**Rhetoric of Technology and the Body**

**CMST 7966**

**3:00-5:30pm Wed**

**Coates 153**

Professor: Stephanie Houston Grey, PhD

Office Hours: 2-3pm Wed.

Office: 224 Coates Hall

Contact: [houston@lsu.edu;shgphd1@yahoo.com](mailto:houston@lsu.edu;shgphd1@yahoo.com);

Phone: 225.287.9022 (cell)

**Objectives:**

Around two million years ago early hominids generated a revolution in mammal behavior when they began to chip fist sized stones into hand axes. This would mark a watershed for our biosphere because it generated new forms of rationality, an abiding belief that nature could be controlled and a brain capable of projecting invisible cause and effect relationships between objects and events. As we progress to our own age we are beginning to grapple with the effects of this evolutionary adaptation that has made humans so successful. Human technology systems now permeate every aspect of our lives. They mediate our relationships, constitute our identities and regulate our actions. Technology is seen as both a site for liberation and an apparatus for control. We often find ourselves caught between two polarities. The first links technology to our collective fantasies of progress in which we see machines as a means toward achieving material wealth, social equality and salvation. On the other hand technology is also seen as the curse that we brought with us from the metaphorical garden. In these accounts it becomes a shadow force that inserts itself in our lives and separates us from the natural conditions that spawned us. This class will explore the ways that technology is seen to mediate our relationship to the world, to language and even our own bodies. Here are our specific goals during the semester:

* Understand the relationship between science and technology
* Develop a theoretical understanding of technology as a mediated force in our world
* Understand the meaning of technology along the axis of liberation and control
* Develop critical frameworks for understanding impact of technology in our lives and on our bodies
* Actively engage the literature of rhetoric and technology
* Engage is original research in the field of rhetoric, technology and the body

**Readings:**

Carl Sagan, *The Demon Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*, New York: Random House, 1995. Audiobook (select portions). Youtube.

Robert Scharff & Val Dusek Eds., *Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition*.

UK: Blackwell, 2003.

Lewis Mumford, *Technics of Civilization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934.

Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. New York: Vintage, 1993.

Leah Ceccarelli, *On the Frontier of Science: An American Rhetoric of Exploration and Exploitation.* Lansing: Michigan State UP, 2013.

Beverly Sauer, *Rhetoric of Risk: Technological Documentation in Hazardous Environments* London: Routledge, 2002.

Phaedra Pezzullo, *Toxic Tourism: Rhetorics of Pollution, Travel and Environmental Justice.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009.

Donna Haraway, *Simians,* *Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York:

Routledge, 1991.

James Herrick, *Visions of Technological Transcendance: Human Enhancement and the Rhetoric of the Future* New York: Parlor Press, 2017.

The LSU Library has made four of these books available for free to students, according to librarian Emily Frank ([efrank7@lsu.edu](mailto:efrank7@lsu.edu" \t "_blank) for questions about access). See

Toxic Tourism: Rhetorics of Pollution, Travel, and Environmental Justice:

[http://libezp.lib.lsu.edu/login?url=http://muse.jhu.edu/book/35922](http://libezp.lib.lsu.edu/login?url=http://muse.jhu.edu/book/35922" \t "_blank)

On the Frontier of Science : An American Rhetoric of Exploration and Exploitation:

[http://libezp.lib.lsu.edu/login?url=http://muse.jhu.edu/books/9781609173913/](http://libezp.lib.lsu.edu/login?url=http://muse.jhu.edu/books/9781609173913/" \t "_blank)

Rhetoric of Risk:

[http://libezp.lib.lsu.edu/login?url=https://www.tandfebooks.com/action/showBook?doi=10.4324/9781410606815](http://libezp.lib.lsu.edu/login?url=https://www.tandfebooks.com/action/showBook?doi=10.4324/9781410606815" \t "_blank)

Simians, Cyborgs and Women.

