

**SIENA HEIGHTS UNIVERSITY**  
**PHIL 329: Technology and the Human Condition**  
**Fall-2, 2009**  
**Wednesday 9:00 am–12:00 pm**  
**Oct. 21-Dec. 16, 2009**  
**Room:**

**COURSE SYLLABUS AND OUTLINE**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This class will inquire into the profound and subtle ways technology has changed human life by looking at both the natural and human environments. The course will wrestle with the complex and too-little-asked question of what is meant by technological progress. This course is offered out of the belief that our society has not yet learned to direct its technology instead of letting its technology direct it. (*Siena Heights University Undergraduate Catalog 2004-2006*, 135.)

**TEXTBOOK:**

Postman, Neil. *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992. ISBN: 0-394-58272-1.

Schultze, Quentin. *Habits of the High-Tech Heart: Living Virtuously in the Information Age*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002. ISBN: 0-8010-2322

Maimon, Elaine P., Janice H. Peritz and Kathleen Blake Yancey. *A Writer's Resource: A Handbook for Writing and Research*. 2<sup>nd</sup>. edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007. ISBN: 13:978-0-07-325938-3

**COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES**

The student will examine the influence of technology on society, giving consideration to its historical, social, and philosophical perspectives. The student will also examine the effects of technology on the human condition. The course will engage the student in an active critical evaluation of various perspectives and theories. The course will seek to expand the student's understanding of technology and of how technology affects the human condition. The course will help the student improve her/his proficiency in critically evaluating the place of technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The course will encourage the student to "prophetically" project where technology will take human beings as the new millennium opens before us and will encourage the student to think through

appropriate responses to technology and its effects.

By the end of the semester the student should be able to:

- Propound the various historical perspectives on technology.
- Propound the various social perspectives on technology.
- Propound the various philosophical/ethical perspectives on technology.
- Critically assess various technologies that are currently shaping the human condition.
- Outline the historical development of technology.
- Explain some of the characteristics of modern technology.
- Describe how technology affects economies and human rights.
- Describe how technology affects computers, robots and information processing.
- Offer a number of ways whereby technology can be controlled.
- Offer a number of directions that technology can take in the new millennium.
- Esouse a number of ways that technology is beneficial to the human condition.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Attendance and Class Participation)

The student will be expected to attend all classes, to arrive and leave on time. Attendance will be taken; absences, late arrivals and leaving early will affect the student's grade. Absences are not excused, except in the case of a death in the family or a personal injury that renders the student unable to attend classes. Up to one missed class may be excused for these circumstances. A second miss will result in the final grade being dropped a full letter grade. A third missed class will result in the failure of the course. Unavoidable absence requires the student to demonstrate mastery of missed content to the instructor at the student's initiative. This will include reading, notes from the class, and any other material covered in class. Participation involves the student's interaction in both large and small group discussions. **IMPORTANT NOTICE: Because of the importance of the first class session, anyone missing the first class will be automatically dropped from the class.**

### Reading of the Assigned Text (20% of the final grade)

The student will report at the end of the semester what percentage of the assigned text was read.

### Technology and Culture Essays (20% for each report for a total of 80% of the final grade)

1) Write an essay on the student's critical interactions with "The Judgment of Thamus" from Plato's *Phaedrus*. This story is in the first chapter of the textbook. The student will critically evaluate Plato's story in light of her/his own experiences and thoughts on the subject of the story. This essay will be 3 to 4 pages in length. This essay is due the second week of class.

2) The student will write an essay, critically addressing any technology and its effects upon culture, by answering the following questions: 1) What are the positive effects of this technology on culture?, 2) What are the negative effects of this technology on culture?, 3) Who wins in the use of this technology?, 4) Who loses in the use of this technology?, 5) What is gained in the use of this technology?, and 6) what is lost in the use of this technology? This essay will be 4 to 5 pages in length. This essay is due the fourth week of class.

3) The student will write an essay, critically addressing the technological phenomena known as “Social-networking” (Facebook, MySpace, Classmates, Twitter, Flickr, etc.) The student will critically evaluate the notion of “social-networking by addressing the following questions: 1) What does this particular technology assume about the way the world is? 2) What does this technology assume about the way human beings are? 3) What does this technology make possible that wasn’t possible before? 4) What does this technology make impossible or at least very difficult that was possible before? 5) How does this technology affect the human condition for good and bad? This essay will be 4 to 5 pages in length. This essay is due the sixth week of class and your findings and responses will be discussed in class.

4) From the list provide at the end of the syllabus, the student will pick one film. The student will watch the film and then critically interact with the film by writing a four to five page paper dealing with the following major concerns: 1) how does the film present technology, 2) how does the film portray the effects of technology on the human condition, and 3) what the student thinks could be done to address the technological problems presented in the film. This essay will be 4 to 5 pages in length. This essay is due the eighth week of class.

### **COURSE POLICIES:**

1. Absolutely no late papers will be accepted. All papers must be turned in on time.
2. Papers must be typed. Hand written papers will not be accepted.
3. If you anticipate being absent from a class you must let the instructor know before class that you will be absent.
4. Students are not permitted to bring guests to class without prior permission from the instructor.
5. Children are not allowed in the classrooms nor can they be left unattended in any room or hallway of the building.
6. This syllabus is dynamic and subject to change.

### **Attention: It has now become necessary to add the following policies, because of previous abuse by students.**

1. Cell phones and pagers must not disrupt a class. All cell phones and pagers must be either turned off or set to “vibrate” when the student is in class. Text-messaging during class will not be allowed. Please be courteous to your fellow-

class mates. If this becomes a problem during a class, the student will be asked to leave and an unexcused absence will be assigned for the day.

