraries and other professional research assistance rather than relying too heavily on Internet search. The Internet has revolutionized access to information, but has not yet solved the problem of acquiring knowledge or, even more difficult, wisdom. Google searches are so convenient that most of us indulge ourselves with snippets of instantly-discovered information, but put off doing real research using vetted, peer-reviewed or otherwise well-chosen sources that often reside in library databases. The temptation to do a quick search online is like the challenge to public health posed by junk food: the fat, salt, and sugar are so attractive and the marketing is so overwhelming that it is difficult to resist. But a healthy intellectual “diet” should also seek out the fruits and vegetables of critical analytical thinking, and is necessary to give your mind a vigorous mental workout.

Talk about what you are reading and thinking about with family, friends and classmates. Most of what you will actually learn you will learn from people you interact with. Teachers can serve as guides to what to learn, and can provide some feedback on how you are doing. But by and large it is your classmates and friends that provide the best sounding board for what you think about what you are reading. Explaining new ideas to others is a form of teaching and learning: by talking to others, by teaching them, you are learning the material yourself. Doing so helps you see how new information fits with what you already know, and helps you find gaps in your knowledge. Talking about what you’re reading helps you to think more critically about it, and ultimately enables you to master the material.

Group work II
I strongly encourage you to join with students in your own study groups to discuss the material.

Blackboard and library databases

Book chapters and some other readings will be available through Blackboard. Journal articles are available through the Library's databases (journals or newspapers: use E-journal finder).

Blackboard posting and reading discussions

As noted above, we will use the public Discussion Board function on Blackboard to jumpstart the class discussions of the weekly readings. Comments and critiques online will give you time to consider what your classmates have to say about the readings, and help us focus on core issues more quickly. Blackboard comments can also be useful as summaries and discussions of readings, useful for preparing for the final exam.

There are two kinds of comments: Start-off Comments and Response Comments. The class will be divided into two groups. **People whose last names begin with letters A through J are in Group A, everyone else in is Group B.**

Everyone in each group will post Start-off or Response Comments on alternate weeks, i.e, Group A will post Start-off Comments on weeks 1, 3, 5, etc., and Group B will post Response Comments in those weeks. Group B will post Start-off Comments on weeks 2, 4, 6, etc., and in those weeks, Group A will post Response Comments.

**Start-off Comments** are to be posted to Blackboard **no later than 6 pm, 48 hours before class.** Your contribution should be about 300-400 words, in which you:

1. Articulate any special insight or inspiration that week’s reading has given you, or any issues or problems you are having with it;
2. Raise and give initial thoughts on one or two questions the readings suggest that you would like your classmates to reflect on and discuss in class
3. Begin to analyze and synthesize the readings, both within a session (i.e. discuss how readings relate to one another) and across the whole course (i.e. discuss how your view of the general themes and issues of the course are shaped by the readings and class discussions).

**Response Comments** are to be posted by the group that has **not** posted Start-off Comments that week. They must be posted **no later than 6 pm, 24 hours before class,** and should also be about 300-400 words. Response Comments respond to the Start-off Comments and begin (not end!) discussion on the topics raised.

**Posting weekly is required.** You will be assigned to a comment group on the first day of class.

**Late comments.** I take a dim view of late comments: you deprive your classmates of having the benefit of your thoughts while you have the benefit of theirs. Accordingly, I cannot give full credit for late comments. But if you do miss the deadline, post anyway: better late than never.

**Writing help**

Diana Hacker's *A Pocket Manual of Style* is the standard style manual in use in the School, and you should become familiar with it. If you would like help with learning about how to compose your arguments or write more clearly, please contact the University Writing Center, [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu) or see me.
Student journal: *New Voices in Public Policy*

I will nominate the very best papers in this course for publication in *New Voices in Public Policy*. *New Voices* is a student- and faculty-reviewed journal that shares SPP's finest student work with the rest of the world.

**Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

**Group work III**

*I strongly encourage you to join with students in your own study groups to discuss the material.*

**Grading criteria**

For purposes of this course, the grades of A or A- are reserved for sustained excellence and outstanding performance on all aspects of the course. The grades of B and B+ are used to denote mastery of the material and very good performance on all aspects of the course. The grade of B- denotes marginal quality work that is not quite up to graduate level standards. The grade of C denotes work that may be adequate for undergraduate performance, but is not acceptable at the graduate level. The grade of F denotes the failure to perform adequately.

