DATE: 9.25.19

REVIEWER: Christopher Swift

COURSE TITLE & NUMBER: HIS 3209 - History of Technology

PROPOSED BY: Geoff Zylstra

CREDIT HOURS: 3

PREREQUISITES: ENG 1101 and a previous history course

COURSE IS: x Existing   New   In development

PROPOSED COURSE DESIGNATION: X College Option   elective   Capstone   other:

DEPARTMENT HOUSED IN: Social Sciences

PROPOSED STRUCTURE (e.g., co-taught, guest lecture, LC, other): Guest lecture

CREDIT DISTRIBUTION (if co-taught):

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: "An examination of technology in North America from Native American inhabitation to the present. Focusing on the relationship between technology and cultural value systems, this course addresses the historical development of our current technological society. Topics include the relationship of technological change to class, gender and racial divisions, the creation of large-scale technological systems, and ethical debates regarding the appropriate use of technology."

DESCRIBE & EVALUATE HOW COURSE MEETS INTERDISCIPLINARY CRITERIA?
The course focuses on the cultural and social ramifications of technological development from the colonial period in America to the present. The course also examines the social forces that precipitate the developent of new technologies. Crucially, the course highlights how technologies arose (and still arise) out of unequal systems of power and often can deepen systematic racism, gender discrimination, etc. Issues of environmental justice are also addressed. Cross-disciplinary conversations between history and economics, culture and biology, etc. deepen the level of investigation across the curriculum.

* Note: currently there are only three guest lectures scheduled on the syllabus, but for 1.25-hour classes the minimum requirement is six guest lectures.

DESCRIBE & EVALUATE THE INTERDISCIPLINARY STRUCTURE?
The ideas from the course were developed in the "Making Connections" NEH grant, on which Prof. Zylstra was the PI. The ID learning outcomes of the proposed ID version of Prof. Zylstra's course are to encourage humanistic inquiry in the study of technology, which at our STEM-centric college is a crucial aim. Concepts in the proposed course, like technopolitics, biotechnology, and technological determinism, are inherently interdisciplinary and Prof. Zylstra has created assignments that engage with these ideas head on. The interests and accomplishments of Prof. Zylstra's guest lecturers—Park (Philosophy), Voza (Biology), and Ellis (English)—will provide the course with greater complexity in the investigation of historical technologies.

DOES COURSE MEET REQUIREMENTS FOR GENERAL EDUCATION? Yes.

STRENGTHS: This is a superb course. Great care was taken in selecting the readings, the course goals are inspiring, and the proposal itself is written with clarity and detail.

WEAKNESSES: None.