

INF1501 - Introduction to Culture & Technology

Time/Location:

Tuesdays, 12 pm-3 pm, Bissell 538

Instructor: Gustavo Ferreira

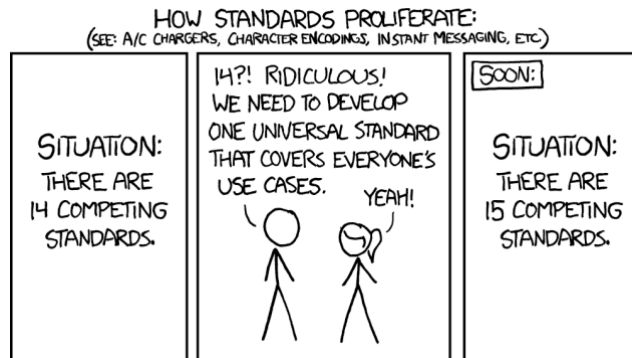
Contact: gustavo.ferreira@utoronto.ca

Office Hours:

Tuesdays, 4 pm-5 pm, Bissell 616

Teaching Assistant: TBD

Contact: TBD



Subtitle: "Fortunately, the charging one has been solved now that we've all standardized on mini-USB. Or is it micro-USB? Shit."

Source: XKCD (2011). 927: Standards. <https://xkcd.com/927/>

Acknowledgement of Traditional Land

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

We also wish to acknowledge that we must *go beyond* recognition, take steps to learn more about and address Indigenous claims to sovereignty, and set a path toward decolonization.

Course Description

This course introduces ideas, readings, and research approaches that will help students examine the nexus of culture and technology. The course functions primarily as an introduction for students in the Culture & Technology concentration of the Master of Information program, but it provides knowledge and skills for any students exploring fields such as science and technology studies, critical media studies, digital humanities, media archaeology, cultural studies, and other established and emerging approaches to culture and technology. Readings and lectures will provide critical perspectives on received concepts such as technology, culture, and information, drawing on philosophical, sociological, anthropological, historical, literary, artistic, or other relevant approaches for these topics.

Instructor's Overview

Our focus will be on exploring the intellectual basis for a Culture & Technology information professional practice. In this sense, the course has two important pillars. First, it has a strong theoretical component with which we want to achieve a deep understanding of the concepts of culture and technology as they relate to knowledge creation, scientific practice, information management and cultural production. Secondly, it challenges the student to develop intellectual and critical information practices by analyzing an object's history and meaning. What are the cultural dimensions of everyday objects? How do they become a source of meaning and meaningful information about specific cultures? For what is the multitude of technological devices we use? Why is digital technology so central to our current culture, and how can we challenge this centrality? When and how is it appropriate to question technological development and adoption? How can we leverage these critical approaches to create and manage information in more socially productive ways? These are the types of questions we want to address in the course and equip students to raise in professional information contexts.

Contact and Conduct

For dialogue about the course's structure and assessments, students can do it directly during office hours and by email or indirectly through a student representative. To book office hours, we will use an MS Bookings link on Quercus. You can direct other private inquiries by email, and I will try to respond within two business days.

All course updates and official information will be posted on Quercus and discussed in class. You should check it for updates regularly—at least once a week.

Class Conduct

When interacting with others, you should always be attentive to their well-being, use polite and non-aggressive language, justify your positions, and give sources of information. When expressing opinions, always reflect on how your thoughts align with different realities and perspectives. We value ***solidarity as a learning practice***: make an effort to think and take your positions from a solidary position. You can do this by acknowledging how your context is affected and affects others and how everyone, including instructors and classmates, has common goals and interests. Your actions should be focused on these common goals. Be open to help and be helped. We are allowed to disagree, and we should understand that more than one thing can be true.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) and Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Students who have successfully completed this course will be able to:

