

RESC 098 TECHNOLOGY EQUALS PROGRESS?

Week 7 assignments

Read the following articles:

“Can Technology Replace Social Engineering?” by Alvin M. Weinberg and
“Do Machines Make History?” by Robert L. Heilbroner.

Writing Assignment 7A:

Weinberg ends his paper by appealing to the U.S. government to deploy its vast technological resources to the goal of addressing current social problems. In your first paragraph, describe the author’s motivation for seeking technological fixes. Include one quotation from Weinberg. In paragraph 2, argue the merit of this action, i.e., whether this is a wise course of action. Use any evidence from our course readings/viewing to support your claim.

Writing Assignment 7B:

Come up with a specific question about the effects of evolution that makes use of the genetic algorithm program we explored in Tuesday’s class. This could be a question like:

- will all societies (of insects) eventually attain the same performance (measured by number of plants eaten) regardless of the selection criteria for reproduction? (What parameters seem to matter? Do some impact more than other? How long must you wait?)
- what happens to an ‘evolved’ society when the food supply is disrupted (either by plants growing in a different arrangement or the overall number of plants changes)?
- how does mutation rate affect successful evolution?

Perform a series of studies, making notes of your results. Present your analysis as an executive summary, stating your question and presenting your findings/recommendations. (If you are unsure of the requirements of an executive summary, look up its meaning).

Use the template containing the rubric and limit each response to 500 words or fewer. Print each assignment on a separate page and bring a hard copy to Tuesday’s class.

Journal Entry 7:

Before Wednesday midnight, reflect on the points made in Heilbroner’s paper. To what extent can we ‘control’ the direction of our technological development? How does your response relate to Weinberg’s call to focus technological effort to ‘fix’ current social problems?

Finally, include a question that can be the basis for a class discussion.

Symposium/Final Papers Project Proposal:

By Friday, October 3, submit a one-paragraph proposal describing the controversial issue you plan to explore for your final papers and Symposium project. The topic can be any question relating to food, technology, and society. Be sure to identify both sides of the question (pro/con) and include two references for each side. Please convert your document to a PDF file and send it to me in an appropriately titled email.