Science, Technology Society: From History to Policy

Sample student evaluation material

Before each lecture, students are required to read a chosen article and answer specific questions that have been posed by the instructor beforehand. Each student thus delivers a 2-page essay before each lecture. The instructor reads all the students' essays before the lecture and uses them to organize a discussion. The final grade derives from these short essays.

What follows are two sample sets of questions, to be answered in writing before the 2nd and 8th lecture of the course. Please note that specific questions are subject to change without further notice.

Lecture #2: Introductory concepts II

Obligatory reading:

Leo Marx, "'Technology': The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept", *Social Research,* Vol. 64, No. 3, 1997.

Supplementary reading:

Gabrielle Hecht and Michael Thad Allen, "Authority, Political Machines, and Technology's History", in Gabrielle Hecht and Michael Thad Allen (eds.), *Technologies of Power: Essays in Honor of Thomas Parke Hughes and Agatha Chipley Hughes,* MIT Press, 2001.

David Edgerton, 'From Innovation to Use: Ten Eclectic Theses on the Historiography of Technology', *History and technology: An International Journal,* Vol. 16, No. 2, 1999.

Questions (Answer the following questions in a total of 2 pages or less. Send your essay to the instructor on the day before the next lecture):

1. Were you aware of the fact that our notion of "technology" had a history and is in fact quite recent? What does this (new) knowledge mean to you?

2. According to Leo Marx, our current notion of "technology" filled a "conceptual void" that was increasingly felt after 1850. Describe the social changes that led to this "conceptual void".

3. In what sense is "technology" a hazardous concept, according to Leo Marx?

Lecture #8: Nuclearity.

Obligatory reading:

Gabrielle Hecht, "Political Designs: Nuclear Reactors and National Policy in Postwar France", *Technology and Culture,* Vol. 35, No. 4, 1994.

"AUKUS nuclear submarine deal poses risk to global security: think tank report", *chinadaily.com.cn,* 3/8/2023, https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202308/03/WS64caf791a31035260b81a058.html.

Supplementary reading:

Stathis Arapostathis, Aspasia Kandaraki, Yannis Garyfallos and Aristotle Tympas, «'Tobacco for Atoms': Nuclear Politics, Ambivalences and Resistances about a Reactor that was Never Built», *History of Technology,* Vol. 33, 2017.

Questions (Answer the following questions in a total of 2 pages or less. Send your essay to the instructor on the day before the next lecture):

1. What was the technopolitical function of the French nuclear reactors eventually built? In what sense can we say that building these reactors constituted technopolitics?

2. Comment on the quote by former French Prime Minister Mendes-France (Hecht, p. 675). Did he know that selecting a reactor design was in fact a political act?

3. Can you provide an example of everyday technopolitics?

4. Why do China and Russia argue that the 2021 AUKUS treaty exploits a "lacuna" in current non-proliferation treaties? Might Hecht's article be used to strengthen their arguments?