

HTS 3083A
Spring 2009
MWF, 10-11
D.M. Smith 304

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Old CE, Room 137
MWF, 11-12, and by appt.
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Technology and the Shaping of America

Introduction

As its title suggests, this course explores the place of technology in American history. Our concern is not merely with things and processes, but rather with how technologies have interacted with society and culture in complex and important ways. Often, this interplay has taken the form of a challenge and response, in which various groups and individuals found themselves reacting to new technical possibilities. On other occasions, the interactions involved trade-offs and compromises struck by various interests who sought to shape emergent technologies. Either way, disputes over the nature and direction of technical change (and the social changes associated with it) have persistently been a central part of the American experience. Their outcomes have mattered a great deal to the lives of all Americans, past and present.

Requirements

Two quizzes each count 20% of your final grade. A comprehensive final exam counts 30%. A paper of approximately 8-10 double-spaced typed pages, based on multiple sources beyond the assigned readings in the course, counts 30%. Details on the paper assignment will be provided separately. It will be due at the start of class on 4/20. Attendance and participation in class discussion are expected and can influence border-line grades significantly.

Attendance and Honor

Students bear responsibility for participating fully and equitably in the course. This means attending regularly and attentively and following the letter and spirit of the Georgia Tech Honor Code.

Readings (available at Engineer's Bookstore, corner of Means and Marietta)

Merritt Roe Smith and Gregory Clancey, Major Problems in the History of American Technology
Ruth Schwartz Cowan, More Work for Mother

Office Hours

In addition to the hours posted above, I am available after class or by appointment. I try to respond to email by the end of my next scheduled office hours following receipt, if not sooner.