Philosophy of Technology: CMNS 857

Andrew Feenberg

School of Communication
tel: 604-291-5169 | email: Feenberg@sfu.ca | www.sfu.ca/~andrewf

This course will introduce philosophy of technology through literature, major texts in the Continental tradition, and recent approaches to technology studies in the social sciences. We will begin with Aldous Huxley's famous novel *Brave New World* which lays out in narrative form the dystopian terms of 20th Century technology critique. The domination of man by machine is the theme. A dystopian logic of technology underlies the philosophical work of Heidegger and his student Marcuse. Marcuse's theory, however, opens up the possibility of a radical transformation of technology. With Habermas we have a very different attempt to come to terms with the existing technology by limiting its reach. Foucault approaches similar issues of science and technology based domination from a more empirical standpoint. He relates the acquisition of social knowledge to the exercise of power through procedures and devices. His work will help us to interpret the contributions of recent science and technology studies, represented here by Pinch and Bijker and Latour. We will conclude with my own book which draws on all these sources to present an approach I call "critical constructivism."

Format: This is a graduate seminar. There will be lectures, student presentations, and discussion. Students are expected to participate actively. Grading will be based on participation (50%) and a research paper (50%).

Readings:

Articles in Reader or on line:

Pinch and Bijker, "The Social Construction of Facts and Artifacts"

Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'"

Latour, "Where are the Missing Masses?"

Foucault, "Truth and Power," "The Subject and Power"

Feenberg, "Democratic Rationalization," "From Information to Communication," "The Factory or the City: Which Model for Online Education," "Marcuse and the Critique of Technology"

Heidegger, "Traditional Language and Technological Language"

Dreyfus, "Heidegger on Gaining a Free Relation to Technology"

Books:

Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*

Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*

Feenberg, *Questioning Technology*

Huxley, *Brave New World*

Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*

Reading List by week:

1. Feenberg, "Democratic Rationalization," Feenberg, Questioning Technology, preface, chap. 1

2. Huxley, *Brave New World*

3. Heidegger, "Traditional Language and Technological Language," Dreyfus, "Heidegger on Gaining a Free Relation to Technology," Feenberg, *Questioning Technology*, chap. 8

4. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, "The Question Concerning Technology"

5. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*

6. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*

7. Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology,'" Feenberg, *Questioning Technology*, chap. 7.

8. Foucault, "Truth and Power," "The Subject and Power"

9. Pinch and Bijker, "The Social Construction of Facts and Artifacts,"

10. Feenberg, "The Factory or the City: Which Model for Online Education," Feenberg "From Information to Communication."

11. Latour, "Where are the Missing Masses?", Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*

12. Feenberg, *Questioning Technology*, chaps. 4,5,6,9

Some extra time is allowed for additional materials to be decided by the class.