

Course Title : Techno-culture
Course Code : CUS3013
Recommended Study Year : 3/4
No. of Credits/Term : 3
Mode of Tuition : Lecture-Tutorial
Class Contact Hours : 3 hours per week
Category in Major Prog. : Programme Elective
Prerequisite(s) : None
Co-requisite(s) : None
Exclusion(s) : None

Brief Course Description : We live daily with technology, a key player in society and culture. Changes in the technologies are an inseparable part of our everyday life, material cultures and social worlds. Both the technical and magical dimension of technology has had immense impacts on the cultural formations and social norms of “modernity”. In this course, we examine how technologies mediate our social interactions and lead to changes in the ways we conceive of ourselves as human beings, individually and collectively. Thus, we focus on the intricate relationship between technology and culture. We study selected topics, cases, and aspects of techno-culture with regard to the diverse representations and conflicting understandings of that relationship in the changing patterns of social and everyday life, of human experience within the private and the public domain, of artistic, literary and narrative imagination, as well as popular cultural genres and socio-economic structures.

Aims : (1) To develop students’ understanding of the relationship between the uses of technology and the shaping of everyday life and popular cultural practices;
(2) To help students acquire the critical perspective and related research skills in analyzing the impacts, possibilities and constraints of technology in relation to contemporary culture.

Learning Outcomes : On completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Identify and examine the major arguments relating to the understanding of technology as a set of tools or “techniques” that contribute to the making of any given culture;
2. Show comprehension of the key arguments in the cultural perspectives on technology, including the understanding of the material character of everyday life through cases in popular cultural practices;
3. Provide a well-illustrated account of contemporary culture as techno-culture by outlining the ways in which machines and media technologies affect our understandings of who we are and what human nature and relationships have become within the histories of “modernity”.

Indicative Content : Craft, skill, and creativity in the “knowledge economy”;
media life and techno-cultural forms;
new media and techno-capitalism;
households and the techno-domestic environments;
culture/creative industries, commodity and hyper-reality;
everyday habits, material culture and bodily engagements;
digital technologies and the changing concepts of corporeality;
edu-tainment and the network society;
global spectacle and neo-liberalism;
cyberculture and postmodern identities;
questions of media ethics, freedom and the post-human.

Teaching Method : (1) Lectures supplemented with a wide range of cross-media materials illustrate the complex nature in practices through which technology and culture integrate.

(2) Tutorial presentations and discussions prepare students for relevant fieldwork and critical study.

(3) Guided term projects allow students to develop their skills in data collection and case analysis.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes:

Learning Outcome	Assessment Method			
	Class Participation	Exercises	Mid-term Assignment	Term Project
(1) Students should be able to identify and examine the major arguments relating to the understanding of technology as a set of tools or “techniques” that contribute to the making of any given culture	X	X		
(2) Students should be able to show comprehension of the key arguments in the cultural perspectives on technology, including the understanding of the material character of everyday life through cases in popular cultural practices;		X	X	
(3) Students should be able to provide a well-illustrated account of contemporary culture as techno-culture by outlining the ways in which machines and media technologies affect our understandings of who we are and what human nature and relationships have become within the histories of “modernity”				X

Assessment : Students are assessed on the basis of 100% Continuous Assessment with the following grade distribution:

- Class participation [20%]
- Exercises [20%]
- Mid-term assignment [20%]
- Term project (with proposal) [40%]

References

Required/Essential Reading:

Shaw, Debra Benita. *Technoculture: The Key Concepts*. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2008.

Vannini, Phillip, ed. *Material Culture and Technology in Everyday Life: Ethnographic Approaches*. New York, Berlin and Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009.

Recommended/Supplementary Readings:

Berry, Chris, Fran Martin, and Audrey Yue, eds. *Mobile Cultures: New Media in Queer Asia*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press, 2003.

Caldwell, John Thornton, ed. and intro. *Electronic Media and Technoculture*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000.

Fuery, Kelli. *New Media: Culture and Image*. Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Lysloff, Rene, and Leslie C. Gay, Jr., eds. *Music and Technoculture*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2003.

Munt, Sally R., ed. *Technospaces: Inside the New Media*. London and New York: Continuum, 2001.

Pavlik, John V. *New Media Technology: Cultural and Commercial Perspectives*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998.

Robins, Kevin, and Frank Webster. *Times of the Technoculture: From the Information Society to the Virtual Life*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999.

Rosa, Hartmut, and William E. Scheuerman. *High Speed Society: Social Acceleration, Power and Modernity*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008.

Van Dijk, Jan. *The Network Society: Social Aspects of New Media*. Trans. Leontine Spoorenberg. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999.

Wise, J. Macgregor. *Exploring Technology and Social Space*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997.

Important Notes:

1. Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 2 hours of class contact and 7 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
2. Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
3. Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
4. To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>.