COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course explores the powerful roles that technology plays in contemporary social life and suggests some of the impacts that our ever-greater reliance on, and faith in, technology might have upon our lives. The course begins with a critical overview of the heralded promises that technology often carries; here, we explore some of the undersides of so-called “technological progress.” The remainder of the course examines a series of debates about the impacts of particular technologies on social life. Our aim in looking at these debates is to get a handle on the implications that these technologies may have in the foreseeable future.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
This course will enable you to:
• Think critically about the role that technology plays in our society and make informed judgments about its possible future impacts.
• See both sides of the debates surrounding various technologies.
• Become comfortable with expressing your ideas in front of your peers.
• Write with focus, clarity, and brevity.

TEACHING STYLE:
The success of this course hinges on the productive exchange of ideas through discussions. While I will at times give short lectures, your active participation is essential. The more you each bring to class, the better it will go and the more that you will take from it. I may call on you to voice your ideas in the event that discussions begin to drag or if it becomes clear that only a handful of people are participating. My reason for taking this liberty is to convince you that what you have to say matters. In a liberal arts course, there are often not “right” or “wrong” answers. Therefore, just contributing something to the discussion can be very constructive in productively moving it along.
ATTENDANCE:

I expect you to come to class consistently and on time. **IF YOU MISS MORE THAN ONE CLASS, YOUR GRADE WILL START TO SUFFER.** There is no need to bring a doctor’s note or the like for those classes that you do miss. The point is that I want you to be in class, not to produce excuses for why you’re not. If you are not in class on a particular day, it is your responsibility to ask me for any materials that I handed out.

READINGS: * Please bring assigned readings to class.

All readings are in a photocopied packet, which is available free of charge from me. On occasion, I may distribute additional readings in class.

GRADING AND EVALUATION:

Your final grade will be based on a paper, a take-home midterm, a take-home final, attendance and participation, and a class presentation. I will compute your final grade as follows:

- 20% Paper
- 20% Take-home midterm
- 30% Take-home final
- 20% Attendance and participation
- 10% Class presentation

OVERVIEW: THE PROMISE AND PERIL OF LIVING IN A TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED SOCIETY

Sept 11th: Course Introduction


Sept 25th:


Oct 2nd:

No class – Yom Kippur

Oct 9th

No class – Columbus Day

Oct 16th:


Oct 19th:

Paper due by 5pm via email.

The film The Chemical Kids will be shown at 7pm at a location to be announced. If you would prefer to watch it on your own, it is available at the Knapp Media Center.

Oct 23rd:


EXAMINING DEBATES ABOUT THE IMPACTS OF TECHNOLOGY ON SOCIAL LIFE

Is anti-terrorism surveillance compatible with democracy?

Oct 26th:

The film *Security Threat: Terrorism, Surveillance, and Civil Liberties* will be shown at 7pm at a location to be announced. If you would prefer to watch it on your own, it is available at the Knapp Media Center.

Oct 30th:


Should the U.S. continue to explore space?

Nov 6th:


Are genetically modified foods safe?

Nov 9th: The film *Harvest of Fear* will be shown at 7pm at a location to be announced. If you would prefer to watch it on your own, it is available at the Knapp Media Center.


Is genetic technology positively revolutionizing human life?

Nov 16th: 

**Midterm exam due by 5pm via email.**

The film *Gattaca* will be shown at 7pm at a location to be announced. If you would prefer to watch it on your own, it is available at the Knapp Media Center.


**Does the use of information technology need to have more defined boundaries?**


Wi-Fi Wars: Loiterers Can Be a Drag on Businesses' Bottom Line, By Alison Lobron, Boston Globe, July 9, 2006.

Jonathan D. Glater, Professor@University.edu, Subject: Why It's All About Me. New York Times, February 21, 2006.

**Is greater Internet access a meaningful remedy to social inequality?**

Nov 30th: The film Virtual Equality: The Information Revolution and the Inner City will be shown at 7pm at a location to be announced. If you would prefer to watch it on your own, it is available at the Knapp Media Center.


**Is technology-based learning good for education?**


Dec 18th: **Final exam due by 5pm via email.**