

History 476: Technology in American Society

Spring 2018
Tuesday 12:30-3:15
226 Bay State Road, Room 304
Boston University

Professor Edmund Russell
Department of History
Office: 226 Bay State Rd., Room 302
Office Phone: 617-353-2550
edruss@bu.edu
Office hours: T 3:30-4:30, F 3:30-4:30, and by appointment

Goals

The goals of this course are to (a) deepen our understanding of the interaction between people and technology over time, (b) advance critical thinking skills, and (c) develop research and writing skills. By the end of the course, you should be able to meet these objectives.

1. To explain how technologies arose, spread, and affected American people.
2. To pose questions about the world, analyze data, and express conclusions clearly. These skills are important for college, work, personal lives, and democracy.
3. To locate primary sources and explain their relationship to broad historical patterns.

Credit

Class participation	30
Discussion leadership (including plan)	10
Short papers	30
Primary source assignments	30
Total	100

Class Participation

You will receive 0-10 points for each class day. Credit stresses quality of participation more than quantity for its own sake. One great contribution per class will be rewarded more than many mediocre comments. The key to quality is preparation before class. Come to class having done the reading, prepared to raise questions, and to offer your own interpretations of the issues at hand. The course is, among other things, a forum for your views. Whether they are expressed verbally or in writing, they should be clear, coherent, and respectful of others.

10	Shows excellent preparation. Analyzes readings and synthesizes them with other knowledge (from other readings, course material, discussions, experiences, etc.) Makes original points. Synthesizes pieces of discussion to develop new approaches that take the class further. Responds thoughtfully to other students' comments. Builds arguments with other students, but may question majority view. Stays focused on
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	topic. Volunteers but does not dominate.
8	Shows good preparation. Interprets and analyzes course material. Volunteers regularly. Thinks through own points, responds to others' points, questions others in constructive way, may question majority view, raises good questions about readings. Stays on topic.
7	Participates but demonstrates little or no mastery of the reading.
6	Present but does not contribute to discussion
0	Absent

Class attendance is required. You may miss one day without penalty. Each additional class missed will reduce the participation grade.

Short Papers on Readings

The short papers on readings have three purposes.

1. To help you master ideas and facts in the course
2. To improve your writing skills
3. To lay the groundwork for an excellent class discussion

Beginning in week 2, you are required to turn in (at the beginning of class) a short (two-pages, double-spaced) essay on that week's reading. The essay should (a) summarize the main points in the reading, and (b) analyze the reading. Your analysis should push beyond the information in the book and demonstrate independent thinking. The analysis may include criticisms of the reading, questions for further discussion, and/or points that you find particularly interesting or controversial.

You may take one bye on a short paper during the semester. That is, you can turn in no essay one week with no penalty. If you do this, please submit a piece of paper telling me you are taking a bye. Byes are intended to help you if you are sick or have some other emergency.

Primary Source Analyses

Beginning in week 2, you are required to find and analyze a primary source related to that week's reading. The purposes of this assignments are:

1. To enhance your research skills
2. To apply ideas in the readings to primary sources
3. To see historical events through the eyes of people who experienced them

Primary sources are materials generated close to the events under study. (Secondary sources are scholarly analyses written well after events. The course textbook is a secondary source.) Examples of primary sources include newspaper articles, magazine articles, books, speeches, legal documents, laws, advertisements, and artifacts. You can find primary sources on line or in person. Either way, you need to create a document of the source (e.g., a printout of a newspaper article) that you can submit in class. If the document is long, you can print just the key pages. **Add full citation information for**

your source. Full citation information means all the information someone else needs to find the same document. Put the information in Chicago note style.

At the beginning of class, submit your primary source and a one page analysis of it. The analysis should (a) explain how this source illustrates major historical patterns, and (b) adds to your understanding of events beyond the information in the textbook.

You have the option to take one bye on a primary source analysis during the semester. That is, you can turn in no document or analysis one week with no penalty. If you do this, please submit a piece of paper telling me you are taking a bye. Byes are intended to help you if you are sick or have some other emergency.

In sum, at the beginning of each class in week 2 and after you will submit:

1. A short paper on readings (two pages, double spaced, typed)
2. A primary source (may be a few key pages from a long document) with full citation information
3. A one page analysis of your primary source

Integrity

Integrity is the bedrock of scholarship. We have to rely on others to present findings honestly. My assumption is that all of us are honorable people and will not lie, cheat, or otherwise behave dishonestly. If confronted with evidence to the contrary, and if investigation convinces me that a student acted dishonestly, I will follow the procedures in the BU Academic Conduct Code.