[http://libezp.lib.lsu.edu/login?url=http://www.tandfebooks.com/action/showBook?doi=10.4324/9780203873106](http://libezp.lib.lsu.edu/login?url=http://www.tandfebooks.com/action/showBook?doi=10.4324/9780203873106" \t "_blank)

**Tentative Assignments:**

*Facilitations*: Each class member will do one facilitation of a class readings. These will involve generating a set of discussion questions and observations directly pertaining to the readings. You should provide a *brief* outline of the reading (2 pages), definitions of key terms, and 3-5 discussion questions. The facilitation will be worth 200 points. The focus of this assignment is not to make you be responsible for teaching your classmates the text, but rather to further develop your ability to distill and present complex ideas, and create points of connection and conversation with your peers. These materials can be shared in preparation for examinations, if you wish.

The following assignment design is based on single-authored projects. Because of the number of students in the course, I want to create an opportunity for co-authorhip in an effort to facilitate process to publication. We will discuss this in class and how such a choice on our part might change the expectations for each assignment.

*Paper Proposal:* For the assignment you will provide a brief 1-2 page description of your proposed final paper project. 50 points.

*Literature Review:* This short paper of 5-6 pages will contain a literature review of 15-20 sources relevant to your final research paper topic. 150 points.

*First Draft*: Each participant will write a convention level paper in association with the class. This rough draft of 15-20 pages will be worth 200 points.

*Final Paper*: The final paper of 25-30 pages will be submitted near the end of the term. It will be worth 200 points.

*Presentation*: Participants will present their papers in a convention style format at the end of class and field Q&A. The presentation will be worth 50 points.

*Paper Feedback*: You will be required to provide formal, written feedback on the papers and presentations of your colleagues twice during the term 1-2 pages in lenght. The will occur after the draft stage and afte the final paper presentation. 75 points each for a total of 150 points.

I hope to arrange for us a Saturday tour of Cancer Ally. Details to follow. Not graded, but I expect you all to attend.

I have invited select book authors to Skype in. I’ll keep you posted as to their availability.

**Grading:**

1000-980: A+

979-929: A

928-900: A-

899-880: B+

879-829: B

828-800: B-

799-780: C+

779-729: C

728-700:C-

699-680:D+

679-629:D

628-600: D-

599 and below F

Policies:

For LSU’s policies on disability, review this website:

<http://students.lsu.edu/disability>

For LSU’s policies on plagiarism, review this website:

http://students.lsu.edu/saa/students/plagiarism

Late Work:

Work more that 3 days late will receive a one letter grade reduction, and another letter grade reduction for each additional three days. Please keep up with your work.

Additional Assistance:

I am happy to discuss projects in process at any mutually agreed on time throughout the semester.

**Tentative Schedule:**

Aug 23: Introduction to Class. Preview of upcoming readings. Discussion of course goals.

Aug 30: Sagan, *Demon Haunted World* (excerpts). Movie *Surviving Progress*.

Sept. 6: Scharff & Val Dusek Eds., *Philosophy of Technology* (selections).

**Guest Lecture** Jon Cogburn, LSU Philosophy Professor.

Sept. 13: Mumford, *Technics of Civilization.* **Paper Proposal Due.**

Student Discussion Leader\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Sept. 20: Postman, *Technopoly*.

Student Discussion Leader\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Sept. 27: Ceccarelli, *On the Frontier of Science.* **Literature Review Due.**

We will **Skype with book author** for part of the class.

Student Discussion Leader\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Oct. 4: Sauer, *Rhetoric of Risk*.

**Guest Lecture** Anne Rolfes, Louisiana Bucket Brigade.

Student Discussion Leader\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Oct. 11: Haraway, *Simians, Women and Cyborgs*.

**Guest Lecture** via Skype Laura Sells, Nicolet College.

Student Discussion Leader\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Oct. 18: Scharff & Val Dusek Eds., *Philosophy of Technology* (selections).

Oct. 25: Peuzullo, *Toxic Tourism*.

We will **Skype with book author** for part of the class.

Student Discussion Leader\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Nov 1: **Draft Due in class (to readers 3 days previous).**

**Feedback Responses Due.**

Nov. 8: Herrick, *Visions of Technological Transcendence*.

We will **Skype** **with book author** for part of the class.

Student Discussion Leader\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Nov. 15: No Class Meeting: National Communication Association Annual Convention.

Nov. 22: No Class Meeting: Thanksgiving.

Nov. 29: **Final Presentations. Draft of Final Paper Due to Feedback Readers.**

Dec 6: **Final Papers Due. Final Feedback Due.**