I will occasionally return substandard work to students under the rubric of “revise and resubmit.” Comments on written work are to be taken as general guides and feedback, not specific problems that need fixing. It is not sufficient to simply correct errors I may have pointed out and consider work dramatically improved.

To do well in this course, it is essential that you write well and use the literature we’ve read as a foundation for your arguments. The guidelines below spell out the main evaluation criteria for writing, posting and participating in this class.

**Writing assignments, class participation and Blackboard discussion grading criteria**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Writing is excellent in all respects. Arguments are clearly presented, logic is evident, appropriate detail is provided, literature is used throughout to make key points. Grammar, usage are accurate, without errors, typos, etc. Formatting is clear, consistent, professional. Student is actively engaged in and posts to Blackboard for every class, well in advance for all members to read and react to. Voluntarily raises questions and thoughtfully contributes in each class session. Posts frequently refer to readings and contributions of other students, both from Blackboard postings and from class discussions. All readings are discussed thoughtfully, and student makes a strong effort to synthesize material and explore its meaning and implications. Builds on other student comments, and is respectful of the views of others. Postings often raise questions about the material, both in the context of a particular session, but also more thematically, across the course as a whole. Writing is clear, logical, and succinct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Writing is very good. Arguments are clearly presented, logic is evident, appropriate detail is</td>
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</table>
provided, literature is used most of the time to make key points. Some grammar, usage inconsistencies, a few errors, typos, etc. Formatting is clear, consistent.

Student frequently participates in class, and posts for nearly every class, sufficiently in advance for most members to read and react to. Engages in class discussions without prompting. Prepared most of the time, but not always. Posts refer to readings and contributions of other students, both from Blackboard and class discussions. Most readings are discussed, and student makes an effort to synthesize material and explore its meaning and implications. Postings raise questions about the material, both in the context of a particular session, but also thematically, across the course as a whole. Writing is clear, logical, and succinct. Performance is good, but not consistently excellent.

**B+**

Writing is good. Arguments are mostly clearly presented, logic is sometimes not evident, occasional over-generalization is used, literature is used from time to time to make key points. Some grammar, usage inconsistencies, a few errors, typos, etc. Formatting is pretty good, with the occasional consistency.

Student attends class and participates in discussions sometimes, but performance is not consistent. Posts for most class sessions, and in time for readers to react. Posts often refer to readings and contributions from other students, but not as frequently as above. Postings refer often to one or two readings rather than all or nearly all, but they provide insight into the material discussed. Postings sometimes raise questions about the readings in the context of the class discussion at hand. Writing is usually clear, logical and succinct, with only an occasional overly long paragraph or run-on sentence.

**B**

Writing is workmanlike, okay. Arguments are clearly presented most of the time, logic is mostly evident, with the occasional over-generalization. Literature is used sometimes to make key points. Some grammar, usage inconsistencies, a few errors, typos, etc. Formatting is a bit sloppy, inconsistent. Writing in this category is usually just good enough, but is not memorable, and often hard to critique in specific terms.

Student attends class and participates in discussions sometimes, but performance is not consistent. Student responds when asked, but does little beyond that. Posts for a majority of class sessions, and usually in time for readers to react. Posts sometimes refer to readings and contributions from other students, but sometimes not. Postings mostly refer to a particular reading, mostly as a summary or description, rather than an analysis. May get online discussion off track. Questions are only occasionally raised about the readings. Writing is sometimes unclear or exhibits questionable logic, and can be succinct, with only an occasional overly long paragraph or run-on sentence.

**B-**

Writing is not quite up to graduate school standards. Arguments are sometimes muddy presented, logic is sometimes not evident, occasional over-generalization is used, literature is used sparingly. Some grammar, usage inconsistencies, a few errors, typos, etc. Formatting is a bit sloppy, inconsistent. Writing in this category is usually not quite good enough, and if it is memorable, it is because it seems out of line from what we’ve come to expect. It is often hard to critique in specific terms.

Student attends class, but is rather passive, and seldom volunteers to answer questions. Student reluctantly participates, and sometimes misses posting, sometimes not in time for readers to react. Readings are generally not the focus of the postings as much as a discussion of some of the ideas that the material raises. Personal commentary dominates the discussion.
Writing is sometimes hard to understand, due to flaws in logic, grammar or structure.