CLO	Related PLO
Outline the history of thought and debate about the relationship of culture and technology	Students develop an understanding of the development of theory concerning information, where it is found, and how it is used.
Evaluate theoretical and methodological approaches that converge at the intersection of culture and technology, and understand how different approaches reinforce, complement, and contradict each other.	Students understand and are conversant with fundamental concepts, theories, practices, and the diverse horizons of information disciplines, and can respond to changing information practices and needs of society
Apply concepts learned in the course to intervene effectively in debates about how culture and technology are co-constructed in the present.	Students develop the ability to contribute through research and publication, to the continuous expansion and critical assessment of the body of knowledge underlying the information and archives sciences.
Adapt theoretical and critical approaches to contexts where culture, technology, information, and materiality interact, in preparation for careers requiring broad knowledge translation.	Students develop knowledge and values appropriate to their future exercise of economic, cultural, and/or social leadership, and thereby provide leadership in defining the social responsibility of information professionals to provide information services for all, regardless of age, educational level, or social, cultural, or ethnic background.
	Students develop an understanding of the application of new technological developments to the preservation and communication of information, and in the identification of the impact of such developments on society.
	Students continue in life-long intellectual growth beyond graduation.

Assignments

Assessment category/assignment	Due date	% of final grade	CLO assessed
#1: Participation	Weekly	10%	All
#2: Object Lessons: Choice	Sep 24 (Week 4)	10%	1
#3 Object Lessons: Review	Oct 15 (Week 7)	25%	2
#4 Object Anatomy and Field Journal	Nov 5 (Week 10)	25%	2, 3
#5 Object Lessons: Paper	Dec 3	30%	3, 4

Assessment

The assessment of student performance will be inspired by the stated *solidarity learning practice* and *critical pedagogy*. Hence, excellent performance translates into active participation, student collaboration and critical, creative, and intellectual production that accurately represents, problematizes and builds on the topics studied by explicitly employing the concepts learned and skills developed in the course.

Final Grade Round-up: We will round up your final grade to the next letter grade if the difference is equal to or less than 3% and your participation grade is at the minimum level of A-.

#1 Participation (10%) - Weekly

Participation refers to evidencing comprehension and critical thinking about the readings, lectures and projects. It means you have read the assigned texts, listened to, or watched other assigned materials and are prepared with at least one question, comment and example about the week's topic to contribute to our in-class or group discussions. You achieve this by speaking in class about the topic during lectures and tutorials, helping classmates by answering questions or adding your ideas and experiences, and speaking directly to the instructor during office hours. The weight on preparedness and content will increase over time to assess your improvement.

Brief of Participation Rubric (detailed rubric in a separate sheet):

A+ to A-: Contributes by *initiating* conversation, commenting or asking questions in almost all discussions; contributions show you have prepared and read all the required and additional materials weekly; content of contributions represents the materials accurately and reflects on them by adding original thoughts, connecting different readings/themes or giving insightful examples.

B+ to B-: Contributes by commenting or asking questions in most discussions; contributions show you have read most of the materials most of the time; content of contributions adds to relevant points of colleagues or adds meaningful, simple examples.

#2 Object Lessons: Choice - Sep 25 (Week 4)

You must choose an object to analyze, then submit a Microsoft Form describing the object and justifying your choice using the readings from the first two classes. ONE PowerPoint (or PDF) slide illustrating your choice. A mini-presentation oral of (max. of 2 min) of your object to the class.

#3 Object Lessons: Review - Oct 15 (Week 7)

You will write a review a work from the Object Lessons series. The format is 1000-1500 word paper. With this, you will familiarize yourself with the type of analysis these projects engage with while also trying to identify gaps or elements you might add to your work.

#4 Object Anatomy and Field Journal - Nov 5 (Week 10)

This is a dossier of 8 to 10 pages where you gather the materials (charts, illustrations, diagrams, pictures, transcripts, etc.) you used to perform your analysis, organizing them in a narrative. How did you decide on the object (you can use the choice write-up), and what did you gather first? Make a qualitative description of what your object is and connect it to how you gathered the information to describe it.

#5 Object Lessons: Paper - Dec 3 (one week after last class)

You will submit a 1500-2000 article reporting and reflecting on the research and analysis of your object. You will pursue the question of what the object means in a context (social, cultural, economic).

