

The University of British Columbia

**SOCI 260 (002) Technology, Work and Society**

Location: ANSO 207

Classes: Mon/Wed 4:00 5:30pm

Instructor: Prabhsharanbir Singh

Email: [prabh.isgp@gmail.com](mailto:prabh.isgp@gmail.com)

Office Hours: By Appointment

Office: ANSO 3127

**Course Description**

This course is designed to make students familiar with the continual transformations in the realm of human labor due to fact-paced technological development. We will focus on how the recent rise of digital communications and networking technologies have changed the way people understand and engage with their working environments. We will analyze concepts such as Playbour (the blurring of boundaries between work and play e.g. at Googleplex), Hacktivism and Free Labor for media outlets such as Huffington Post to understand the shifting patterns of labor under technological capitalism. The investigation of political economy of digital work place will be an indispensable part of the course. This course aims to make explicit the hidden connections of exploitation of labor and the increased penetration of our everyday lives by new communications technologies. The purpose of this course is to bring to attention the radical transformation of work by recent technologies. Rigorous and respectable discussion will be a core feature of this class.

**Course Learning Objectives and Goals**

1. To familiarize students with sociological significance of technology.
2. To encourage students to think critically about technology. A special emphasis will be given on the ways in which technology has transformed the nature of work and working environments in late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.
3. To understand the political economy working behind recent technological advancements and its implications for working class.
4. To understand the complex relationship of neo-liberalism, subject formation and technologically driven globalization.

**Grading:**

Where a final exam is scheduled and you do not write the exam or withdraw from the course before the deadline date, you will be assigned a N grade. Unless otherwise specified on the course outline, all other graded assignments in this course must be completed for a final grade

other than N to be assigned.

**Your final mark in the class will be based on the following:**

**A) Class Presentation 20%**

Every student is required to make a presentation in class. The theme of their presentation should be original and related to course readings. Students are expected to choose a case study such as a geographical region or a specific time period to illustrate nuances of arguments put forth in the readings. They can supplement, complicate, or challenge that argument. This assignment is aimed at checking students' ability to convey their ideas coherently, concisely and in a stimulating way. Each student will have 15-20 minutes for presentation and 10 minutes for discussion. Students are encouraged to discuss their topic with their instructor in advance, preferably during the first or second week.

**B) Class Participation 10%**

An active participation in classroom discussions and other activities is considered an integral part to achieving the goals of the course. Students are expected to come to class fully prepared, having read the required readings and preferably suggested readings as well.

**C) Research Paper 30%**

Students will be encouraged to discuss their topic or a range of possible topics with their instructor. It is suggested that they prepare a proposal first and show it to the instructor for feedback. The length of the research paper should be around 3,000 words. Students are expected to make a thorough and critical engagement with the texts studied in class and with other relevant literature. Their take on the subject matter should be nuanced and review of literature comprehensive. "A 12-step guide to research and writing for students: One essay at a time" by Candis Steenbergen and Robyn Diner can be found here:

[http://journals.sfu.ca/thirdspace/index.php/journal/article/viewArticle/resources\\_12stepguide/153](http://journals.sfu.ca/thirdspace/index.php/journal/article/viewArticle/resources_12stepguide/153)

**D) Final Exam 40%**

**Academic Dishonesty and Misconduct Policy**

Students are responsible for informing themselves of the guidelines of acceptable and non-acceptable conduct for graded assignments established by their instructors for specific courses and of the examples of academic misconduct set out below. Academic misconduct that is subject to disciplinary measures includes, but is not limited to, engaging in, attempting to engage in, or assisting others to engage, in any of the actions described in the link below. Please visit this link for more information:

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

**Required Texts:**

Scholz, Trebor (Ed.). 2013. *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*. New York & London: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2014. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York & London: Routledge.

### **Recommended Texts:**

Peters, Michael A. & Bulut, Ergin. 2011. *Cognitive Capitalism, Education and Digital Labor*. New York: Peter Lang.

Fuchs, Christian & Sandoval, Marisol. 2014. *Critique, social media and the information society*. New York & London: Routledge.

