

# Technology and Environment

Professor: Eileen Crist,  
Department of Science and Technology in Society  
Virginia Tech  
231 Lane Hall  
Blacksburg, VA 24061-0247  
Phone: 540.231.5195  
Email: [ecrist@vt.edu](mailto:ecrist@vt.edu)

Professor: Eileen Crist, Office: Lane Hall 231, Phone: 540.231.5195, Email: [ecrist@vt.edu](mailto:ecrist@vt.edu)

## Description

This seminar will consider the relationship between technology and environment as it has been explored in philosophical writings, critical analyses, historical narratives, and utopian and dystopian visions. Our investigations will combine theoretical approaches and case studies.

## Readings

### Books:

*Technology and Values: Essential Readings* (2010) edited by Craig Hanks

**Articles** and papers on Scholar

## Requirements

The success of the seminar depends on participants' reading the assignments closely and contributing actively. For each reading, one participant will be responsible for guiding discussion by raising questions about the reading (prepared beforehand) and keeping the conversation going; discussion leading will be done via power point. The quality of your overall participation in the course will count about 40% of the grade. The other major requirement for the course is a research project which will be presented in oral and written form at the end of the semester. The paper will be about 15 to 20 pages long, double-spaced with references. The presentation will be formal and delivered by power-point. The last two weeks of classes are reserved for presentations of research.

## Schedule of Classes and Readings

**WEEK 1: *Introductory concepts: technophiles, technophobes, and the wild***

### First meeting

Lori Gruen, "Technology," Chapter 35 in *Technology and Values*

### Second meeting

Alan Drenghon, "Four Philosophies of Technology," Chapter 2 in *Technology and Values*

Donna Haraway, "Cittercam: Compounding Eyes in Naturecultures" on Scholar

Jack Turner, "Introduction" and "Wildness and the Defense of Nature," on Scholar

## **WEEK 2: *Technological determinism?***

### **First meeting**

Jacques Ellul, "The Autonomy of Technology," Chapter 6 in *Technology and Values*  
David Nye, "Does Technology Control Us?" on Scholar

### **Second meeting**

Merritt Roe Smith, "Technological Determinism in American Culture," on Scholar  
Jerry Mander, "Television: Audiovisual Training for the Modern World," on Scholar

## **WEEK 3: *Case study: the technological remaking of North America***

### **First meeting**

David Nye, "Technology, Nature, and American Origin Stories," on Scholar  
Philip Shabecoff, "The Garden and the Wilderness" and "Subduing Nature" from *A Fierce Green Fire*, on Scholar

### **Second meeting**

Ted Steinberg, "Wilderness Under Fire," "A Truly New World," and "A World of Commodities" from *Down to Earth*, on Scholar  
Leo Marx, "The Domination of Nature and the Redefinition of Progress," on Scholar

## **WEEK 4: *Heidegger's significance in questioning***

### **First meeting**

Martin Heidegger, "On the Question Concerning Technology," Chapter 9 in *Technology and Values*  
Callum Roberts, "No Place Left to Hide," from *The Unnatural History of the Sea*, on Scholar

### **Second meeting**

Martin Heidegger, "Memorial Address," on Scholar  
Kevin Michael Deluca, "Thinking with Heidegger," on Scholar

## **WEEK 5: *Critical theories of technology***

### **First meeting**

Herbert Marcuse, "The New Forms of Control," Chapter 13 in *Technology and Values*  
Franco "Bifo" Berardi, "Prozac-economy" and "Panic depressive syndrome and competition," on Scholar

### **Second meeting**

Lewis Mumford, "Authoritarian and Democratic Technics," on Scholar  
John Zerzan, "Second-Best Life: Real Virtuality," on Scholar  
Bill McKibben, "Out There in the Middle of the Buzz," on Scholar  
David Orr, "Virtual Nature," on Scholar

## **WEEK 6: *Technological denaturing and critics***

**First meeting**

Donna Haraway, "[Modest Witness@Second Millenium](#)," on Scholar

Leon Kass, "Preventing a Brave New World – Part I," Chapter 25 in *Technology and Values*

**Second meeting**

Theodore Roszak, "Where the Wasteland Ends," on Scholar

Theodore Roszak, "The Nature of Sanity," on Scholar

Richard Louv, chapters from *Last Child in the Woods*, on Scholar

**WEEK 7: *The emergence and spread of car culture*****First meeting**

John Steinbeck, "A Model T Named 'IT,'" on Scholar

E. B. White, "Farewell to Model T," on Scholar

Douglas Browning, "Some Meanings of Automobiles," Chapter 22 in *Technology and Values*

Lewis Mumford, "The Highway and the City," Chapter 29 in *Technology and Values*

**Second meeting**

Hans Jonas, "Toward A Philosophy of Technology," Chapter 1 in *Technology and Values*

**WEEK 8: *Case study: industrial agriculture and factory farming*****First meeting**

Richard Manning, "The Oil We Eat," on Scholar

(<http://www.harpers.org/archive/2004/02/0079915>)

Edmund Russell, "'Speaking of Annihilation': Mobilizing for War against Human and Insect Enemies, 1914-1945," on Scholar

**Second meeting**

John Berger, "Why Look at Animals?" on Scholar

Jim Mason and Mary Finelli, "Brave New Farm," on Scholar

Charlie LeDuff, "At a Slaughterhouse, Some Things Never Die," on Scholar

**WEEK 9: *Critical responses to the industrialization of food*****First meeting**

Bernie Rollin, "The Ethics of Agriculture: the End of True Husbandry," on Scholar

Frederick Kirschenmann, "Food as Relationship," on Scholar

**Second meeting**

Wendell Berry, "The Agrarian Standard"

Joyce D'Silva, "The Urgency of Change: View from a Campaigning Organization"

**WEEK 10: *Biotechnology: altering plant and animal genomes***

**First meeting**

Nina Federoff and Nancy Marie Brown, "Food for Thought," Chapter 27 in *Technology and Values*

Norman Borlaug, "Compromising the Potential of Biotechnology," on Scholar

**Second meeting**

Marc Sagoff, "Genetic Engineering and the Concept of the Natural," on Scholar

Jack Turner, "The Wild and its New Enemies," on Scholar

**WEEK 11: *Climate change and geoengineering*****First meeting**

Bill McKibben, "A New World," on Scholar

James Lovelock, "Geoengineering," on Scholar

Background (recommended):

James Hansen et al., "Perceptions of Climate Change: The New Climate Dice," on Scholar

**Second meeting**

Edward Teller, "Sunscreen for Planet Earth," on Scholar

Timothy Luke, "Geoengineering and Global Climate Change Policy," on Scholar

Wendell Berry, "A Promise Made in Love, Awe, and Fear" on Scholar

**WEEK 12: *Wither the future & radical reflections on modern technology*****First meeting**

Robert Costanza, "Visions of Alternative (Unpredictable) Futures and their Use in Policy Analysis," on Scholar

Leo Marx, "The Idea of 'Technology' and Postmodern Pessimism," on Scholar

**Second meeting**

John Zerzan, "Why Primitivism?" <http://www.johnzerzan.net/articles/why-primitivism.html>

Wendell Berry, "Why I Am not Going to Buy a Computer," Chapter 43 in *Technology and Values*

Derrick Jensen, "Abusers," on Scholar

Chellis Glendinning, "Technology, Trauma, and the Wild," on Scholar

**WEEK 13 and 14**

Student Presentations