Referencing and Formatting

The specific formatting will be described in the separate assignment sheets. Basic academic writing elements include the use of serif fonts (such as Times New Roman), double-spaced and 2.54 cm (1 inch) margins.

For referencing, you can choose between widely used styles like APA, MLA or Chicago. However, I strongly recommend you use the Chicago-style author-date. You can find more information and writing references in the [Chicago Manual of Style Online](#).

Generative AI Policy

Although I strongly advise against the use of Generative AI, students *may choose* to use generative artificial intelligence tools as they work through the assignments in this course; this use must be documented in an appendix for each assignment. The documentation should include what tool(s) were used, how they were used, and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work.

Late Submission Policy

All assignments can be submitted *one week late* with no penalty for any reason, provided you alert me *before the deadline*, except for assignments that are done in groups and finished in class. For other extensions, I advise you to read below about *Accommodations* and then talk to me.

Missed in-class exclusive assignments or components: these will *not* be accepted late. In this case, you should contact me beforehand or the same day after missing class to arrange an alternative assessment with a letter-grade step penalty. For example, if you missed the presentation component of your assignment, we will try to arrange an alternative date. If this is possible, the maximum letter grade you can recover for that component is an A. Assignments that start in class but have a later submission date for the finished deliverables will follow the normal policy from the previous paragraph.

Accommodations

Students with diverse learning styles and/or accessibility needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me, student services and/or the Accessibility Services Office as soon as possible. Students who believe they require accommodations and are unsure where to begin can speak to an academic advisor in student services for guidance and referrals.

Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals to supportive services and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let us know your needs, the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course. Once you have obtained an accommodation plan from Accessibility Services, please share your accommodation letter with your instructor and student services.

Students who have already obtained accommodations from the Accessibility Services Office are *encouraged* to share their letter with their instructor and with student services *in the first week of class or as soon as possible*. Students should discuss potential accommodations in consultation with their Accessibility Advisor and instructor to understand what may be possible and how the instructor wishes to be informed when an accommodation needs to be actioned. *It is the student's responsibility to discuss any extension requests, where possible, in advance of course deadlines.*

To book an appointment with an Accessibility Advisor, please connect with the Accessibility Services front desk via email at accessibility.services@utoronto.ca or call (416) 978-8060. Consultation appointments are available to discuss any questions about the Accessibility Services registration process and/or potential accommodation support. The on-location Accessibility Advisor at the Faculty of Information is Michael Mercer.

Weekly drop-in appointments are available with Michael for registered students. For more information, visit [Accessibility Services](#) and find his name under the Contacts section.

Academic Integrity

Please consult the University's site on [Academic Integrity](#). The Faculty of Information has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism as defined in section B.I.1.(d) of [the University's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters \(PDF\)](#). You should acquaint yourself with the Code. Please review the material in Cite it Right and if you require further clarification, consult the resource [How Not to Plagiarize \(PDF\)](#).

Cite it Right covers relevant parts of the U of T [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters \(1995\)](#). It is expected that all Faculty of Information students complete the [Cite it Right module and the online quiz](#) prior to the second week of classes of their first term.

Plagiarism Detection Tool

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation website (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

You will have the right and opportunity to opt out of using the tool. Students who opt-out will not be punished or treated differently.

Generative AI Policy

Although I strongly advise against the use of Generative AI, students *may choose* to use generative artificial intelligence tools as they work through the assignments in this course; this use must be documented in an appendix for each assignment. The documentation should include what tool(s) were used, how they were used, and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work.

Writing Support

As stated in the Faculty of Information's Grade Interpretation Guidelines, "work that is not well written and grammatically correct will not generally be considered eligible for a grade in the A range, regardless of its quality in other respects." With this in mind, please make use of the writing support provided to graduate students by the SGS Graduate Centre for Academic Communication. The services are designed to target the needs of both native and non-native speakers, and all programs are free. Please consult the current SGS Workshops Schedule for more information.

