Course code: SOC 2401ID HD22   Instructor: Joseph Smith
Course title: Society, Technology and Self   josmith@citytech.cuny.edu
Class hours/credits: 3 class hours, 3 credits

Meeting times: Mondays, 11:30 am – 2:00 pm
- In-person meetings: Namm-616:
- Zoom meetings: Feb 18th, April 7th, April 28th
  - Link/Passcode:

Office hours:
Mondays, 10:00 - 11:00 am
- Namm-600.
- Zoom meeting days: Use course link and passcode
Tuesdays, 4:30 pm – 5:30 pm (on Zoom all semester)
- Link/Passcode:
Wednesdays: 1:00-2:00 pm
- Namm-600:
- Online: March 5, April 9, April 30th
  - Link/Passcode:

Syllabus, Spring 2025

Prerequisite: SOC 1101
Pathways: Individual and Society

Catalog Description: This course analyzes the social relationship between society, technology and self from a sociological perspective. The emphasis of this course is on technology as the principal form of social interaction, and as a determinant of the reconstitution of the character and personality structures.

ID designation: SOC 2401 ID is an interdisciplinary course covering readings from different disciplines, including history and psychology. It will feature three guest lectures from different fields during the in-class meetings. It aims to introduce students to different perspectives related to the social dimensions of technology use.

Capstone course: *This course fulfills the LAA/LAS Associate Capstone requirement, though it can also be taken for other requirements and electives. The City Tech LAA/LAS Associate Capstone is designed for students entering their second year in the program. LAA/LAS Associate Capstone courses are meant to prepare students to continue their studies in a bachelor's degree, third-year, or junior, level. In addition, Associate Capstone courses are meant to help students develop an awareness of the importance of knowledge, values and skills developed in general education courses; and to integrate this knowledge, these values and these skills into their advanced academic study and professional careers. Please ask the instructor if you have any questions about what the LAA/LAS Associate Capstone requirement entails.*

Guest Lectures
Professor Peter Parides (History) – The industrial revolution
Professor Sean MacDonald (Economics) – Markets, technological change, and employment
Professor Raaghav Pandya (Education) – Integrating emerging technology, wellbeing, and
contemplative philosophy
Professor Eric Rodriguez (Psychology) – Social Psychology and Social Media
Professor Abubakar Tidal, Jr (CityTech Library, Chief Librarian, Department chair) – Algorithmic
Autobiographies & Fictions

Readings

Broussard, Meredith, When Algorithms Give Real Students Imaginary Grades, *New York Times*,
September 8, 2020.

Miller, Vincent, Economic Foundations of the Information Age, in *Understanding Digital Culture, 2nd
edition*, Sage, 2020.

Nguyen, Aiha, The Constant Boss: Work Under Digital Surveillance, *Data and Society*, May 2021, pp
3-30.

Rettberg, Jill Walker, *Seeing Ourselves Through Technology*, Palgrave, 2014.

Schneier, Bruce, The AI Wars Have Three Factions, And All Crave Power, *New York Times*, Sept. 28,
2023.

Zuboff, Shoshana , You are the Object of a Secret Extraction Operation, N*ew York Times*, November
12, 2021.

Films

Shoshana Zuboff on Surveillance Capitalism, VPRO Documentary, *Youtube*, posted December 20,
2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIXhnWUmMvw

Coded Bias (2020)

Scope of assignments and other course requirements

Exams (multiple-choice, short answer questions), homework assignments, response paper, in-class
ungraded writing exercises, discussion forum posts.

FINAL GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

Two exams (30 points each)	60 points
Homework: Surveillance capitalism	10 points
Algorithmic Autobiographies response paper	10 points
Reflections and discussion posts:	10 points
Free writing exercises (Ungraded. 1 point each for participation)	5 points
Participation (attendance and in-class participation)	5 points
Total:	100 points

GRADING

Grade	Numerical Ranges	Quality Points	Grade	Numerical Range	Quality Points
A	93 and above	4.0	C+	77-79.9	2.3
A-	90-92.9	3.7	C	70-76.9	2.0
B+	87-89.9	3.3	D	60-69.9	1.0
B	83-86.9	3.0	F	59.9 &below	0
B-	80-82.9	2.7	WF	withdrew, failing	0.0
C+	77-79.9	2.3	WU	attended at least once	0.0

INTERDISCIPLINARY COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT METHODS

LEARNING OUTCOMES	ASSESSMENT METHODS
1. Purposefully connect and integrate across-discipline knowledge and skills to solve problems.	Exams, written assignments, and discussions.
2. Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries.	Exams, written assignments, and discussions.

GENERAL EDUCATIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES/ASSESSMENT METHODS

Knowledge: Develop knowledge of the concepts
and theories deployed by sociologists in their analysis
of society, technology and social change.

Exams, essays, discussion board.

Skills: Develop and use the tools needed for
Communication.

 Class discussion, small group work.
Group presentations.

Integration: Work productively within and across
disciplines.