2. The same courteousness will also be extended with regard to computers in class. If you are taking notes on your laptop, that is one thing, but if you are surfing the web, playing games or emailing during the class you will be asked to leave and an unexcused absence will be assigned for the day.

## **GRADING SCALE**

Grades will be based on the following scale:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A+	100-99%
A	98-97%
A-	96-94%
B+	93-91%
B	90-88%
B-	87-85%
C+	84-82%
C	81-79%
C-	78-76%
D+	75-73%
D	72-70%
D-	69-67%
E	66-00%

## **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY POLICY** (Siena Heights University Catalog 2002-2004, p. 156)

### Definition

Academic dishonesty is unethical behavior which in any way violates the standards of scholarly conduct. It includes such behaviors as cheating on assignments or examinations, plagiarizing, submitting the same or essentially the same papers for more than one course without the consent of all instructors concerned, misappropriating library materials, or the destroying of or tampering with computer files. Also included in academic dishonesty is knowingly or intentionally helping another violate any part of this policy.

Plagiarism is the failure to give credit for the use of material from outside sources. It includes, but is not limited to, verbatim use of a quote without quotation marks and adequate documentation, submission of a paper prepared by another person as one's own work, using the ideas, facts, words or data of someone else and claiming them as your own, or not documenting ideas, facts, words, or data gathered during research.

### Faculty Responsibilities and Penalties

Faculty must explain dishonesty and plagiarism at the start of each course, every semester, and /or state in their syllabi the policies, procedures, and penalties for such behavior. Since academic dishonesty is often more difficult to prove than prevent, each faculty member is encouraged to take every reasonable measure to prevent academic dishonesty from occurring. Faculty are encouraged to explain why academic dishonesty is critical to scholarly endeavor and to provide examples of academic dishonesty that are germane to their classes.

Faculty members who suspect a student of academic dishonesty may settle the case directly with the student. In cases where the violation is substantial or admitted, the instructor may penalize the student in accord with his/her stated policy. When a student is penalized, the faculty member must report the incident in writing to his/her division chair or site director. A copy of the report will be sent to the appropriate Dean (Dean of the College for Professional Studies; Dean of the Graduate College; or the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences). The Dean of Students and the student's adviser will also be notified. If more than one instance of academic dishonesty is reported about a specific student, the Dean will review the reports, and, in cases of serious offenses, could take steps to suspend the student from the university.

### Student Responsibility

Students should familiarize themselves with the Siena Heights University Academic Dishonesty Policy, which can be obtained from instructors. Students are not excused from adherence to the policy even if they have not read it.

### Appeals Procedure

Any appeal by a student must be made in writing to the instructor within ten (10) university working days from the time the student is notified that a penalty has been levied against him/her. If the appeal is denied, the student may submit a written petition to the division chair or site coordinator with his/her concerns. The division chair or site coordinator should then consult with the faculty member involved before rendering a decision. If the student wishes, he/she may make a final appeal to the appropriate Dean or his/her designated representative.

## **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

Siena Heights University is committed to providing a learning environment that benefits all students. Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 all reasonable accommodations will be made to meet the documented needs of students. The Siena Accommodations Policy for Students with Disabilities requires a student to provide written documentation of his/her disability to the Academic Advising Office. If you require special accommodations, it is your responsibility to notify each instructor during the first two weeks of the semester.

In accordance with University Policy and the equal access laws, I am available to discuss

appropriate academic accommodations that you may be eligible for as a student with a disability. Please contact me for an appoint to discuss possible accommodations. Students must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities for disability verification and determination of reasonable accommodations. Requests for accommodations must be done in a timely manner and are not retroactive.

### **TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE**

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Material Covered</u></b>	<b><u>Reading Schedule</u></b>
Week 1	Introductions, Syllabus, “Children of Invention”	Introduction in both books
Week 2	“The Judgment of Thamus” Historical Perspectives Essay 1 Due	Chapter 1 in both books
Week 3	Historical Perspectives Con’t	Chapters 2-3 in both books
Week 4	Philosophical Perspectives Essay 2 Due	Chapter 4 in both books
Week 5	Social Perspectives Ethical Perspectives	Chapter 5 in both books
Week 6	Social Networking Essay 3 Due	Chapter 6 in both books
Week 7	Computers, Robotics, and Information Technology	Chapters 7-8 (Postman) Chapter 8 (Schultze)
Week 8	Responses to Technology Essay 4 Due	Chapters 9-11 (Postman)

### **LIST OF FILMS FOR ESSAY # 2**

The student will choose three films from this list for her/his cultural interactions with technology. It is possible to choose a film not on this list but it will have to be okayed with the instructor first.

*Jurassic Park–I, II, and III*

*The Island of Dr. Moreau (1977, 1996)*

*The Island of Lost Souls (1933)*

*The Matrix*

*The Matrix: Reloaded*

*The Matrix: Revolutions*

*Titanic*

*The Fly (1958, 1986)*

*Dr. Strangelove*

*The China Syndrom*

*Bicentennial Man*

*The Island*

*A Civil Action*

*Extreme Measures*

*Blade Runner*  
*Star Wars*  
*Soylent Green*  
*Silkwood*  
*Logan's Run*  
*Paycheck*  
*Iron Giant*  
*Déjà vu*  
*Wargames*  
*Hackers*  
*Syriana*  
*Sound of Fury (Doc.)*  
*The Day After Tomorrow*  
*The Real Dirt on Farmer John (Doc.)*  
*The City of Lost Children*

*Outbreak*  
*Panic In the Streets*  
*Erin Brockovich*  
*AI*  
*Frankenstein (Any version)*  
*Cell*  
*Terminator I, II, and III*  
*Enemy of the State*  
*Antitrust*  
*Firewall*  
*Short-Circuit*  
*The Sixth Day*  
*The Lord of War*  
*Live Free or Die Hard*