Course Schedule and Materials

Week 1	Sep 3	Opening: What are we doing here?	
		Teaching philosophy, syllabus, assessments and all things formal.	Required Material
			Syllabus (<i>this document</i>)
			Extra Material
Browse this website: “Object Lessons.” n.d. Object Lessons. Accessed August 30, 2024. https://objectsofobjects.com/			

Week 2	Sep 10	What do we mean by “Culture & Technology”?	
		Possible ways to define or understand culture and tech. These are relatively recent readings approaching the fundamentals of STS from a cultural studies standpoint. Our focus is on establishing a common understanding of the conceptual issues of culture and technology and making our assumptions clear for whole course.	Required Material
			Dumit, Joseph. 2014. “Writing the Implosion: Teaching the World One Thing at a Time.” <i>Cultural Anthropology</i> 29 (2): 344–62. https://doi.org/10.14506/ca29.2.09
			Hess, David J. 2019. “The Cultural Construction of Science and Technology.” In <i>Science and Technology in a Multicultural World: The Cultural Politics of Facts and Artifacts</i> , 18–53. Columbia University Press. https://doi.org/10.7312/hess92728-004
Winner, Langdon. 2010. “Technologies as Forms of Life.” In <i>The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology</i> , by Langdon Winner, 19–39. University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/9780226902098			
Extra Material			
Yee, Evan, dir. 2022. <i>Who Will Survive The AI Revolution?</i> Wisecrack. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gv0a19p0t4k			
Chiang, Ted. 2016. Story of your life. IN: <i>Stories of Your Life and Others</i> . First Vintage Books edition. New York: Vintage Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. p. 91			

		<p>OR: Villeneuve, Denis, dir. 2016. <i>Arrival</i>. Drama, Mystery, Sci-Fi. Lava Bear Films, FilmNation Entertainment, 21 Laps Entertainment.</p> <p>This film is available to UTORid holders on the Criterion On-demand service here</p>
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Week 3	Sep 17	What can we know about C&T?	
		<p>Epistemologies.</p> <p>In this class we discuss the nature and possibility of knowing and how they affect science practice and technological development. In this sense, the readings are older because they tackle unresolved deep issues about the philosophy of knowledge. We adopt these critiques to, once again, questioning and making clear our assumptions about culture and technology and how we can acquire knowledge about them.</p>	<p>Required Material</p> <p>Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." <i>Feminist Studies</i> 14 (3): 575–99. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066.</p> <p>Harding, Sandra. 1992. "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is 'Strong Objectivity?'" <i>The Centennial Review</i> 36 (3): 437–70. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23739232.</p> <p>De Castro, Eduardo Viveiros. 2019. "Exchanging Perspectives." Edited by Jeffrey M. Perl. <i>Common Knowledge</i> 25 (1–3): 21–42. https://doi.org/10.1215/0961754X-7299066.</p> <p>Extra Material</p> <p>** <u>Activate Subtitles</u> **</p> <p>Krenak, Ailton, and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. 2023. CONVERSA NA REDE - Partículas Particulares. Youtube. SELVAGEM Ciclo de Estudos Sobre a Vida. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wp5NlnNE4BI</p>

Week 4	Sep 24	How to study C&T? Part 1	
		<p>Anthropology, History, Feminist Critique</p> <p>After laying out dense and fundamental theoretical and philosophical notions for our course, we turn to how these translate into methods of inquiry. This week, three fields of cultural inquiry.</p>	<p>Required Material</p> <p>Geertz, Clifford. 1973. <i>The Interpretation of Cultures</i>. New York: Basic Books. Chapter 1 - Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.</p> <p>Graham, Richard. 1991. "Technology and Culture Change: The Development of the 'Berimbau' in Colonial Brazil." <i>Latin American Music Review / Revista de Música Latinoamericana</i> 12 (1): 1–20. https://doi.org/10.2307/780049.</p>

		Wajcman, Judy. 1991. <i>Feminism Confronts Technology</i> . University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press. Chapter 1 - Feminist Critiques of Science and Technology
		Extra Material
		Jonze, Spike, dir. 2014. <i>Her</i> . Drama, Romance, Sci-Fi. Annapurna Pictures, Stage 6 Films. This film is available to UTORid holders on the Criterion On-demand service here
		#2 Object Lessons: Choice - Due Tonight

