Technology and Society
Sociology 241
Spring 2022
Dr. Leslie Kay Jones
Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:50pm - 5:10pm

CONTACT INFORMATION

Email Address: lk.jones@rutgers.edu

Office Location: Outside of Davison Hall or by WebEx.

Office Hours:

Wednesdays and Fridays 3pm-5pm by appointment (Appointments accepted up to 2pm that day). Please make an appointment so that I can accommodate both physical and virtual office hours.

Additional Webex appointments (outside of these hours) available by e-mail arrangement.

Email Procedures:

Timing

Please allow up to 2 work days (regular business days) for a response. Example: Sending an email on Tuesday before 5pm means you get a response by Thursday at 5pm. Sending an email after 5pm means I will get to your email on Friday. Sending an email on Friday means that I will get to your e-mail on Tuesday.

Formatting

Please include SOC 241 in the subject line so that I can locate your e-mail. Sometimes students take more than one class with me. If you do not include your course number, there will be a delay in response due to having to look up your course.

The Sociology department will also hold optional weekly advising hours on Fridays 10am-12pm (email Undergraduate Administrative Assistant, Carissa Nadonley at
Undergrad-soc@sociology.rutgers.edu) and Thursdays 11am-1pm (email Undergraduate Director, Jeffrey Dowd at ug-dir@sociology.rutgers.edu) that all students of this course are welcome to attend.

**Course Texts:** All required texts are available through article and book search on Rutgers Libraries website. They will also be uploaded as PDFs to the course website.

**Course Description**

This course engages with the big idea of “technology” as a framework for thinking about social organization, communication, and culture. What is technology exactly? Does technology develop us or do we develop it? We will engage with a variety of texts in an effort to better understand how technology is imagined in the social world, from iconic science fiction films to personal essays. We will examine the historic impact of technological innovation on social infrastructure and identify manifestations of technological inequality.

**Students who complete this course will be able to:**

- Explain what technology is in sociological terms.
- Articulate a sociological definition of technological infrastructure.
- Explain how political context can drive and shape technological innovation
- Describe the relationship between technological infrastructure and economic inequality.
- Explain how technology changes over time have affected the spread of information.
- Understand how race, gender, and disability shape and are shaped by technological innovation.
- Explain the physical infrastructure of the internet and its limitations
- Begin to critically evaluate the sociological implications of new technology laws.
- Identify and analyze different media frames that are used to talk about technology in the public sphere
- Define, critique, and expand upon "The Digital Divide"
- Understand the theoretical application of a technology frame to the construction of race

**GRADE MAKEUP**

30% Participation

Index card system - students must hand in 3 index cards over the course of the semester. Quality over quantity. Each index card labeled with your name and student ID should have one question or comment about the class content. You can even prepare your index card before class.

You may use your index card to indicate you would like to speak in class, or you may submit an index card at the end of class. You can use one index card per class. So you do need to space them out across the semester.
You may indicate on your index card whether or not you would like me to read your question or comment out loud.

20% News Report

Every student must sign up for a week to submit a “tech news of the week report.” Each week will have up to five students. You may collaborate with other students signed up for your week to submit one summary (1 page) or you may choose to work individually and submit your summary. Students who work together may agree on a single person to present their summary, or share time to present as a group. I will model this news report summary and suggest news sources for you during the first week of class.

20% Midterm Take-home Exam (Multiple Choice) - Open October 25th to November 1st.

30% Final Reflection - 2.5 Pages Due on the last day of Reading Days, Wednesday, 12/15.

Accessibility
If you have any specific personal and/or academic accessibility requirements (learning disability, physical disability, language comprehension, etc.), I welcome you to speak with me or email me to let me know how to best accommodate your needs, especially if you don’t have an apparent disability, have ongoing health issues or are trying to pass. You are NOT obligated to disclose any of these issues with me, only specify if there’s any accommodations required. It is my pleasure to ensure that as my class meets the needs of all my students. If you need any adaptations for course materials (large font, pacing, image description, closed captioning) let me know. You are also encouraged to register with the Office of Disability Support Services, but it is not a requirement.
Syllabus Schedule

1-18-2022 and 1-20-2022  What is Technology?

**Week 1 Texts**

**Listen:**

“Mini-Stories: Volume 11.” *99% Invisible*. [Transcript](#).

**Browse and Skim:**

[ComputerHistory.org](#)

**Read:**


**Technology and the Public Sphere**

1-25-2022 and 1-27-2022

**Read:**


“15.1 Technological Advances: From the Printing Press to the iPhone.” in “Media Technology and Communication.” *A Primer on Communication Studies*.


2-1-2022 and 2-3-2022  Technology and Culture

**Week 3 Texts:**

**Listen:**

“The Lost Cities of Geo.” *99% Invisible*. [Transcript](#).

**Read:**

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2-8-2022 and 2-10-2022 Technology and Infrastructure

Week 4 Texts:

Listen: “Curb Cuts,” 99% Invisible
Read:

Learning from Disaster? The History of Technology and the Future of Disaster Research
Author(s): SCOTT GABRIEL KNOWLES

https://www.thenation.com/article/society/usps-funding-local-media/

Imagining Technological Futures
(Pt 1: Looking Backwards)

2-15-2022 and 2-17-2022 Week 5 Texts

Listen:

“Money Tree.” Criminal, Episode 51.

Read:
McFadden, Syreeta. 2014. Teaching The Camera To See My Skin: Navigating photography’s inherited bias against dark skin.

2-22-2022 and 2-25-2022 Imagining Technological Futures
(Pt 2: The Future is Now)

Week 6 Texts

Listen: “DNA Kits - Can You Trust Them.” Science Vs. 4-11-2019

3-1-2022 and 3-3-2022 Health Technology and Cyborg Theory

Week 7 Texts

Listen:


Read:


3-8-2022 and 3-10-2022 History of the Internet/Web 1.0

Week 8 Texts:

Listen:


Read:


Spring Break - 3-12-2022 to 3-20-2022
Your midterm opens this week on Canvas on 3-23-2022 and closes next week on 4-1-2022

3-22-2022 and 3-24-2022  Infrastructure of the Internet

Week 9 Texts:

Listen:
“Sally Gets Taken for a Ride.” Episode 4. What the Hack with Adam Levin. 8-2-20. Transcript.

Read:


20% Midterm Canvas Quiz (Multiple Choice) - Midterm Due - 4-1-2022

3-29-2022 and 3-31-2022

Week 10 Texts:

Listen:


Midterm Due - 4-1-2022

4-5-2022 and 4-7-2022  Social Media

Week 11 Texts

Read:


4-12-22 and 4-14-2022  The Gig Economy

Week 12 Texts

Listen:

“Wanna Swim in Cash?” Season 1, Episode 1. The Dream. Stitcher Podcasts. Version with captions


4-19-2022 and 4-21-2022 Information Technology, Science, and “Knowing”

Week 13 Texts:

Listen:


Read:

Excerpt from Algorithms of Oppression by Safiya Noble.

4-26-2022 and 4-28-2022  The Internet and Activism

Week 14 Texts:

Read:


30% Final Reflection - 2.5 Pages. Due at the end of Reading Days.