C Writing suffers from lack of precision, unclear logic, poor argumentation. Grammar and formatting are idiosyncratic and sloppy. Writing in this category needs considerable improvement.

Student does not attend all classes, and posts on an irregular basis, usually not in time for readers to react. Comes to class unprepared to answer basic questions. Seldom volunteers for anything, very passive. Perfunctory postings refer to some of the ideas that the material raises, but readings are mentioned only in passing. Most of the postings are reactive only, and sometimes it is hard to tell if the student read any of the assigned readings or other postings at all. Posts are brief, with little substance, and hard to understand. Usually seems to be present only in body, but not in mind and spirit. Takes notes and hopes that he/she will not have to speak.

Grade equivalents are given below. These values will be used to calculate grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Received grade</th>
<th>Numeric value</th>
<th>Calculated grade from…</th>
<th>…to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0</td>
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Missed class sessions

Missing class is strongly discouraged, and I will not admit students who do not attend the first session, even with notice. More than one absence may jeopardize your grade, if not your ability to keep up with our rapid pace.

If for some reason you cannot attend a class, your participation grade can be maintained by providing me a 750-word summary and analysis of the week's reading, with special attention to the critical questions they raise. This is to ensure that you have dug into the material, and will therefore have less risk falling behind the rest of the class.

Plagiarism

All work must be your own. In general, where the work of others is used, even in paraphrased form, it must appropriately referenced. When in doubt, cite! Plagiarism is an Honor Code violation: http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html

The main things to keep in mind:

- Know your sources and what they say.
- Keep track of your sources when you copy and paste, and cite them accurately.
- If you quote a key source, explain what the author says in your own words.
Avoid the temptation to simply change a few words or sentence order in a copied text. This is not original writing, but instead is incorrect paraphrasing, which is a form of plagiarism.

If deadline pressure leads you to even consider passing off others’ work as your own, DON’T DO IT. Contact me to discuss your situation. There are better ways to deal with stress that don’t risk expulsion.

If you have any questions about correct citation, paraphrasing and writing, let me know. The following resources will also help:

GMU University Writing Center: Plagiarism
http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/?p=499

Washington State University
http://www.wsulibs.wsu.edu/plagiarism/main.html

Indiana University: Plagiarism: What It is and How to Recognize and Avoid It
http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml

Here follows the official SPGIA Policy on Plagiarism:

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of SPGIA. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of SPGIA takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (eg. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the SPGIA policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The SPGIA policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.

‘Nuf said.
Group work IV

_I strongly encourage you to join with students in your own study groups to discuss the material._

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**COURSE SYLLABUS**

All reading and viewing is required to be completed before we meet for the first session.

**Session 1: Introduction to the Topic and Overview of Course**

*Group A post Start Off Comments, Group B Response Comments*

As the semester starts, I’d like to get your intellectual and public policy juices flowing by watching a provocative film, reading three thematically-orienting book chapters, and begin a conversation about what it takes to succeed in your field. We'll talk about how the course will connect the three seemingly disparate themes, which in reality are integrated in fascinating ways. Technologies are our starting place, but the readings for this week take us into the other domains of the course as well, and show that it is fruitful to consider all three together to understand their importance to public policy.

The film is *Manufactured Landscapes*, a documentary about photographer Edward Burtinsky and his efforts as an artist to capture the consequences of industrial society on the natural world. This film serves as an early starting point in our conversations about how technological or industrial development, large-scale organizations, culture, and public policymaking interact and influence modern society and public well-being.

The texts are the first of our readings on technology that will presage much of the discussion we’ll have throughout the semester. The film and the readings each take up important questions about technology, organization and culture; _pay close attention to them, as we’ll refer to the ideas in all these materials numerous times over the course of the semester._

Finally, we’ll discuss briefly Agre’s short piece on becoming a professional in your chosen field. Agre is a thoughtful observer of Internet culture, and his concern for helping graduate and professional school students navigate the changing nature of professional networks and the process of becoming a leader are on directly on point to the larger purpose of this course, and indeed the School of Public Policy itself.

**Read these pieces carefully, and be prepared to discuss them during our first session.**

1) Burtinsky’s work focuses on large-scale industrial artifacts, built and managed by vast, complex organizations and systems. What does he want his viewers to take away from his work? What do we know about the modern world after seeing his photographs that we didn’t before seeing them?

