

# Technology and Society

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Last Updated: Thu, 01/01/2026

**Course prefix:** HTS

**Course number:** 2084

**Section:** A

**CRN (you may add up to five):**

34957

**Instructor First Name:** Declan

**Instructor Last Name:** Abernethy

**Semester:** Spring

**Academic year:** 2026

**Course description:**

This course is designed as an introduction to key ideas about technology using historical and contemporary case studies that give us a different way to think about technology and its relationship to society.

Technology is a human product, not an autonomous force. Technology makes nothing happen by itself, but only as the result of human action. We can, therefore, only make sense of technology by understanding it as an integral part of human history.

The theme of ethics is present throughout the course. We learn how human choices shape technological change in ways that affect the principles of a just society. We read about the responsibility of technical professionals to act in the public interest and minimize harm. We look at how people make ethical judgments when participating in technical decision making.

**Course learning outcomes:**

By the end of HTS 2084, students should be able to:

- Give a broad definition of "technology" with examples of various types;
- Identify and describe how technologies influence and are influenced by social, cultural, economic, and political contexts;
- Apply course concepts to analyze contemporary technological case studies and their ramifications
- Develop communication skills through multimedia reflections and writing assignments;
- Explain the ethical implications of technological choice.

### **Required course materials:**

All readings or other materials will be available in pdf form on Perusall or Canvas or easily accessible online. Please do note that the readings for this class will be challenging. Therefore, even if a reading seems short, be prepared to take the time to read it carefully.

### **Grading policy:**

**Reading Annotations (25%):** Each lesson of the semester will include material posted, typically on Perusall. Students will be expected to do the readings (or watch videos) and engage with each other and the content. Some lessons will include guided questions that I come up with; others will be student-led discussions based on readings. There will be 14 reading annotations discussions in total. More information on how to get full credit will be included in the Perusall explainer video.

**Blog Posts (25%):** Students will be responsible for setting up their own blog on a subtheme from the course of their interest. Each week, students will be required to write at least 300 words on how our material for the week relates to their interest, pull in one outside resource, and leave at least 100 words of comments on other classmates' blogs. More information will be shared on these blog assignments in week 1.

**Three Minute Thesis (3MT) (20%):** At the end of the semester, students will use what they have learned through their blogging as it relates to course content and their interest/major to create a three-minute video for the class. More information will be provided during the semester.

**Analysis Papers (20%):** Two papers. You will be required to write two analytic papers that will ask you to apply course material to make an argument. More details about these papers will be provided as the semester progresses.

**Self-Reflections (10%):** Taking ownership of your own learning is a crucial component of this course. A few times over the semester, students will write self-reflections on materials they've learned from in the course and assess their own learning.

*Grading Scale:*

A = 90-100%

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = 0-59

Grades for each category are weighted as listed above. This means that each grade subcomponent will be calculated as a percentage. The scores for each category are then combined for your final grade. For example, if you average 95% on your writing responses, you will have earned 28.5 out of 30 % for this grade category. If you have questions about this please ask sooner rather than later.

Turn Around Time: I will do my best to return assignments with feedback within 7 business days of their submission but know that I'm not perfect!

**Attendance policy:**

Online asynchronous

**Academic honesty/integrity statement:**

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

**Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):**

**This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.**

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question: • How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

#### Ethics Attribute Learning Outcomes

HTS 2084 fulfills the Georgia Tech ethics requirement. In this course, students will acquire:

- An ability to recognize ethical and professional responsibilities in real-world contexts.
- An ability to assess actions or decisions based on established ethical principles and theories, or through deliberative processes.
- An ability to consider the implications of actions, both for society as a whole and for individuals.