PHILOSOPHY OF TECHNOLOGY
HU 359
Fall 1999
Professor Jennifer Daryl Slack

Class Time: 3:35-4:50 Tu, Th
Office: 304 Walker Hall
Class Location: Office Phone: 487-3228
Office: Hours: 11-12 Tuesday and Thursday; Other times by appointment
Email: jdslack@mtu.edu

COURSE GOALS:
In this class, we will look at technology philosophically. But that does not mean that what we will
talk about is irrelevant to your life. Quite the contrary! My principal goal in this class is to help you
develop ways to think about the many different ways that technology matters in your life. The
book will guide us to look at some select issues - mainly privacy, necessity, space, time, and
(even) death. You should expect to leave the class with some really new ways to understand the
significance of technology.

TEXT:
In order to develop a depth of understanding, will look closely at a single book (or argument):
Thomas F. Tierney's The Value of Convenience: A Genealogy of Technical Culture.
I have study guides on reserve in the library.

COURSE DESIGN: A variety of formats has been developed to help you explore the relevance
of Tierney's the argument. Because most people learn more when they have to explain an issue to
someone else, the structure of the class requires you to take and explain your position frequently.

Reading: The book has 9 chapters, we will cover one chapter per week.

Class Participation: Each day you will have to come to class with a one page paper:
Responding to a specific question(s) (on Tuesday) and/or
Exploring some issue of interest to (on Thursday)
These will be handed in for credit toward preparation for participation. You will be given credit for
A) attendance and B) adequate preparation You will be called on (randomly) to read these
papers in class to facilitate class discussion

Group Presentations: Groups will organize the materials for chapters 4-8 and lead class
discussions Tuesday. I stongly advise you to use the study guides to help organize your discussion.
Expectations for Group Presentations: Groups should meet, discuss the chapter together and become comfortable with the material. The presentation should teach the material to the class. You can safely assume that everyone in the class will have read the material, but the group should have achieved superior understanding of the material. The presentation should

1. Connect the content of the chapter with the overall project of the book class.
2. Review and explain the arguments in the book with knowledge and authority.
3. Highlight areas/issues of specific importance in the chapter.
4. Make links between arguments in the chapter and other arguments in the book/class.
5. Offer examples/explanations/explorations from outside the book.
6. Be rehearsed! Be well-organized! Be animated!
7. Involve ALL group members in the oral presentation.
8. Engage the class in some way - for example, by having them answer questions or participating experimentally. (Be careful, however, that you don’t let too much of this happen at the expense of the tasks listed above.)

Week 10 presentations: The final week you will have due one paper: a three page paper in which you explore the way in which a particular technology (not computers or automobiles generally and not a technology covered in the book) illustrates some aspect of the argument in the book. The assignment for this paper will be handed out after midterm. These will be read to the class during week 10. The paper is due on the day you give your presentation.

GRADING: TOTAL: 100 POINTS

Attendance: 20 points (1 point per day)

Preparation for Participation: 40 points total

Each daily response paper is worth 0, 1, or 2 points (the week you do your group presentation you do not need to do the papers - but will receive the 2 points each day)

*0 points if not turned in at class time; if less than one full page; if does not respond to question posed; if does not demonstrate knowledge of the text or discussion

*1 point if okay but misunderstands; if engagement with material is oversimplified

*2 points if answer is good; demonstrates engagement with text and discussion; demonstrates effort to understand

You may miss 2 days and still receive 3 points. After that, I will only accept papers late if you present documentation of an excused absence. To receive credit, late papers must be turned in at the next class period. Attendance points cannot be made up.

NOTE: It is your responsibility to keep contact with another student in the class to get class assignments if you miss one. Papers must be turned in on time to receive credit.

Group: 20 points

Week 10 presentation: 20 points
GRADING SCALE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91-100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>89-90</td>
<td>A/B</td>
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<td>81-88</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>79-80</td>
<td>B/C</td>
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<td>71-78</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>69-70</td>
<td>C/D</td>
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<tr>
<td>61-68</td>
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*group project and week 10 paper must be completed to receive a passing grade.

***An unexcused absence during class presentations will result in your grade lowered by ½ grade.

GRADING CRITERIA FOR GROUPS: (20 POINTS POSSIBLE)

18-20pts = exceptional command of material; links chapter to the project of the book/class; draws provocative connections with other material in book/class; excellent coverage of material in chapter; engaging presentation; develops examples and explanations beyond the material in the book - but clarifies material in book

17pts = excellent command of material; links chapter to project of book/class; good coverage of material in chapter; engaging presentation; develops examples and explanations beyond the material in the book - clarifies material in book

16pts = good command of material; good coverage of material in chapter; links chapter to project of book/class; engaging presentation; explanations remain close to examples in book

15pts = command of material; engaging presentation; organized by readings from book

14pts = command of material; organized by readings from book; presentation okay

13pts = misunderstand some material or presentation based on readings from book, but with evidence of fundamental understanding; presentation only fair

12pts = some serious misunderstanding of material or presentation based on readings from book; poor presentation

0-11 = fundamental misunderstanding of material and presentation based on readings from book; poor presentation

GRADING CRITERIA FOR WEEK 10 PAPERS/PRESENTATIONS

(Will be distributed when assignment is distributed)

*****MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students (ext. 3212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head or chair, or the Affirmative Action Office (ext. 3310).

*****If it may be necessary to alter the syllabus as the quarter proceeds in order to better meet the instructional needs of the class.
# TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 7  (T)</td>
<td>Intro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 9  (TH)</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 14 (T)</td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
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<td>Sept 16 (TH)</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
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<td>Sept 21 (T)</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 23 (Th)</td>
<td>Chapter 4  Group 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 28 (T)</td>
<td>Chapter 4  Group 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 30 (Th)</td>
<td>Chapter 5  Group 2 -</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 5 (T)</td>
<td>Chapter 5  Group 2 -</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 7 (Th)</td>
<td>No class</td>
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<td>Oct 12 (T)</td>
<td>Chapter 6  Group 3 -</td>
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<td>Oct 14 (Th)</td>
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<td>Oct 19 (T)</td>
<td>Chapter 7  Group 4 -</td>
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<td>Oct 21 (Th)</td>
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<td>Oct 26 (T)</td>
<td>Chapter 8  Group 5 -</td>
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<td>Oct 28 (Th)</td>
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<td>Nov 2 (T)</td>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
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<td>Nov 4 (Th)</td>
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<td>Nov 9 (T)</td>
<td>WEEK 10 PAPER PRESENTATIONS</td>
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<td>Nov 11 (Th)</td>
<td>WEEK 10 PAPER PRESENTATIONS</td>
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**Questions for class preparation papers:**

**Week 1 (Thursday):** (For Chapter 1: Introduction)
1. Explain, using evidence from Tierney, what makes his argument contextual?

**Week 2 (Tuesday):** (Chapter 2: Arendt)

**pick ONE:**
1. Explain what Arendt means when she says that in modernity, society is a form of public household. How does that differ from Greek society according to Arendt?
2. According to Tierney, Arendt gets something wrong. What does she get wrong? Why is that significant?