The biggest danger for honesty in a course like this is plagiarism (a form of cheating), so be sure to (1) cite a source for any idea not your own, (2) set off quotations in quotation marks, or by indenting, and cite the source, and (3) use a standard style of documentation (we will use Chicago note style). Carelessness, ignorance, and lack of time are unacceptable excuses for plagiarism. I am happy to clarify the rules for you. If you are uncertain how to do something properly, ask me for help **before** turning in an assignment.

Syllabus quiz

We will have a quiz on this syllabus during the second class (Class 2). The purpose is to ensure that we have a common understanding of plans for the course. You cannot use the syllabus during the quiz, but you can use one page of notes that you prepare in advance. Topics for the quiz are the following: course goals, credit (points and categories), academic integrity (especially how to avoid plagiarism), and potential sanctions for academic misconduct. For the last of these, read the BU Academic Conduct Code at

<https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>.

Accommodations

My goal is for everyone to succeed in this class. If you find yourself struggling with your mental or physical health this semester, please feel free to approach me. I try to be flexible and accommodating.

Required Book

Ruth Schwartz Cowan and Matthew H. Hirsch, *A Social History of American Technology*, 2nd Edition (Oxford University Press), ISBN 978-0195387261.

Please bring the book with you to class in hard copy.

Discussion Leadership

Each class a student will take responsibility for leading discussion. Each leader will prepare a 3-4 double-spaced page discussion plan (to be emailed to me, or dropped in my mailbox, at least 24 hours before class begins) of the reading. The plan should identify major themes in the reading and questions you plan to pose for discussion.

Late Paper Policy

Papers lose one third of a grade for each day they are late (so an A paper will become an A- if turned in one day late, B+ if turned in two days late, etc.). Papers seven or more days late receive a grade of 0.

Paper format

- Machine printed
- Double spaced
- Times New Roman font, 12 point
- Paginated (lower right or upper right)
- Single sided
- Chicago footnote style (full note, no ibid)
- Top of first page
 - Your name
 - Course number
 - Prof. Russell
 - Due date
 - Title of paper

Schedule**Class 1**

- Jan. 23
- Read Cowan and Hersch, Introduction.
- Due: nothing
- Overview of course
- Demonstration of finding primary sources

Class 2

- Jan. 30
- Read Cowan and Hersch, Chapter 1: The Land, the Natives, and the Settlers
- Due: Short paper on reading; primary source; primary source analysis
- Quiz on syllabus

Class 3

- Feb. 6
- Read Cowan and Hersch, Chapter 2: Agricultural and Craft Work in the Colonies
- Due: Short paper on reading; primary source; primary source analysis

Class 4

- Feb. 13
- Read Cowan and Hersch, Chapter 3: From Farm to Factory
- Due: Short paper on reading; primary source; primary source analysis

[Tuesday, Feb. 20—no class because university follows Monday class schedule]

Class 5

- Feb. 27
- Read Cowan and Hersch, Chapter 4: Transportation Revolutions
- Due: Short paper on reading; primary source; primary source analysis

[Tuesday, March 6—no class—spring break]

Class 6

- March 13
- Read Cowan and Hersch, Chapter 5: Technological Systems and Industrial Society
- Due: Short paper on reading; primary source; primary source analysis

Class 7

- March 20
- Read Cowan and Hersch, Chapter 6: Everyday Labor in the Mechanical Age
- Due: Short paper on reading; primary source; primary source analysis

Class 8

- March 27
- Read Cowan and Hersch, Chapter 7: Inventors, Entrepreneurs, Engineers, and Industrialization
- Due: Short paper on reading; primary source; primary source analysis

Class 9

- April 3
- Read Cowan and Hersch, Chapter 8: Automobiles and Automobility
- Due: Short paper on reading; primary source; primary source analysis

Class 10

- April 10
- Read Cowan and Hersch, Chapter 9: Taxpayers, Generals, and Aerospace
- Due: Short paper on reading; primary source; primary source analysis

Class 11

- April 17
- Read Cowan and Hersch, Chapter 10: Electronic Communication and Social Control
- Due: Short paper on reading; primary source; primary source analysis

Class 12

- April 24
- Read Cowan and Hersch, Chapter 11: Electronic Brains and Global Villages
- Due: Short paper on reading; primary source; primary source analysis

Class 13

- May 1

- Last class
- Read Cowan and Hersch, Chapter 12: Foods, Drugs, and Unintended Consequences
- Due: Short paper on reading; primary source; primary source analysis

No final exam. You will have demonstrated your mastery of material through weekly writing assignments, so an exam is unnecessary.

Syllabus of 29 Dec. 2017