

**T601: TOPICAL SEMINAR IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY  
& POLICY -- ORIGINS OF THE INFORMATION AGE**  
SECTION 25690  
Fall 2006

Instructor: Harmeet Sawhney  
Office: Radio & TV Center, Rm. # 325  
Phone: 855-0954

Office Hours: by appointment  
E-Mail: HSAWHNEY

Course Meetings: Mondays 5:45 to 8:30 pm TV 169

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Today, the term "information age" is commonplace. We hear about it in the press, political speeches, popular books, scholarly journals, and everyday conversations. However, it was only a few decades ago that the term first entered our vocabulary. In this seminar, we will explore the origins of the information age; both as a concept and as a phenomenon. We will start with the earliest writings on the information age by Machlup, Porat, Bell, and others and work our way through the literature to the most recent thinking on the subject. We will identify important themes which weave through the literature, unearth the assumptions the authors bring to their work, and track the changes in our conceptualization of the information age. After taking stock of the literature on the information age, we will try to understand when, where, and how the information age actually started and what forces are behind the societal transformations we are currently witnessing. We will use Beniger's "The Control Revolution" as a jumping board for our own theorization about the information age. Our readings will then expand beyond the traditional literature on the information age to those from sociology, political science, history, cultural studies, business and other disciplines on information, technology, and coordination and control of human activities. By the time we are finished, we will have a good overview of the literature and a robust theoretical framework for thinking about the information age. This framework will enable us to place the latest technological and policy developments within their proper context and analyze them in a historically informed way.

### READINGS

The specific articles for each class are listed in the calendar section of the course syllabus. This reading list will be modified if the class discussions move in directions beyond the areas selected for this particular seminar.

### COURSE GRADE

The relative weights of the different components of the final grade will be as follows:

Synthesis Paper 1	20%
Synthesis Paper 2	30%
Synthesis Paper 3	30%
Class Participation	20%

Synthesis Papers: There will be 3 synthesis papers (5-8 pages) in which you are expected to identify and develop themes that cut across the different readings. You are encouraged to build one synthesis paper over another so that your thoughts develop in a cumulative way over the semester. The papers will be due on the dates mentioned on the calendar.

Class Participation: Class participation is an essential element of a seminar class. The success of this seminar to a very large degree depends on the quality of contributions you make. Therefore a significant component of the overall grade has been assigned to class participation.

## CALENDAR

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic &amp; Readings</u>
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Aug 28	Introduction
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### **LITERATURE**

Sept 4	Lewis (2000) -- The New New Thing, Preface
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	Machlup (1962) -- The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 10
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Sept 11	Galbraith (1967) -- The New Industrial State, Chapters 1-8
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Sept 18	Drucker (1968) -- The Age of Discontinuity, Chapters 1, 2, 8, 11, 12, 16, 17, Conclusion
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Sept 25	Bell (1973) -- The Coming of Post-Industrial Society, Introduction, Chapters 1
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Oct 2	Porat (1976) -- The Information Economy, Chapters 1, 2, 3
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	Nora & Minc (1978) -- The Computerization of Society, Intro, Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5
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SYNTHESIS PAPER # 1: Due Wednesday, October 4

Oct 9	Beniger (1986) -- Control Revolution, Introduction, Chapters 6, 8, 10
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Oct 16	Schement & Curtis (1995) -- Tendencies and Tensions of the Information Age, Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 7
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Oct 23                    Castells (1996) -- The Rise of the Network Society, Prologue, Chapters 1, 3

                             Masuda (1980) -- The Information Society, Chapters 8

                             Duff (2000) – *Joho Shakai: The Japanese Contribution to Information Society Studies* (article in Keio Communication Review No. 22)

                             Akutsu (1978) -- The Japanese Path Toward an Information Society (Chapter in *Information Societies: Comparing the Japanese and American Experiences*)

Oct 30                    Florida (2002) -- The Rise of the Creative Class, Chapter 1

                             Brooks (2000) – *Bobos in Paradise*, Introduction, Chapter 1

                             Knorr-Cetina (1999) -- Epistemic Culture, pp. 1-11

                             Evers (2000) -- Epistemic Cultures (Working Paper #330, Sociology of Development Research Center, Univ. of Bielefeld)

                             Duguid (2005) -- "The Art of Knowing": Social and Tacit Dimensions of Knowledge and the Limits of the Community of Practice [article in TIS 21(2)]

                             Hayek (1945) – The Use of Knowledge in Society [article in *American Economic Review* 35(4): 519-530]

SYNTHESIS PAPER # 2: Due Wednesday, November 1

### **TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK . . .**

Nov 6                    Mulgan (1991) -- Communication & Control, Chapter 1

                             Braman (1989) -- Defining Information (article in TP, Sept., 233-242)

                             Schiller (1988) -- How to Think About Information (Chapter in *The Political Economy of Information*)

                             Webster & Robins—Plan and Control (article in *Theory & Society* 18: 323-351)

Nov 13                    Foucault (1977) -- *Discipline and Punish*, Chapters 1.1, 1.2, 2.2, and 3.0

Nov 20                    Ellul (1964) -- *The Technological Society*, Chapter 1

Ellul (1980) -- The Technological System, Introduction

Ross (1969) -- Social Control, Chapter 33

Fromm (1950) -- The Fear of Freedom, Chapters 4, 7

Nov 27

Mumford (1970) -- The Myth of the Machine, Chapters 10, 11, 12

Dec 4

Webster & Robins (1986) -- Information Technology: A Luddite Analysis, Introduction, Chapters 3, 10

Sennett (1998) -- The Corrosion of Character, Preface, Chapter 1, 5, 6, 8

Mumford (1964) -- Authoritarian and Democratic Techniques (article in Technology & Culture 5(1): 1-8)

SYNTHESIS PAPER # 3: Due Wednesday, December 6