

**HIST 380-06: Gender and Technological Change**

Illinois Institute of Technology, Humanities Dept.

Spring 2013

TuTh 1:50-3:05 p.m.

Siegel Hall 204

Prof. Hicks

[mhicks1@iit.edu](mailto:mhicks1@iit.edu)

@histoftech on twitter

Office Hours Thursdays 3:05-4:15 p.m.

and by appointment

in Siegel 206

Often we think about gender and technology as separate categories that only occasionally interact, or that are simply layered on top of one another. But in reality, gendered assumptions mold our technological tools and solutions. Simultaneously, technologies construct what gender means in different times, places, and contexts. This complicated process opens up fascinating questions, which we'll discuss over the course of this semester.

## **Course Description:**

Have you ever wondered why more men choose to portray themselves as women online than the reverse? Or why there are more boys than girls in China? Or why vibrator technology was seen as a medical necessity in the 19th century? Have you ever thought about how the interplay between technology and gender constructs everything from our modern military, to how we choose to spend our free time, to where we work?

This course explores the history of technology by using gender as a category of study. It also looks at how technological objects and tools participate in molding elements of our culture that we may take for granted as logical or timeless. By looking at change over time, we will analyze the different ways technology affects how we live and see ourselves.

We will read works from science studies, history, sociology, and other disciplines to give you the tools you need to understand and analyze how technology and society interact, and how social categories both change, and are changed by technological development. You will also have the opportunity, through class discussions and assignments, to apply what you learn to current debates and pressing issues.

## **Expectations:**

You are expected to do the reading for each class day in advance of the class, and to complete the relevant assignments laid out on the syllabus, or assigned in class, for the dates defined. Late work will not be accepted except in the case of illness or unusual hardship. It is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate in the event you miss class—please refrain from emailing me to ask me to catch you up unless you've exhausted all other options.

You are required to purchase one book for this course: *Women, Science, and Technology: A Reader*, edited by Wyer et. al (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, paperback). The other readings for this class are online, either on our Blackboard site or at URLs listed in the syllabus. If the URL on the syllabus doesn't work, check for a copy of the reading on Blackboard before emailing me.

You are encouraged to take advantage of IIT's Writing Center to help you improve your writing. It is located in the Humanities Department, Siegel Hall, Room 232-233:  
[http://www.iit.edu/csl/hum/resources/writing\\_center.shtml](http://www.iit.edu/csl/hum/resources/writing_center.shtml)

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verified disabilities. Please register with IIT's Center for Disability Resources and also speak with me at the start of the semester:  
<http://www.iit.edu/cdr/>

Please also be aware of the code of student conduct contained in your student handbook: cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade.

## **Assignments:**

Class attendance, participation, and reading quizzes: 20%

Class projects, small assignments, and blog posts: 30%

Midterm: 15%

Final: 15%

Final presentation and paper: 20%

## **Class Schedule:**

### **Unit 1: Introduction**

**Getting acquainted with the issues, defining important terms, engaging in a public conversation about gender and technology (online)**

#### **Tu 1/15 A Sampling of Issues in Gender and Technology**

*New York Times* article on gender of Wikipedia users:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/31/business/media/31link.html?\\_r=2&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/31/business/media/31link.html?_r=2&pagewanted=print)

#### **Th 1/17 What is Gender, and How Does Technology Help Create It?**

*New York Times* article on Ben Barres:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/18/science/18conv.html?pagewanted=all>

Kessler, "The Medical Construction of Gender: Case management of Intersexed Infants" (25 pp.)

#### **Tu 1/22 How Does Gender Help Create Technology?**

Maines, "Socially Camouflaged Technologies: The Case of the Electromechanical Vibrator" (10 pp.)

Optional: Fishman, *Manufacturing Desire: The Commodification of Female Sexual Dysfunction* (28 pp.)

#### **Th 1/24 Translating Gender into Women**

Amartya Sen, selected articles on Blackboard

NYT, "In Rape's Aftermath India Debates Violence Against Women"

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/13/world/asia/in-rapes-aftermath-india-debates-violence-against-women.html?src=rechp>

Optional:

Freakonomics episode:

<http://www.freakonomics.com/2011/10/26/misadventures-in-baby-making-a-new-freakonomics-radio-podcast/>

Clip from National Geographic "China's Lost Girls" (watch to 21 min):

[http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/chinas\\_lost\\_girls](http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/chinas_lost_girls)

#### **Tu 1/29 Intersecting Categories**

Ronald Eglash, "Race, Sex, and Nerds: From Black Geeks to Asian American Hipsters" (16 pp.)

#### **Th 1/31 Article Day—FIRST BLOG POST DUE 11AM FRIDAY**

### **Unit 2: Theory**

#### **Tu 2/5 What is Gender, and How Does it Work?**

Butler, introduction to *Bodies That Matter* (pp. 1-16)

#### **Th 2/7 Theories of Technological Change: Social Construction of Technology**

Cowan, "The Industrial Revolution in the Home" (pp. 1-23)

And, take a look at advertisements for home appliances in this archive:

<http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/collections/#advertising>

**Tu 2/12 Theories of technological change: Technological Momentum and Heterogeneous Engineering**

Oudshoorn, "On Masculinities, Technologies, & Pain: Testing Male Contraceptives" (22 pp.)

Th 2/14 Storify an issue on Gender and Technology, share articles—SECOND BLOG POST DUE 11AM FRIDAY

**Unit 3: Practice**

**Tu 2/19 How Technology and Gender Interact: Stereotype Threat**

Lee, "Asian-Americans And The Gender Gap" (13 pp.)

