

**University of British Columbia - SOCI 260A-001 - Technology, Work  
and Society  
Winter 2013 Term 1  
Course Outline**

<https://sites.google.com/site/technologyworkandsociety/>

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**Instructor**

Dr. Evan Keith Preston [kpreston@mail.ubc.ca]

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**Classes**

Monday, Wednesday and Friday 11:00-12:00. Room - GEOG 101

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**Office Time**

By appointment.

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**Overview and Learning Outcomes**

Information and communication technologies are the latest technologies to have had an impact not only on everyday non-work life but also on the organization and experience of work. This course introduces past and contemporary debates about the relationships among work, technology and society and introduces and assesses a number of concepts that allow us to think sociologically about these aspects of the world around us. An acquaintance with concepts that encourage us to think critically about the social world will potentially also encourage us to change it for the better.

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**Learning Objectives**

After completing this course students will be able to: identify the major sociological perspectives on the relationships among work, technology and society; explain the influence of different national contexts on the use of new technologies in manufacturing; explain the influence of different national contexts on the use of new technologies in office work; explain the influence of different national contexts on the use of new technologies in managerial work; outline the implications of new forms of work organization; describe the relationship between technological change and globalization; explain how technological innovation is influenced by national contexts; assess arguments about the future of work, technology and society.

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**Organization**

The course will be based on a close reading of the required text and organized as a mix of individual directed study, lectures, and in-class individual and group activities. Through individual directed study students will read required and recommended course material. Lectures will provide disciplinary and social context for this reading material and introduce concepts and examples relevant to this material but not included in the required reading. Ongoing in-class individual and group activities such as quizzes, discussions, informal presentations, video viewing, problem solving... will reinforce and assess understanding of both reading and

lecture material.

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### **Required and Recommended Reading**

The required reading for the course is from: Boreham, Paul, Rachel Parker, Paul Thompson and Richard Hall. 2008. *New Technology @ Work*. New York: Routledge. Throughout the course the instructor will recommend additional reading material.

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### **Grading**

The grade for the course will be determined by performance on **3 in-class tests and a final exam**. Test 1 is worth 20% of the course grade. Test 2 is worth 25% of the course grade. Test 3 is worth 25% of the course grade. The exam is worth 30% of the course grade. Each test will require responses to 4 out of 6 short-answer questions. The exam will require a response to 1 out of 6 essay questions. **Test 1** - This will be held in the last class of week 3. It will consist of questions based on reading and class [lecture, video, class discussion...] material from weeks 1-3. **Test 2** - This will be held in the last class of week 6. It will consist of questions based on reading and class [lecture, video, class discussion...] material from weeks 4-6. **Test 3** - This will be held in the last class of week 9. It will consist of questions based on reading and class [lecture, video, class discussion...] material from weeks 7-9. **Exam** - This will be held in the formal exam period. It will consist of questions based on reading and class [lecture, video, class discussion...] material from weeks 10-13.

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### **Marking Criteria for Responses to Short-answer Questions**

Appearance - name and student number; legibility; organization; consistent formatting; double-spacing; numbered pages; word count; clean paper. Breadth - inclusion of key points. Clarity - correct disciplinary terminology used; meaning of sentences clear; correct grammar, spelling and punctuation; logical arrangement of points.

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### **Marking Criteria for Responses to Essay Questions**

Appearance - name and student number; legibility; organization; consistent formatting; double-spacing; numbered pages; word count; clean paper. Breadth - inclusion of introductory, key, context [social and/or academic], example, critical and concluding points. Clarity - correct disciplinary terminology used; meaning of sentences clear; correct grammar, spelling and punctuation; logical arrangement of points.

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### **Grades**

An 'A' grade [80%-84% = A-, 85%-89% = A, 90%-100%] will be awarded for exceptional performance.

A 'B' grade [68%-71% = B-, 72%-75% = B, 76%-79% = B+] will be

awarded for competent performance.

A 'C' grade [55%-59% = C-, 60%-63% = C, 64%-67% = C+] will be awarded for adequate performance.

A 'D' grade [50%-54%] will be awarded for just-adequate performance.

An 'F' grade [0%-49%] will be awarded for an inadequate performance.

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**Academic Integrity** - please be familiar with University policies on this.

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### **Topics**

**Technology and Work.** Introduction to Sociology. Introduction to popular and sociological perspectives on technology and work. New technology and work. [Reading: course text chapter 1 and class notes]

**Technology and Change at Work.** Technological determinism. Political materialism. Social constructionism. [Reading: course text chapter 2 and class notes]

**Manufacturing and Technology.** Technologies in manufacturing. Advanced manufacturing technologies. Cross-national differences. [Reading: course text chapter 3 and class notes]

**Office Work and Technology.** A history of office work. The call centre phenomenon. [Reading: course text chapter 4 and class notes]

**Managerial Work and Technology.** Managerial work. Managing managers. Knowledge management. ICT workers. [Reading: course text chapter 5 and class notes]

**New Work and Technology.** Distributed work forms. Telework. Reorganization of work. The virtual workplace. [Reading: course text chapter 6 and class notes]

**The Global Context.** Dimensions of globalization. Technological change. [Reading: course text chapter 7 and class notes]

**National Technological Systems.** Innovation. Varieties of capitalism and innovation. [Reading: course text chapter 8 and class notes]

**The Future of Work.** Technology and employment. Restructuring. ICT and services. Quality of work. [Reading: course text chapter 9 and class notes]

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