Week 5	Oct 1	How to study C&T? Part 2
		Cultural Studies and Ideology
		Continuing on our overview of methodological practices, we look at examples of the study of technology from the cultural studies standpoints.
		Required Material
		McNeil, Maureen. 2008. <i>Feminist Cultural Studies of Science and Technology</i> . London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203938324 . Chapter 2 - Feminist cultural studies of science and technology: roots and routes. Du Gay, Paul. 2013. <i>Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman</i> . Second edition. Culture, Media and Identities. London: SAGE. Introductions to the First and Second Editions + Another chapter of your choice. Barbrook, Richard, and Andy Cameron. 1996. "The Californian Ideology." <i>Science as Culture</i> 6 (1): 44–72. https://doi.org/10.1080/09505439609526455 .
Extra Material		
		Marx, Paris, and Richard Barbrook. 2021. The Sunset of the Californian Ideology? Podcast. Vol. Tech Won't Save Us. https://techwontsave.us/episode/63_the_sunset_of_the_californian_ideology_w_richard_barbrook .

Week 6	Oct 8	What does material "stuff" reveal?	
		<p>Materiality and Infrastructures</p> <p>This week we turn the critique towards traditional cultural studies and discuss two theoretical and methodological approaches that highlight the agency of objects in culture and technology. The readings unveil how the materiality of objects cannot be separated by the materiality of the other beings (humans and others) who interact with them.</p>	<p>Required Material</p> <p>Sterne, Jonathan. 2014. "What Do We Want? 'Materiality!' 'When Do We Want It?' 'Now!'" In <i>Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society</i>, edited by Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo J. Boczkowski, and Kirsten A. Foot, 0. The MIT Press. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9780262525374.003.0006</p> <p>Laet, Marianne de, and Annemarie Mol. 2000. "The Zimbabwe Bush Pump: Mechanics of a Fluid Technology." <i>Social Studies of Science</i> 30 (2): 225–63. https://doi.org/10.1177/030631200030002002</p> <p>Appel, Hanna. 2018. Infrastructural time. In N. Anand, A. Gupta, and H. Appel (Eds.), <i>The Promise of Infrastructure</i> Durham and London: Duke University Press. P. 41-61.</p> <p>Extra Material</p> <p>Khalili, Laleh, Sadowski, Jathan, and Edward Ongweso Jr. 2021. "Suez Canal /// Imperialist Infrastructure." Podcast. <i>This Machine Kills</i>. Accessed September 1, 2024. https://podcastaddict.com/this-machine-kills/episode/121427045</p>

Week 7	Oct 15	Should we and how to resist technology?	
		<p>Luddism and Solutionism</p> <p>In this class we dive into the historical and contemporary critique and resistance to technologies. Two themes are central, one is a better understanding of the term "luddite", which points to sabotage as political action and technological rejection as labour strategy. The second, presents us with</p>	<p>Required Material</p> <p>Conniff, Richard. n.d. "What the Luddites Really Fought Against." <i>Smithsonian Magazine</i>. Accessed August 23, 2024. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-the-luddites-really-fought-against-264412/</p> <p>Nachtwey, Oliver, and Timo Seidl. 2020. "The Solutionist Ethic and the Spirit of Digital Capitalism." https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/sgjzq</p> <p>Facchetti, Andrea. 2021. "Who Needs Solutions? Social Design Between Technological Solutionism</p>

Week 8	Oct 22	the problem of technological solutionism as an ideology that goes beyond technological development, but works for those who own the means of it.	and Articulation of Conflicts.” <i>Diid — Disegno Industriale Industrial Design</i> , no. 74 (November), 10–10. https://doi.org/10.30682/diid7421o
			Extra Material
			Merchant, Brian and Conover, Adam. 2024. “Why Big Tech Is Ruining Our Lives with Brian Merchant - Factually! - 250.” Podcast. Factually. Accessed September 1, 2024. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJzHmw3Ei-g
			Morozov, Evgeny. 2013. <i>To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism</i> . PublicAffairs. Chapters 1 and 2.
			#3 Object Lessons: Review - Due tonight

