If the title, "technology and discourse," suggests that this course will be about the operations of language about technology, then the course title is misleading. It is simply too easy when one focuses on the work of discourse in this way to leave behind the notion that anything exists outside of discourse. Struggle is reduced to struggle in discourse, and, as Stuart Hall has put it, society can then be erroneously thought of as a "totally open and discursive field." ("On Postmodernism and Articulation, in Journal of Communication Inquiry 10:2, 1986, p. 56). Our understanding of contemporary "technoculture" (or more recently "cyberculture") would suffer immeasurably if we looked merely at the language about it.

The "discursive" operates in relationship to what we might refer to as a "technological apparatus." Foucault offers this definition of apparatus - a definition that clearly locates discourse in relation to an ensemble of elements: Apparatus (dispositif) is

firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions - in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements. Secondly, what I am trying to identify in this apparatus is precisely the nature of the connection that can exist between these heterogenous elements. Thus, a particular discourse can figure at one time as the programme of an institution, and at another time it can function as a means of justifying or masking a practice which itself remains silent, or as a secondary re-interpretation of this practice, opening out for it a new field of rationality. In short, between these elements, whether discursive or non-discursive, there is a sort of interplay of shifts of position and modifications of function which can also vary very widely. Thirdly, I understand by the term ‘apparatus’ a sort of—shall we say—formation which has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an urgent need. ("The Confession of the Flesh," from Power/Knowledge p. 194).
Drawing on Foucault's notion of the apparatus as well as the emerging conception of agency, I take the goals of this class to include at least three interrelated tasks:

1) to examine/critique the ways in which particular ways of understanding technology (and discourse) have functioned (as an apparatus) as both programme and mask for technological practices;

2) to examine/critique the workings of the contemporary technological apparatus ("technoculture" and more recently "cyberculture"); and

3) to explore new ways of understanding technology and contemporary technoculture/cyberculture - as well as acting/intervening in the contemporary situation using a concept of agency rather than identity.

Course Structure and Requirements

Reading and lecture discussion will form the backbone of class preparation and class time. In addition there will be 4 sets of questions (each covering a two week period) from which you must choose any 3 to write a 6 page paper (for a total of 18 pages for the class). Those papers are due in my mailbox before we move on to another section of the class. You may not go back and write on a topic discussed earlier in the class.

Grading

Papers 30 % each (for a total of 90%)
Class preparation, participation, attendance 10%

Course Schedule

Dec 2
What is Technology? Why Does it Matter? No Class

Dec 9
Autonomy, Neutrality
Winner, Autonomous Technology Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics"
Rec: Carolyn Miller, "Technology As A Form of Consciousness"

Dec 16
Enlightenment & Modernity
Horkheimer and Adorno, Dialectic Of Enlightenment (through p. 167)
Marshall Berman, Chapters 1 & 2 of All That is Solid Melts Into Air
Rec: Baudrillard, Simulations

First Paper due: Before Dec 23

Dec 20?
Modes of Communication
Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy or
Petroski, The Book on the Book Shelf
Rec: Nicholson Baker, "Discards"

Or 21?


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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 6</td>
<td>Causality</td>
<td>Slack, Communication Technologies And Society</td>
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<td><strong>Second Paper due: Before January 13</strong></td>
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<td>Jan 13</td>
<td>Articulation, Genealogy, Apparatus</td>
<td>Slack, “Contextualizing Technology”</td>
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<td>Slack, “The Theory and Method of Articulation in Cultural Studies”</td>
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<td>Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy History”</td>
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<td>Foucault, “Two Lectures”</td>
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<td>Foucault, “Confessions of the Flesh”</td>
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<td>Foucault, Selections from Technologies of the Self</td>
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<td>Jan 20</td>
<td>Articulation, Genealogy, Apparatus</td>
<td>Tierney, The Value of Convenience</td>
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<td>Rec: Kevin Robins &amp; Frank Webster, Times of the Technoculture: From The Information Society to the Virtual Life</td>
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<td><strong>Third Paper due: Before January 27</strong></td>
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<td>Jan 27</td>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>Latour, We Have Never Been Modern</td>
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<td>Latour, “Mixing Humans and Non-Humans Together: The Sociology Of a Door Closer”</td>
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<td>Rec: Donna Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs”</td>
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<td>Rec: Latour, Aramis</td>
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<td>Feb 10</td>
<td>Agency; Assemblage</td>
<td>Wise, Exploring Technology and Social Space, Part I</td>
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<td>Rec: Felix Guattari, “Balance-Sheet for Desiring Machines”</td>
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<td>Rec: Paul Virilio, Politics of the Very Worst</td>
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<td><strong>Fourth Paper Due: Before February 17</strong></td>
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<td>Feb 17</td>
<td>Controlling Time and Space</td>
<td>Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology”</td>
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<td>(Guest Lecture: David James Miller)</td>
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Questions:

1. First Paper (Choose one or obtain approval for a question of your interest):
   a. Discuss the relationship between technology as an autonomous phenomenon and the notion of responsibility.
   b. What kind of improvements are made with the conception of “technology as forms of life”?
   c. Discuss the sense in which Marx is modern with respect to technology.
   d. What is the significance of the enlightenment vis-a-vis technology?
   e. What does modern mean vis-a-vis technology?
   f. Discuss the statement by Horkheimer and Adorno that “A technological rationale is the rationale of domination itself.” (P. 121)

2. Second Paper (Choose one or obtain approval for a question of your interest):
   a. Discuss the limitations of the “modes of communication” argument
   b. Lay out the range of distinctions the “modes of communication” argument permits you to make
   c. Discuss the ways in which Law’s position implies a critique of Ong.
   d. Consider the strengths and limitations of conceptualizing technology in terms of causality.
   e. Consider the strange position Slack ends up with in “Communication Technologies and Society” with regard to patent law. How did the theoretical position push her there? Can you see where and how one might argue differently?

3. Third Paper (Choose one or obtain approval for a question of your interest):
   a. Explain the concept of articulation and how it relates to technology
   b. Explain what it means to do a genealogy of technology
   c. Discuss the ways in which a genealogical approach differs from a historical approach to technology.
   d. Defend the argument that Tierney’s book is a genealogy of technology?
   e. Discuss the relationship between doing genealogy and doing articulation.
   f. What is technology?
   g. What is meant by “technologies of the self?”
   h. Discuss the nature, usefulness, and limitations of the concept of a technological apparatus.

4. Fourth Paper (Choose one or obtain approval for a question of your interest):
   a. Discuss the notion of technological agency.
   b. Consider the relationship of technological agency to responsibility.
   c. Differentiate between the concept of technological actors having agency and agency as enacted.
   d. What does Latour mean when he says “We have never been modern?” What does that have to do with technology?
   e. What does Wise (drawing on Deleuze) accomplish with the concept of a “technological assemblage?”