2) What is a technology? How do the authors’ views of technology differ from common usage, say, in the media or everyday parlance? Is this a surprise? For these authors, how are organizations, social life and culture related to technologies?

3) Westrum asks how can society manage its technologies; he clearly worries that we are less and less able to keep up with the challenges they bring. What does he mean? What examples can you point to?

4) Agre argues that leadership is both a goal and a process of networking. What does he mean by “leadership,” and what does he suggest professional school students do to become leaders themselves?
Manufactured Landscapes, Jennifer Baichwal, director, Foundry Films and the National Film Board of Canada, 2007.

Session 2: Technology and Progress
Group B post Start Off Comments, Group A Response Comments

Thinking about technology means thinking about progress. Most people have no doubt that technology is good, and that more is better. It almost goes without saying that innovation and economic growth based on technological development has meant rising material welfare, and greater national economic, political and military power. The evidence of the truth of this is apparent all around us.

But this conventional assessment is also superficial. There is a lot more going on in how people and technologies interact, and in how people think of them. The very idea of progress has undergone significant change, and will continue to evolve.

In addition, technological changes affect nearly everyone, and the pace of change is picking up. Scale, complexity and unintended consequences of technological development are accelerating at an alarming rate.

So, how should we think about technological change? Who benefits from such changes? Does technology have a “dark side?” Are there alternative objectives of social development, and how do technologies fit into them? How do communities develop their collective aims, and how do they defend them?


Optional:
Session 3: Three Paradigms of Technology, Organization and Culture:
Automobiles, Food and Surveillance in Modern America

This session starts out with a close look at three of the most influential and powerful technology systems the world has ever known: the gas-powered, internal combustion automobile, the modern American food system, and the surveillance society.

In this session, we will take aim at the importance of technological systems, as contrasted to technological artifacts or “gadgets.” This difference in perspective is important, for much of the “wow” factor in contemporary technology focuses on single elements of much more complex systems that have important social and political properties that far outweigh their importance as cool gizmos.

Called “the machine that changed the world,” the automobile is an ideal vehicle (excuse the pun) for looking at a technical system in all its technological, organizational, political, economic and cultural glory. The modern food system, which feeds a vast majority of Americans, and increasingly people around the world, is fast becoming one of the most powerful influences on contemporary life. Finally, nearly ubiquitous surveillance systems, including data mining, closed circuit video, Internet monitoring, face recognition technologies and the like, are central to both modern business and modern governance, for good and ill. All three are at the heart of numerous current policy debates.

Studying automobiles, food and surveillance as complex technological, organizational and cultural systems is not just an end in itself. These systems are also paradigms for looking at any large technological system, in any society and at any level of development.

Food System

Automobile System
“Working at Ford in the 1920s,” “Ford During the Slide into the Great Depression,”
   Part 1: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtYRLtT8bvY&feature=related (4:23)
   Part 2: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFsBC0_Uglg&feature=relmfu 7:05
   Part 3: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5J2zW7mvyM&NR=1 (8:27)
Surveillance System

Session 4: Technological Choices, Sponsors and Politics
*Group B post Start Off Comments, Group A Response Comments*

One common way of thinking about technologies is to consider them as inanimate objects. But this narrow view obscures important economic and political factors that give life to technologies and enable them to take enduring roles in our world. We need to consider “who” as well as “what” technologies are. How are technologies chosen? Why do we have one particular design or configuration of a technology or technological system rather than another? Is it the case that the “best” technology wins out over its competitors, as celebrated in the old phrase “Build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door”? Or are there other factors at play, such as path dependence, economic power, lobbying and marketing, bureaucratic politics, and the like, that help determine the outcome? Are there matters of social justice and democratic politics at stake?

Sponsors and path dependence

Cases
Session 5: Controlling Technologies: Ethics, Risk and Democracy
Group A post Start Off Comments, Group B Response Comments

In this session, we move from a discussion about understanding technologies as they affect individuals, organizations, society and cultures, to one about controlling them. We want to reduce the likelihood that technologies will result in harm to, and make them more consistent with norms of democratic societies. Technological controversies suggest that the interests of technology designers and promoters are out of alignment with the interests of some parts of the public, but controversies can also provide the means for technology designers to incorporate feedback.