Dar-Nimrod, "Exposure to Scientific Theories Affects Women's Math Performance" (1 pp.)

<http://gender.stanford.edu/news/2011/negativemathstereotype-too-few-women-0>

Even asking women to identify their gender before taking a math exam can activate stereotype threat and lead to lower test scores.

Shelley Correll Clayman Lecture on Gender Bias in Workplace and Stereotype Threat:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebikM3Xxvco&list=UUcRjGdVqfsdMGB7j2STnzvw&index=2>

**Th 2/21 How Technology and Gender Interact: Professionalization**

Hicks, "Only the Clothes Changed: Women Operators in British Computing and Advertising, 1950-1970" (12 pp.)

and

Nafus, "'Patches don't have gender': What is not open in open source software" (15pp)

Optional: Ensmenger, "Making Programming Masculine" (26 pp.)

or Mary Barbachek, "Mixed Messages: Men and Women in Advertisements in Science" (15 pp.)

COMICS ASSIGNMENT ASSIGNED—DUE NEXT CLASS

**Tu 2/26 How Technology and Gender Interact: Identities**

Anita Sarkeesian (Ted Talk):

<http://www.feministfrequency.com/2012/12/tedxwomen-talk-on-sexist-harassment-cyber-mobs/>

Jennifer Hepler of Bioware:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/danielnyegriffiths/2012/02/21/bioware-hepler-harassment/>

"From Antisocial to Alphasocial: Exclusionary Nerd Cultures and the Rise of the Brogrammer":

<http://www.sigcis.org/node/335>

Forbes on Brogrammers:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/meghancasserly/2012/09/06/brogrammer-startup-culture-addressed-at-democratic-national-convention/>

Changing meanings of Nerd and Geek:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/23/opinion/23brooks.html?scp=8&sq=geek&st=cse>

Hackers:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2002/03/15/news/15iht-](http://www.nytimes.com/2002/03/15/news/15iht-btswareside_ed3.html?scp=8&sq=hackers%20nerd&st=cse)

[btswareside\\_ed3.html?scp=8&sq=hackers%20nerd&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2002/03/15/news/15iht-btswareside_ed3.html?scp=8&sq=hackers%20nerd&st=cse)

**Th 2/28 MIDTERM**

### Tu 3/5 **How Technology Creates Gender: Online Identities**

Libby Hemphill and Jahna Otterbacher, "Learning the Lingo? Gender, Prestige and Linguistic Adaptation in Review Communities" in *Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work*, 2012  
and

James Chartrand of Men with Pens:

<http://www.copyblogger.com/james-chartrand-underpants/>

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tim-berry/a-startling-reminder-of-g\\_b\\_393007.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tim-berry/a-startling-reminder-of-g_b_393007.html)

<http://menwithpens.ca/about/>

Gender swapping in MMORPGS:

<http://playaslife.com/2011/06/03/men-who-play-female-avatars/>

<http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus/archives/000551.php>

<http://www.nickyee.com/eqt/genderbend.html#5>

### **Unit 4: Public**

#### Th 3/7 **How Gender Creates Technology: Medicine**

*Nature* articles on medical testing

Parthasarathy, "The Patent is Political" (8 pp.)

Listen to Hannah Valentine Lecture Hannah Valentine - How Gender Can Save Lives: Redesigning Medical Research, available on iTunesU from Stanford (you will need iTunes for your computer, or the iTunesU app for iPad/iPhone): <http://itun.es/iSV5mf>

**\*\*\*Extra Credit: Women's History Month Bar Trivia in the Bog, 7-8:30pm\*\*\***

**THIRD BLOG POST DUE FRIDAY 11AM**

#### Tu 3/12 **Gender, Technology, and Social Options: Surrogacy**

Woliver, "Reproductive Technologies Surrogacy Arrangements And The Politics Of Motherhood" (12 pp.)

Indian Surrogate Mothers:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/10/world/asia/10surrogate.html?pagewanted=all>

Th 3/14 Say something about gender in IIT history: <http://archives.iit.edu/>

**FOURTH BLOG POST DUE FRIDAY 11AM**

### **SPRING BREAK: March 16<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>**

Tu 3/26 Women's History Luncheon, 12:45-2pm, MTCC Ballroom, extra credit for attendance/participation

**In-class pre-writing assignment for final project**

#### Th 3/28 **How Gender Creates Technology: Birth Control**

Tone, "A Medical Fit For Contraceptives" (20 pp.)

#### Tu 4/2 **How Gender Creates Technology: Birth Control (cont.)**

Roberts, selections from "Killing the Black Body"

Th 4/4 Documentary screening in class

Tu 4/9 Maureen Flanagan, "Private Needs, Public Spaces: Public Toilets in the Anglo-Atlantic Patriarchal City: London, Dublin, Toronto and Chicago"

Trans Bathroom Projects:

<http://www.queerty.com/new-iphone-app-allows-trans-community-to-find-nearest-gender-neutral-bathroom-20120918/>

and

<http://safe2pee.wordpress.com/bathroom-resources/>

Assign Mapping Project: mapping gender through bathrooms at IIT

Th 4/11 Institutions and Gender

Guest Speaker: Teresa Moreno (Reading TBA)

Discuss Mapping Project

Tu 4/16 Rana, "Fulfilling Technology's Promise" (22 pp.)

Discuss final projects

Th 4/18 Technology and Maternal Mortality

Kristof, selections from "Half the Sky" on Blackboard

Tu 4/23 class presentations

Th 4/25 class presentations

Tu 4/30 class presentations

Th 5/2 Summation and FINAL PROJECT DUE

FINAL EXAM DATE TBA