Week 8	Oct 22	How to imagine and create other worlds?	
		Alternative engagements with nature, futures, knowledge and indigenous thoughts.	Required Material
		Coming from the critique of technological development, we take a detour to a wider proposal: if power and technology correspond to how we design our social systems and who benefits from this design, could we design a new system by questioning its very foundation? Two readings present us with indigenous perspectives on how to decolonize our imaginations of the future. The third one, follows the line of the previous week and presents a way to think about problem framing to avoid solutionism.	Krenak, Ailton. 2020. <i>Ideas to Postpone the End of the World</i> . Anansi International. (The whole book)
			Rivera Cusicanqui, Silvia. 2023. <i>A Ch’ixi World Is Possible: Essays from a Present in Crisis</i> . Lines. London: Bloomsbury Academic. Chapter 1 - A Ch’ixi World Is Possible
		Cunningham, Jay, Gabrielle Benabdallah, Daniela Rosner, and Alex Taylor. 2023. “On the Grounds of Solutionism: Ontologies of Blackness and HCI.” <i>ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction</i> 30 (2): 20:1-20:17. https://doi.org/10.1145/3557890 .	
		Gil Scott-Heron. 1970. <i>Whitey On the Moon</i> . IN: Small Talk At 125th And Lenox. Flying Dutchman. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goh2x_G0ct4 Song. Track B2.	

Oct 29 - Reading Week: Be a luddite, break a machine! Maybe share with us

Week 9	Nov 5	What's the role of media and information technologies? I	
		<p>Mediations, Authenticity, Liveness</p> <p>We come back from the break thinking about media. Specifically, what the process of developing and using technologies that mediate (supposedly get <i>in-between</i>) does to culture, if anything? How to unpack, understand and decide on how to use these tools? The readings intend to provoke questions the “common sense” about media and mediatization and introduce categories commonly taken for granted like media itself, liveness and authenticity.</p>	<p>Required Material</p> <p>Martín-Barbero, Jesus. 1993. <i>Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From Media to Mediations</i>. London: SAGE Publications. Chapter 9 – The methods: From Media to Mediations. P. 187-240</p> <p>Auslander, Philip. 2008. <i>Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture</i>. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge. Chapter 3 - TRYIN' TO MAKE IT REAL: Live performance, simulation, and the discourse of authenticity in rock culture.</p> <p>Davis, Susan. 2012. “Liveness, Mediation and Immediacy – Innovative Technology Use in Process and Performance.” <i>Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance</i> 17 (4): 501–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569783.2012.727623</p> <p>Extra Material</p> <p>Benjamin, Walter. 2019. <i>Illuminations: Essays and Reflections</i>. Boston ; New York: Mariner Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. P. 217-251.</p> <p>Tamara Yajia, dir. 2018. <i>Telenovelas Are Hell: La Usurpadora</i>. Youtube. Funny Or Die. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3FyL_x-uv4</p>

Week 10	Nov 12	What's the role of media and information technologies? II	
		<p>Standards, Formats, Interfaces</p> <p>Mixing all the previous conceptual tools we discussed (cultural studies, materiality, critical infrastructures and mediations) we now</p>	<p>Required Material</p> <p>Sterne, Jonathan. 2006. “The Mp3 as Cultural Artifact.” <i>New Media & Society</i> 8 (5): 825–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444806067737.</p> <p>Suarez, Fernando F. 2004. “Battles for Technological Dominance: An Integrative Framework.” <i>Research Policy</i> 33 (2): 271–86. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2003.07.001.</p>

