

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
Department of History  
Semester I, 1992-93

History 411  
Prof. Dunlavy  
4103 Humanities

Office Hours  
M 2:15-3:45pm, W 4-5:30pm  
or by appt. (263-1854)

*HISTORY OF AMERICAN TECHNOLOGY*

This class surveys the history of American technology from colonial times to the present. Using secondary and primary readings, we will explore some of the ways in which American technology has changed over the centuries, devoting particular attention to two aspects of the process: the *origins* of those changes and their *consequences*. In other words, this is not a survey of the "nuts and bolts" of American technological development; although you will certainly know about the "facts" of technological change by the end of the semester, we will focus on the underlying forces that pushed change in one direction rather than another and on the social and political consequences of those changes.

*COURSE REQUIREMENTS, MECHANICS, ETC.*

This is a three-credit class, which meets three times a week for 50 minutes. Lectures will be interspersed with discussions of assigned readings. The following book should be purchased at People's Bookstore, 458 West Gilman, which opens at 10 a.m. everyday (except Sundays at 12 p.m.).

Alan I. Marcus and Howard P. Segal, *Technology in America: A Brief History* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989).

Another book or two may also be available for purchase later in the semester. The remainder of the assigned readings, marked with an asterisk below, will be available on 3-hour reserve at the Historical Society library. Three copies will be put on reserve, so you will need to PLAN AHEAD to ensure that you get the reading done in a timely fashion.

*Written Work:* Over the course of the semester, you will have a number of written assignments. Some will be one-paragraph analyses of the assigned readings. Two others take the form of take-home essays, each a maximum of five pages in length (typed, doubled-spaced, 1"-margins). You will have a week to write each essay, and each student will write his or her own essay. However, you will be assigned to teams of four or five students, who will meet workshop-style to read and comment on each other's drafts. (Regular classes will not meet during the essay weeks.) These essays will draw on the lectures and class discussions as well as assigned readings, and they serve two purposes: they

require you to think *synthetically, succinctly*, and (in the best of all possible worlds) *creatively* about the causes and consequences of technological change; and they give you an opportunity to hone your writing and analytical skills. The final piece of written work is the traditional, in-class final exam, which will be given on December 16 at 2:45 p.m.

Grades will be based on:

1-¶ analyses of readings	
Attendance and participation	25 percent
Take-home essay no. 1	25 percent
Take-home essay no. 2	25 percent
Final exam	25 percent

Students who want to take the class for honors credit or for a fourth credit should see me after the first class.

**Plagiarism:** A word of warning to the perhaps-not-so-wise. Although you will work on your essays in teams, BE SURE TO WRITE YOUR OWN ESSAYS. If I see any tell-tale signs of plagiarism in your paper, I will ask to see your notes and drafts. SO BE SURE TO KEEP YOUR NOTES AND DRAFTS.

**General Advice** about studying for this class: The text by Marcus and Segal provides a serviceable chronological and topical framework for the course (although it is not the most stimulating reading). Read it quickly and use it often as a reference throughout the semester. The other reading assignments, which explore selected issues in greater depth, should be read more closely.

Take notes. Take notes. Take notes. Throughout the semester. On everything--not only on the lectures but also on the assigned readings. Take notes. The act of note-taking will help you to understand the readings better and this in turn will enhance our discussions. Also, being able to review your notes on the readings and lectures will allow you to make better use of the weeks allotted for writing the essays.

Take some time each week to think about how the lectures, readings, and discussions fit together--i.e., to step back and ponder the larger picture. This is good practice for the essays.

If you are troubled by any aspect of the class, lectures, or readings, or if you would simply like to discuss something in greater depth, please feel free to stop by my office during office hours.