

Technology and Society

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Course prefix: HTS

Course number: 2084

Section: R

CRN

87247

Instructor first name: Timothy

Instructor last name: Stoneman

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

Technologies have formed the basis of material culture and influenced the course of social change throughout human history. Yet the shape of technologies' influence on society has varied significantly with time and place in a way that often goes unnoticed by engineering students. The present course combines the history of technology with world history. While the word "innovation" is modern, creative technical activity, along with changing social practices, is as old as humankind. Through a series of historical case studies – prehistoric fire, medieval cathedrals, artisanal French bread, railways, and smartphones – we will see how engineering (broadly defined) evolved over major eras of the past. In the process, we address three basic questions concerning technology and society. First, what exactly is technological change – how does it actually occur and how does it differ from the way we talk about the topic? How has its form changed over time? Second, what are the social roots, or origins, of technological change, or "innovation" – what role do different social groups and institutions, as well as various ideas, play in encouraging or inhibiting such change? And, third, what are the social consequences (and costs) of technological change and who benefits from its gains? Put differently, how should we discuss "progress"? We cannot answer any of these questions in the abstract. Instead, we must address them in specific historical settings, and we do well to go back as far back in time as humanly possible – hence, our case studies.

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