Essays, presentations, discussion board.

Values, ethics, and relationships: Understand and apply
values, ethics, and diverse perspectives in personal,
civic, cultural and global domains.

Group work and presentations, discussion
board, in-class discussion.

Academic integrity policy

Students and all others who work with information, ideas, texts, images, music, inventions, and other intellectual property owe their audience and sources accuracy and honesty in using, crediting, and citing sources. This includes text written by generative AI programs such as ChatGPT. As a community of intellectual and professional workers, the College recognizes its responsibility for providing instruction in information literacy and academic integrity, offering models of good practice, and responding vigilantly and appropriately to infractions of academic integrity. Accordingly, academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and at New York City College of Technology and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion.

Students with disabilities

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with documented disabilities. If you have specific physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible, but definitely before the date of the first assignment, so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. If you have not already done so, you will need to provide documentation of your disability to the *Center for Student Accessibility*, which is located in L-237 in the Library Building.

Course Calendar

1. Monday, January 27th
   - Introductions and review of course syllabus and course expectations.
   - The industrial revolution and the emergence of sociology as a discipline.
   - Conceptualizing the transition from agricultural society to industrial society.
     - Ferdinand Tonnies, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.
     - Emile Durkheim, *Mechanical* and *Organic solidarity*.

2. Monday, February 3rd
   - **Guest lecture**: Professor Peter Parides: The Industrial Revolution.

3. Thursday, February 10th
   - **Reading**: Vincent Miller, Chapter 2: The Economic Foundations of the Information Age, in *Understanding Digital Culture*.
   - Post-World War II economic transformations: from industrial society to the network society.
     - Daniel Bell: Post-Industrial Society
     - David Harvey: Post-Fordism and Globalization
     - Manuel Castells: The Networked Society

Monday, February 17th – College closed

4. **Tuesday**, February 18th – Meet on Zoom
   - **Guest lecture**: Professor Sean MacDonald: Technological Change and Economic Growth.

5. Monday, February 24th
   - **Reading**: Shoshana Zuboff, You are the Object of a Secret Extraction Operation
   - **Film**: Shoshana Zuboff on Surveillance Capitalism
   - **Homework**: Answer questions on the documentary film.

6. Monday, March 3rd
   - **Reading**: Aiha Nguyen, The Constant Boss: Work Under Digital Surveillance
   - **Review for exam I.**

7. Monday, March 10th
   - **Exam I.**

8. Monday, March 17th

- Guest lecture: Raaghav Pandya: Integrating emerging technology, wellbeing, and contemplative philosophy

9. Monday, March 24th
- **Reading**: Jill Rettberg, Seeing Ourselves Through Technology
- Chap 1: Written, Visual, and Quantitative Self
  - Modes of self-representation
    - Written, Visual, and Quantitative representation
  - Pre-digital and digital versions of each mode of self-representation
- Chapter 2: Filtered Reality
  - Technological filters, Cognitive filters, Cultural filters

Monday, March 31 – No class

10, Monday, April 7th – Meet on Zoom
- **Reading:** Rettberg
- Chapter 3: Serial Selfies
  - Time lapse selfies: Ahree Lee, *Me* (2006), Noah Kalina, *Everyday* (2006), Rebecca Brown, *Photo Everyday 6 1/2 years* (2014)
  - Profile photos
  - Automatic portraits (pre-digital) - Photo booths
- Chapter 4: Automated Diaries
  - Barker and Wright (1951) *One Boy's Day*
  - Smartphone sensors/apps
  - Life-logging technologies
    - Steve Mann, wearable cameras (1970s)
    - Jennifer Ringley, *JenniCam* (1996)
    - Narrative Clip (2010s - present)
  - Pierre Bourdieu: What is photographable?
  - What can algorithms "see?" Roland Barthes: *Studium* and *Punctum*

Monday, April 14th – Spring recess

11. Monday, April 21st
- **Guest lecture**: Professor Eric Rodriguez, Social Psychology and Social Media.

12. Monday, April 28th – Meet on Zoom.
- **Guest lecture**: Professor Junior Tidal, Algorithmic Autobiographies and Fictions
- Wall Street Journal group presentations.
- **Homework**: response paper.
- Write a 2-page account of what you found out about your social media algorithmic autobiography. Was your algorithmic persona accurate or inaccurate (or a little of both)?
- **Format**: 12 point Times New Roman font. Double space between lines. Do not add extra spacing between paragraphs.
- **Due date**: May 4. (Upload your work to Brightspace)

13. Monday, May 5th
    - **Reading**: Meredith Broussard, When Algorithms Give Real Students Imaginary Grades
    - **Film**: Coded Bias

14. Monday, May 12th
    - **Reading**: Bruce Schneier, The AI Wars Have Three Factions, And All Crave Power.
    - **Review**
    - Final Reflections forum opens.

15. Monday, May 20th
    - Exam II.
    - Reflection Post (and response) due by 11:59 pm.