

TECHNOLOGY EQUALS PROGRESS?
Foundation Seminar RESC 098–21
Society and Technology Residential College
Fall 2014

Instructor: Sally Koutsoliotas, Olin 167, 7-3105, s.koutsoliotas@bucknell.edu

Hours: Monday 3:00–4:22; ACWS 108 (common meeting)
Tuesday, Thursday, 9:30–10:52, OLIN 275.

Web-site: <http://www.eg.bucknell.edu/~koutsolts/RESC098/>

Description: Technology is often, unquestioningly, perceived as a measure of the advancement of a society. The advantages that it provides, from the eradication of diseases to the capabilities of mobile communication, cause us to embrace technology. It is seen as a powerful tool for solving problems and alleviating the chores of regular routines. But does technological advancement ensure universal benefits?

Every new development is a consequence of choices made by the members of a society. Whether it is government funding agencies prioritizing research areas and directions, private foundations sponsoring stem cell experiments, venture capitalists deciding their next project, or corporations promoting their next generation of products, society's underlying values are implicit in all technological developments.

The goal of this course is to explore the intimate connection between new technologies and the underlying values of the society developing them. By acquiring an appreciation for the complexities surrounding the introduction of new devices and techniques, a foundation for more deliberate, better-informed decisions can be established.

Required Textbooks:

They Say/I Say, (3rd edition), by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein.
Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology, by Neil Postman.

Other Textbooks:

Technology Matters, by David E. Nye.
Technology and Society: Building a Sociotechnical Future, (5th edition),
edited by Deborah G. Johnson and Jameson M. Wetmore.

Useful References:

The Chicago Manual of Style, (16th edition), edited by The University of Chicago Press Staff.
The Elements of Style, (4th edition), by William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White.
A Pocket Style Manual, (6th edition), by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers.
A Writer's Reference, (7th edition), by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers.

Office Hours: Monday 2:00 – 3:00; Wednesday: 11:00 – noon, or by arrangement.

The Syllabus:

Throughout the course, we will explore three key questions:

1. In which ways are technology and society intertwined?
2. What defines progress and how do we measure it?
3. How/Can technology be guided to achieve a 'better' future?

Readings and assignments will be posted on our web-page for each of the units. Some diversions from the prescribed readings may occur depending on the particular interests of the class.

Course Structure:

The class meetings will be a mixture of focused group discussions, short presentations/lectures, and other activities, some computational. In addition, visits to the Library and Craft Center are planned. Prior to each class, you will be assigned a reading/writing task which will serve to deepen your level of interaction and discussion in the class. At the end of each week, you will prepare a short (approximately one-page) paper. At other times, journal entries will be submitted using our web-page. Two longer writing assignments (papers), for which there will also be an opportunity for feedback and revision, will require independent literature research.

Course Objectives:

As a foundation seminar, the prime objective of this course is to encourage the development and further refinement of skills and habits that will foster a successful academic career. Moreover, the practice of critical thinking and analysis encountered in this course will lay the groundwork for continued intellectual engagement beyond your time at Bucknell.

There will be a strong focus on improving your ability to write clearly, particularly short, positional papers. Since this can only be achieved through the process of careful analysis, critical examination, and an appreciation for techniques of persuasive rhetoric, this objective encompasses several of the course's underlying goals.

The Foundation Seminar:

The following excerpt is taken from the document describing Bucknell University's College Core Curriculum for the College of Arts and Sciences.

Foundation seminars introduce first-year students to the learning community in which they are expected to participate actively while at Bucknell. Through a wide variety of activities, students come to value and to emulate the characteristics of an engaged learner. In particular, they take responsibility for their own learning and understand how specific activities are related to the learning goals of a course. They take an active role in evaluating their own learning, and if necessary, seek assistance in order to achieve the learning goals. They can apply and transfer knowledge across disciplines and can make connections at various levels. They are aware that learning is a social act that requires collaboration and self-awareness as well as being receptive to constructive criticism and alternative ideas or solutions.

Students improve their ability to analyze, evaluate, and interpret materials they encounter to synthesize and communicate the results of their studies, and to create works of their own. This process fosters critical thinking skills complemented by the creative dimensions of imagination and insight. Through

exposure to different perspectives, students come to realize the limitations of a single viewpoint, while learning to construct persuasive arguments based on close analysis of multiple viewpoints.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will develop writing, reading, speaking, listening, and information literacy skills necessary for collegiate-level academic work.
2. Students will develop capacities for independent academic work and become self-regulated learners.

