

History 407/507: Technology and the Body

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By definition, technology relies on attachments. These may entail relationships to knowledge and scientific fields and culture and identities. Probably most important, technologies rely on social imaginaries which suggest how it might be deployed or beneficial in specific contexts. In this course, participants will explore the relationships entailed in the coupling of technology with the body—or better put *bodies*. We will use interdisciplinary tools to think about technologies broadly, in various cultural and historical contexts globally from the 19th century to the present. We will read expansively from humanities-oriented fields of science, technology and medicine (STM), feminist science studies, disability studies and postcolonial technoscience in order to understand the various ways that technology is thought of as being connected to bodies in the modern period. Topics which will be explored include the invention of technology tied to social and technical institutions, toxins and colonialism, cures and the incurable, race and scientific ethics, gender and in-vitro technologies, the human genome project and postgenomics. Students will develop critical interpretive skills by studying diverse primary sources which speak to the theme of technology. The writing of historical figures in the sciences, scientific reporting in newspapers, scholarly writing, manifestos of technology activists, publicity and advertising, conference proceedings and film are some of the primary sources that you might work with.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of term you should be able to:

- Understand the multiple events and historical currents that shaped the emergence of scientific or technological fields
- Understand key aspects of the history of science and technology in various parts of the world.
- Understand the role of difference and power relationships as it pertains to science and technology in different contexts.
- Analyze and interpret “primary” sources of historical information.
- Identify an author’s argument or thesis.
- Write an essay and develop your own argument, supported by evidence.

Class Format: Seminar

Requirements: active participation in class discussions (includes weekly questions on the reading), class presentation(s), final research paper or case study (18-20 pages for undergraduates; 25-30 pages for graduate students).

Research paper: Requirements for the research paper will be discussed in class at length however students have the option to supplement the documentary evidence used for their paper by also collecting oral histories regarding a topic on technology, or health, with individuals working for a select list of organizations collaborating with the University of Oregon’s Office of

Sustainability.

Grade Distribution*

1. Participation	20 %
2. In class presentations	20 %
3. Approved paper description with bibliography	10 % (Due by the 3 rd week/Meeting 3)
4. Preliminary Draft of Paper	15 % (Completed by 9 th week/Meeting 9)
5. Final Draft of Paper	35 % (Due one week after the last class)

* All elements are required to receive a final grade.

All required readings will be provided on Canvas.

Course Schedule (this may be adjusted as we move through the term, I will announce these changes in advance). The readings are selected to be engaging, accessible and manageable in length given that our seminar meets once a week.

Week 1 Introduction

Library session to locate primary sources.

Week 2 What is technology, what is the body?

Nikolas Rose, Introduction and Chapter 1, Biopolitics in the Twenty-First Century, in *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century*

Kim Tallbear, Chapter 1 pp 31-66, Racial Science, Blood, and DNA, in *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*

Week 3 Cures and the Incurable, and Medicalization (or Shams?)

Bharat Venkat, Cures, *Public Culture*, 2106, Vol 28, No.3., pp 475-497

Hannah Landecker, Chapter 2 (11 pages), Immortality, In Vitro: A History of the HeLa Cell Line

Week 4 Discussion of Paper Proposals

No seminar meeting, individual meetings with me in my office during class time to discuss your paper proposals and bibliographies.

Week 5 Toxins, Medicine and Coloniality

David Arnold, Chapter 2, The Imperial *Pharmakon* pp 41-77, and Chapter 3, Panics and Scares pp 78-97, in *Toxic Histories: Poison and Pollution in Modern India*

Week 6 Beyond the Clinic

Lochlann Jain, Chapter 3 pp 67-87, Cancer Butch: Trip Up the Fast Lane, in *Malignant: How Cancer Becomes Us*

Lawrence Cohen, Introduction and Chapter 1 pp 1-43, Orientations, in *No Aging in India: Alzheimer's, the Bad Family, and Other Modern Things*

Week 7

Part 1: Disability, Prosthesis and Design

Jaipreet Virdi, Between Cure and Prosthetic: 'Good Fit' in Artificial Eardrums pp 48-69, in Claire L. Jones (Ed.), *Rethinking Modern Prostheses in Anglo-American Commodity Cultures, 1820-1939*.

Part 2: TBA-collective seminar decision.

Week 8

Part 1: Ignorance

Michelle Murphy, Chapter 5, Uncertainty, Race, and Activism at the EPA pp 111-130, in *Sick Building Syndrome and the Problem of Uncertainty: Environmental Politics, Technoscience, and Women Workers*.

Part 2: Genomics and Post-Genomics

Kaushik Sunder Rajan, Chapter 4, Promise and Fetish: Genomic Facts and Personalized Medicine pp 138-181, or Life Is a Business Plan, in *Biocapital: The Constitution of Postgenomic Life*.

Week 9

Individual discussions of drafts of your paper in my office, no seminar meeting.

Week 10

Paper presentations

Final Draft of Research Paper due one week after the last day of class.