Five main ideas comprise the conceptual foundations of this week’s reading: risk, ethics and responsibility, political controversy, foresight, and anticipatory democratic governance. As you compose your thoughts about the reading for your Blackboard posting, aim to combine these ideas with a discussion of the cases noted below: the food system, synthetic biology, and vaccinations.


Cases:


Session 6: Language, Values, Politics and Culture
Group B post Start Off Comments, Group A Response Comments

Language shapes what we think and believe in, and how we act. The words and metaphors we use to think and communicate can shape how we perceive the world, and thereby enable or constrain certain types of action. They also may contain hints of individuals' moral foundations, which in turn can affect policy and culture.

At the same time, the production and dissemination of language in mass society, both totalitarian and liberal-democratic, has changed profoundly during the industrial era: whereas once the church or state
played a predominant role in shaping how people think, it is now the market that leaves the biggest mark. Values also, obviously, shape policy preferences, but have been shown to do so in ways quite different from the usual left-right state-market divides in much public discourse. This session will look at language, values and politics, and examine some of the institutional features that shape their use and development, particularly in market-based societies.

With these readings, we set the stage for understanding how certain kinds of political discourse emerged as ways to manage society in the early 20th century, as the productive power of industry began to create tremendous economic and social changes in the developed societies. Central to this story is Edward Bernays, the founder of modern public relations and advertising, and a nephew of Sigmund Freud.


Pollay, Richard W., “Propaganda, puffing and the public interest,” *Public Relations Review*, vol. 16, 1990, pp. 39-54, [http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/cgi/getdoc?tid=zkh84c00&fmt=pdf&ref=results](http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/cgi/getdoc?tid=zkh84c00&fmt=pdf&ref=results)


Session 7: How to Find Out What’s Going On with People: Varieties of Ethnographic Methods

*Group A post Start Off Comments, Group B Response Comments*

In this session we’ll explore the various ways that students of organizations, society and culture come to understand what is going on in the messy human reality “out there.”


**Optional:**


Session 8: Organizations: Natural, Rational and Open Systems

Group B post Start Off Comments, Group A Response Comments

Human life is so entangled with organizations that we hardly notice them – except that we notice them literally all the time. In many respects, they co-evolved with large-scale industry and technology. Yet taking a few steps back and seeing what organizations really are, what they do, and how they operate is critical for being able to work effectively with them. This session will sharpen our understanding of organizations by introducing us to several perspectives on them, each with its own consequences for personal satisfaction, economic success and social power. We’ll also connect technologies to organizational structure and change, particularly in terms of rationality and organizations’ efforts to control the factors of uncertainty, both in and outside organizational boundaries.


ch. 2, “Mechanization takes command: organizations as machines,” pp. 11-31,


Elwell, Frank, “The sociology of Max Weber,” Rogers State University, unpublished text.


Session 9: Organizations: Open Systems and Dealing with Complexity and Risk

Group A post Start Off Comments, Group B Response Comments

Much of our thinking about technologies and organizations concerns them in everyday and routine contexts. But as the world becomes more complex and interdependent, and as technologies become more powerful, successful operations become more critical to society’s functioning (health, safety, security, environment). Challenges arise particularly in the operation and management of high hazard or risky systems, such as nuclear power or in contexts in which society sustain virtually no failures, such as in counter-terrorism and homeland security. This is the world we increasingly inhabit. This session will address current thinking about how technological systems might be considered from the point of view of public policy.


ch. 3, “Coupling, Complexity and Catastrophe,” pp. 62-100,


Session 10: Organizations: Power, Resistance, Change and Culture
Group B post Start Off Comments, Group A Response Comments

This session will continue our examination of organizations, focusing on learning, culture and politics in organizational life. Building on last week’s discussion of contingency theory, we will look at how some organizations come to possess the capacity to learn continuously as they grapple with rapid and unpredictable change. In addition, all organizations have cultures that shape the social reality that staff and managers function in. Organizations are also inherently political, and the participants are all political actors, whether they like it or not. Finally, organizations all have unique operating styles or cultures, which can be the source of great strength and success, and sometimes of serious trouble or problems, even failure. Understanding how organizations work in practical terms, and how to diagnose their problems, is important for staff and management in any organization, in any setting.