	<p>uncover the institutional, cultural and economic contexts in which media technologies are developed. How do we start to use a cellphone, an ipod, a flatscreen tv and so many tools, instead of others? Who decides and how? The reading provides us with examples, ways of studying and histories of these processes from different perspectives.</p>	<p>Plotnick, Rachel. 2018. <i>Power Button: A History of Pleasure, Panic, and the Politics of Pushing</i>. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. Chapter 2 - Ringing for Service. P. 17-47</p>
		<p>Extra Material</p> <p>Sterne, Jonathan. 2012. <i>Format Theory</i>. In: <i>MP3: The Meaning of a Format</i>. Sign, Storage, Transmission. Durham: Duke University Press. P. 1-31.</p> <p>Below there is a trilogy of episodes from the Regular Show. Available on Amazon Prime Video via the Teletoon Channel subscription. <i>There is a free trial</i>.</p> <p>Infantino, John Davis, and Sean Szeles, dirs. 2013. "The Last Laserdisc Player." Streaming. <i>Regular Show</i>. Cartoon Network. S04E31</p> <p>Infantino, John Davis, dir. 2015. "Format Wars II." Streaming. <i>Regular Show</i>. Cartoon Network. S06E16</p> <p>Wong, Calvin, dir. 2017. "Meet the Seer." Streaming. <i>Regular Show</i>. Cartoon Network. S08E25</p>
		<p>#4 Object Anatomy and Field Journal – Due Tonight</p>

Week 11	Nov 19	<p>What is intelligent about artificial intelligence?</p>
		<p>Algorithms, AI, Data</p> <p>We will finish our course with a critical, but interpretative, look at the current AI Hype and lean on the whole course to raise questions of power, materiality, scientific knowledge and technological development on how AI and datafication</p>
		<p>Required Material</p> <p>Seaver, Nick. 2022. <i>Computing Taste: Algorithms and the Makers of Music Recommendation</i>. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2 – Captivating Algorithms.</p> <p>Gebru, Timnit, and Émile P. Torres. 2024. "The TESCREAL Bundle: Eugenics and the Promise of Utopia through Artificial General Intelligence." <i>First Monday</i>, April. https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v29i4.13636.</p>

	are being deployed today. The readings provide accounts of culture, ideology and practice of adoption of data and algorithms in social life.	Murphy, Michelle. 2017. <i>The Economization of Life</i> . Duke University Press. https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/book/69262 . Arc III - Investable life. P. 113-134.
		Extra Material
		Thorn, Abigail, dir. 2023. Here's What Ethical AI Really Means. Youtube. Philosophy Tube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AaU6tl2pb3M

Week 12	Nov 26	Closing: Practicing “Culture and Technology”	
		Being a Culture and Technology translator	Required Material
			No reading
			Review and Discussion: main concepts, histories and skill developed in the course, general questions about the final paper.

Dec 3 - #5 Object Lessons: Paper – Last day to submit the final paper – Due tonight

Writing Support

As stated in the Faculty of Information’s Grade Interpretation Guidelines, “work that is not well written and grammatically correct will not generally be considered eligible for a grade in the A range, regardless of its quality in other respects.” With this in mind, please make use of the writing support provided to graduate students by the SGS Graduate Centre for Academic Communication. The services are designed to target the needs of both native and non-native speakers and all programs are free. Please consult the current SGS Workshops Schedule for more information.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another’s differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

The **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Unit (EDIU) at the School of Information**, in collaboration with U of T community members, works to promote and encourage an

equitable and inclusive work and classroom environment, free from discrimination and/or harassment based on any of the code grounds. The EDI Unit is responsible for developing and delivering EDI programs and services, works with all stakeholders, and provides confidential services. Key areas of services include:

- Training and educational opportunities
- Community building and engagement
- Systemic change initiatives
- Providing confidential advice/consultations
- Provide a variety of EDI Resources
- Supports with resolving concerns of discrimination and/or harassment

EDIU Complaints Resolution Assistance Process

- Meet with individuals (all stakeholders) to listen and discuss concerns or questions related to any of the human rights protected grounds
- A complaint is not necessary to approach the EDI Director with questions or to seek information
- Talk about options available for resolution assistance, including informal and formal complaint options
- Provide referrals or liaise with other departments or stakeholders where necessary
- Maintain confidentiality of queries that people bring forward as legally required. Limitations to confidentiality are discussed if safety is raised
- No steps are taken to address a complaint without consent

Please note, there will be changes to this process in the near future; however, if you do have any questions/concerns, feel free to reach out to ediu.ischool@utoronto.ca.