Grading:

While there are no formal examinations for this course, the material is cumulative and it is expected that you will keep up with the readings, written assignments, and other tasks on a day-to-day basis.

Essential for success in this course is your active participation in class. To reflect this fact, part of your final grade will be based on the professionalism with which you approach all class meetings. This will include your on-time attendance at all sessions, the level with which you prepare for class, your work as a member of a team, etc., as well as your attentiveness to class discussions and overall participation. **No external distractions are acceptable.** This includes all activities relating to mobile communication devices, such as texting, Web-surfing, etc.

Please note:

- This is a seminar. As such, in-class discussion and participation is essential, and cannot be ‘made up’ outside class meetings.
- The course material is cumulative. Therefore, each class is planned with the assumption that each member of the class is familiar with all previous course material.
- Any work that comes from you must be yours alone. It is a violation to include sections of texts from other sources (online from the World Wide Web or books, etc.) *without* quoting and referring to your source. For further clarification of academic responsibility, please see: <http://www.bucknell.edu/x1324.xml> (Bucknell University Honor Code) and <http://www.bucknell.edu/x1341.xml> (Avoiding Plagiarism).
If there is ever any doubt, be sure to ask.

Absences:

In accordance with University policy, class attendance is mandatory. This includes the common meeting times set for the entire residential college. If you must legitimately miss a class, inform me as soon as you are aware of this. If the nature of the emergency is such that you cannot tell me ahead of time, contact me as soon as reasonably possible so that we may begin planning how to make up the missed class. More than two absences will result in the lowering of your final grade by one-third of a letter. More than six absences will automatically result in a final grade of F.

Bucknell University expectations for academic engagement:

Courses at Bucknell that offer one unit of academic credit have a *minimum* expectation of 12 hours per week of student academic engagement. This includes both the hours of direct faculty instruction (or its equivalent) and the hours spent out of class. Half and quarter credit courses at Bucknell have proportionate expectations for student engagement.

Since class time is approximately 4.5 hours per week, the most effective way for you to learn the material is to spend many more hours outside the classroom reading, thinking, writing, and revising. Many of the assigned texts are dense and will require repeated reading, careful note-taking, and supplementary research. I expect that you will make use of online resources to “fill gaps” in your understanding of the material.

Weekly Writing Assignments:

Regularly on Thursday, some class time will be spent introducing you to the readings for the following week. To better focus your attention on the important aspects of the week’s readings, you will be asked to prepare written responses to two questions. Your typed response will be collected during class on the following Tuesday. Both assignments will be collected, but only one will be graded in detail and returned on the following Thursday. Late assignments will be marked down. Assignments more than 48 hours after the due date will not be accepted.

Use of student work for class learning. Because this is a W1 course, we will make periodic use of student work to exemplify key aspects of writing. Since the time between submission of work and its return is short, it will not be possible to contact the student whose work I will present to the class for consideration. When presenting student work, all identifying marks will be removed (such as the student’s name, etc.) and only successful examples will be highlighted. If you feel uncomfortable with this arrangement, please let me know.

Journal Entries and Reading Assignments:

Before each week’s class discussion, you will submit either a journal entry or respond to questions based on the assigned reading. Typically, this will happen over the weekend, and serve to focus your thoughts in preparation for the two written responses. Your journal entries will be sent to me electronically, either as email, a Google Document, or through our course web-site. Recognising that there may be days when things don’t go according to plan, your lowest grade for the journal entries will be dropped.

Scoring on the journal entries will be based on a 2–point scale (with a possible ‘3’ in exceptional circumstances).

0. If nothing is sent on time or there is no evidence that the reading has actually been done (e.g., “The reading was fine. See you tomorrow.”)
1. If there is some evidence that you performed the reading, but it was not accompanied with a reasonable amount of reflection or thought.
2. If you submit an entry that indicates that you carefully reflected on the reading and answered thoughtfully, bringing together ideas from various sources.

Your journal entries must be submitted before midnight on the day before the class. In that way, I will have an opportunity to read them and plan our class accordingly.

Students with Certified Disabilities:

Any student with a certified disability should promptly contact me so that accommodation can be made in a timely manner. Such accommodations require official notification from the Deans' Office.

Assessment:

The overall grade will be made up of the following components:

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| Weekly papers | 320 |
| Journal entries | 100 |
| Major paper 1 & 2 | 320 |
| Projects, Assignments, and Exercises | 180 |
| Symposium presentation | 100 |
| Professionalism | 80 |
| TOTAL | 1100 |

Please note: This assessment scheme is tentative and will be confirmed shortly after the beginning of classes.