Session 11: Information Networks, Social Networks and Social Capital
Group A post Start Off Comments, Group B Response Comments

In this session, we’ll shift from an examination of organizations to that of social networks and social capital, and we’ll look in part at how information networks affect them. Social networks are of course not new, but have gained currency in the last three decades, fueled by the ubiquity of the Internet and other networking technologies. Social capital is a different but related take on the social implications of certain kinds of groupings and their interactions. Both concepts are germane to the study of public policy in that they relate to how society works (or doesn’t work) in ways that often call for social and policy action.

All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace is a new documentary by Adam Curtis, whom we’ve met before. In this film, Curtis proposes that computers and the Internet have not liberated us but distorted and simplified our view of the world around us. Provocatively, he connects Ayn Rand’s radical individualist philosophy to Alan Greenspan’s ideas about the financial system, Internet entrepreneurs and the “California Ideology,” and to ecologists’ ideas about self-organizing systems. He argues that ideas about self-organizing systems and technology are convincing to many in the business and financial sectors, and have persuaded them that society can do away with the need for hierarchies and politics. Unfortunately, he argues, power is always present, despite the techno-utopian promise.

Causes

**Effects**


**Session 12: Values, Cultures and Public Policy**

*Group B post Start Off Comments, Group A Response Comments*

This session will take up the question of the role values that may underlie the many of ways individuals, large groups and nations, are organized politically and economically, and the role of organizations and institutions in establishing and sustaining group coherence. The question of culture change, and culture's relationship to democracy will also be discussed. Finally, the session is also about qualitative and quantitative methods of measuring or assessing culture, and an introduction to a widely used large-scale survey project and its results.

ch. 6, “Culture and organization: getting things done in a multicultural world,” pp. 116-137,


**Homework:**

2) Download the set of WVS questions from Blackboard, answer the questions for yourself as a citizen of your own country, and use the WVS website online data analysis function ([http://www.wvsevsdb.com/wvs/WVSAnalize.jsp](http://www.wvsevsdb.com/wvs/WVSAnalize.jsp)) to compare your answers to those of the United States and three other countries; varying them by level of development, and by type of political or economic system.
3) Be prepared to discuss your findings in class. Did you uncover any surprises?
Session 13: Culture, Poverty and Economic Development

Group A post Start Off Comments, Group B Response Comments

Anthropologists have been studying cultures for decades, and have developed deep understanding of how they work by seeing them from the inside and from close up. Such approaches emphasize such concepts as roles, authority structures, formal and informal rules, beliefs, rituals, and the like.

These ethnographic accounts strive to make no value judgments, but some have criticized practitioners for bending too far backward to defend a culture even when it violates certain basic human rights, such as ritual murder, genital mutilation, slavery, and the like. The issue has long been debated in anthropological circles, and is today still not resolved.

A recent strand of thinking (or rather a reworking of an older tradition) holds that culture may account for economic failure in many countries in Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia, or distinct national subcultures, such as ghetto communities in American cities. Authors in this school want to explain, and to change, such cultural elements to improve economic and social wellbeing.

At the same time, an equally venerable tradition in comparative political studies holds that the United States possesses a number of truly exceptional characteristics, which together make the country both a beacon for economic growth and personal freedom, but also the locus of extraordinary crime, social mayhem, and inequality. The following chapters provide a starting point for our own discussion of what culture is, and how and why it matters in public policy.


Session 14: Civilizations, Contact and Conflict

Group B post Start Off Comments, Group A Response Comments

Conflicts over fundamental values can lead to polarized positions, sometimes with dramatic and tragic results, as we have recently seen with the September 11th attack and Middle Eastern politics, from Israel and Palestine to Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and beyond. Regrettably, these are no longer extreme cases. They point the urgent need for much greater cultural sensitivity if they are to be solved, and if more such conflicts are to be avoided.
How much of this conflict is due to forces of economic and technological change and modernization? What might have been done to minimize the chances of a destructive outcome? We will dip a toe into these roiling waters with a discussion of “Muslim rage” and revisit the clash of civilizations argument of Samuel Huntington.

http://www.sullivan-county.com/id3/lewis1.htm part 1
Said, Edward, "Islam through Western eyes," The Nation, April 26, 1980,
http://www.thenation.com/article/islam-through-western-eyes
“The Devil in Me,” This American Life, episode 340, September 7, 2007, segment “Act 1: And So We Meet Again,” on an Iraq War veteran who came home from the war plagued by feelings of hate and anger toward Muslims, and his surprising change of view (34:00),

Take-home final exam