U of Toronto Tri-Campus Equity Offices

Our [Equity Offices](#) play a pivotal role in fulfilling the University of Toronto's commitment to equity and excellence. Unique to our institution, these specialized Equity Offices stand as a testament to our dedication.

- [Accessibility For Ontarians With Disabilities Act Office \(AODA\)](#)
- [Anti-Racism & Cultural Diversity Office \(ARCDO\)](#)
- [Family Care Office \(FCO\)](#)

- [Office of Indigenous Initiatives \(OII\)](#)
- [Sexual & Gender Diversity Office \(SGDO\)](#)
- [Sexual Violence Prevention & Support Centre \(SVPSC\)](#)

Related Offices

- [Community Safety Office](#)
- [First Nations House - UofT Student Life](#)
- [Wellness – The Division of People Strategy, Equity & Culture](#)
- [Multi-Faith Centre for Spiritual Study & Practice - UofT Student Life](#)

Academic Dates & Deadlines

[Academic Dates & Deadlines](#)

Conflicts with religious observances should be brought to the attention of the course instructor and the Office of the Registrar and Student Services no later than the second week of classes. For more information, please see the [Policy on Scheduling of Classes and Examinations and Other Accommodations for Religious Observances](#).

Declaring an Absence in ACORN

Students who miss an academic obligation and wish to seek academic consideration in a course may declare an absence using the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool. Students who declare an absence in ACORN should expect to receive reasonable academic consideration from their instructor without the need to present additional supporting documentation. Students can only use the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool once per academic term (e.g., the fall term) for a maximum period of 7 consecutive calendar days.

The ACORN Absence Declaration Tool requires students to select the course(s) they wish to have academic consideration granted, as well as provide the email address(es) to whom their course syllabus identifies as the contact (e.g., instructor, advisor). A record of the absence is sent to the self-provided email(s) at the time of submission, and a receipt of the absence declaration is also sent to the student's University of Toronto email address.

Submitting an absence declaration does not initiate the process of academic consideration. It is the student's responsibility to arrange for academic consideration by contacting the course instructor using the contact information provided in the syllabus.

Students who have already used one absence declaration in a term will be restricted from declaring any further absences using the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool. Students are required to arrange any further academic consideration directly with their instructor and /

or student services advisor. Students may be asked to provide supporting documentation as evidence of their absences such as the University approved verification of illness form (VOI).

Health and Wellness

The Faculty of Information has a Wellness Counsellor & Coordinator available to its students. Appointments are available Monday-Friday during the academic year.

Contact Health & Wellness, 416-978-8030 ext. 5, to book an appointment with a Wellness Counsellor or for questions about the counselling service. Students can request that they would like to meet with the “iSchool Counsellor” to access counselling on campus.

- Students can also choose to see a counsellor during the academic year and over the summer at the Health & Wellness Centre, located at 700 Bay St., during its [hours of operation](#).

Numerous additional health, wellness and counselling services are offered through the University of Toronto’s Health and Wellness Centre.

- You can access free mental health and wellbeing services at [Health & Wellness](#) such as [same day counselling](#), brief counselling, medical care, [skill-building workshops](#) and [drop-in peer support](#). You can also meet with a Wellness Navigation Advisor who can connect you with other campus and community services and support. Call the mental health clinic at 416-978-8030 ext. 5 to book an appointment or learn more at uoft.me/mentalhealthcare
- The Health & Wellness Centre’s Medical Services Clinic provides a wide range of medical services for U of T students. These services include routine health care services, such as [sexual and reproductive health counselling](#), [allergy care](#), [nutrition consultation](#), and support with many other health concerns. Call the medical services clinic at 416-978-8030 ext. 2 to schedule an appointment or [explore services online](#).

Note

This syllabus and the Object Lessons assignment were developed based on previous iterations of this course at the iSchool. Particularly, the ones taught by Matthew Wells (Fall 2023), Claire Battershill (Fall 2022), Patrick Keilty (Fall 2021) and Alan Galey (Fall 2018).

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