### **Prerequisites: NONE**

### **Schedule of Topics and Readings:**

#### **Week I: Introduction to the Course**

Course Overview

Class Requirements

Determining dates for class presentations

Assignment of class discussion topics etc.

#### **January 5: No Reading**

#### **January 7: The Need for Studying Digital Labor**

Fuchs, Christian. 2014. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 1-19.

### **Week II**

#### **The Changing Nature of Capitalism**

#### **January 12:**

Fuchs, Christian. 2014. "Capitalism or Information Society?" in *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 135-151.

#### **January 14:**

Ross, Andrew. 2013. "In Search of the Lost Paycheck" in Scholz, Trebor (Ed.). *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 13-32.

## **Week III**

### **Playbour: The New Form of Free Labor**

#### **January 19:**

Terranova, Tiziana. 2013. "Free Labour" in Scholz, Trebor (Ed.). *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 33-57.

#### **January 21:**

Kosnik, Abigail De. 2013. "Fandom as Free Labor" in Scholz, Trebor (Ed.). *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 98-111.

## **Week IV**

### **Political Economy of Digital Labor**

#### **January 26:**

Cubitt, Sean. 2013. "The Political Economy of Cosmopolis" in Scholz, Trebor (Ed.). *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 58-68.

#### **January 28:**

Dean, Jodi. 2013. "Whatever Blogging" in Scholz, Trebor (Ed.). *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 127-146.

## **Week V**

### **Gaming and Digital Work**

#### **February 2:**

Wark, McKenzie. 2013. "Considerations on a Hacker Manifesto" in Scholz, Trebor (Ed.). *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 69-76.

#### **February 4:**

Nakamura, Lisa. 2013. "Don't Hate the Player, Hate the Game: The Racialization of Labor in World of Warcraft" in Scholz, Trebor (Ed.). *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 187-204.

## **Week VI**

### **Digital Labor and Social Media**

#### **February 11:**

Fuchs, Christian. 2014. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 243-282.

## **Week VII**

### **Politics after Digital Labor II**

#### **February 23:**

Fuchs, Christian. 2013. "Class and Exploitation on the Internet" in Scholz, Trebor (Ed.). *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 211-224.

#### **February 25:**

Clough, Patricia Tincineto. 2013. "The Digital, Labor, and Measure Beyond Biopolitics" in Scholz, Trebor (Ed.). *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 112-126.

## **Week VIII**

### **Politics after Digital Labor I**

#### **March 2:**

Fuchs, Christian. 2014. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 283-323.

#### **March 4:**

Fuchs, Christian. 2014. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 323-347.

## **Week IX**

### **Effects of Digital Labor**

#### **March 9:**

Andrejevic, Mark. 2013. "Estranged Free Labor" in Scholz, Trebor (Ed.). *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 149-164.

#### **March 11:**

Beller, Jonathan. 2013. "Digitality and the Media of Dispossession" in Scholz, Trebor (Ed.). *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 1165-186.

## **Week X**

## **Networking and Digital Labor**

### **March 16:**

Aytes, Ayhan. 2013. "Return of the Crowds: Mechanical Turk and Neoliberal States of Exception" in Scholz, Trebor (Ed.). *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 79-97.

### **March 18:**

Rossiter, Ned & Soenke Zehle. 2013. "Acts of Translation: Organized Networks as Algorithmic Technologies of the Common" in Scholz, Trebor (Ed.). *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 225-240.

## **Week XI**

### **Digital Labor: Case Studies I**

#### **March 23:**

Fuchs, Christian. 2014. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 153-181.

#### **March 25:**

Fuchs, Christian. 2014. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 182-199.

## **Week XII**

### **Digital Labor: Case Studies II**

#### **March 30:**

**\*\*Research Paper Due\*\***

Fuchs, Christian. 2014. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 200-232.

#### **April 1:**

Fuchs, Christian. 2014. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 233-242.

## **Week XIII**

#### **April 8:**

### **Revision and Final Remarks**

**Final Exam: TBA**