ENGL 4275-001 & WRDS 4011-001
Rhetoric and [of] Technology
Spring 2024

Dr. Aaron A. Toscano (atoscano)
Office: Fretwell 255F
https://pages.uncc.edu/aaron-toscano/

Class: Fretwell 219, Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:30 – 3:45 pm
Office hours: TTH 4:00-5:00 pm (and by appt.)
Virtual office hours can be scheduled as well

Course Description and Purpose

This course will introduce students to research and theories of the rhetorical construction of technology in history and culture. This course analyzes technologies to understand how they reflect the ideologies of the cultures from which they come, requiring us to reflect using a critical theory lens. Students will engage with rhetorical analyses of technology and focus on the discourse surrounding technologies. We will also discuss how the field of technical writing/communication should recognize historical, cultural, and rhetorical analyses of technologies not as tangential to the study of technical writing/communication but as essential to the field. This course meets in a computer lab to help us better understand what it means to be human.

Texts and Materials

Required: Noble, David F. *The Religion of Technology: The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention*. New
                    York: Penguin, 1999. (ISBNs: print-9780140279160 and digital-9780307828538)
                Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. New York: Penguin, 1984. (ISBN: 9780441569595)
                Course readings on Canvas
                Willingness To Learn

Expectations

I expect students to be prepared to participate in class discussions; therefore, students should finish all reading before the class meets. **There is quite a bit of reading in this course, but it is manageable, and, I assure you, I assign way more reading in other classes, so the reading load for this class seems light to me.** This course has a focus on writing and argumentation, so students should expect writing to be thoroughly integrated into the course goals. Writing, reflection, and revision will all be essential activities that will advance our understanding of the course subject. Students should be ready to write and reflect on their own thought processes apparent in their writing. Unless otherwise stated, submit all assignments on Canvas. Please do not e-mail me any attachments. Critical thinking is expected, and **be ready to reference our readings in every class period**.

This 3-credit course requires 150 minutes of classroom or direct faculty instruction and 300 minutes of out-of-class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks. Out-of-class work may include but is not limited to the following: reading, researching, doing assignments, and studying for exams. The above outside-of-class work expectations are derived from Academic Affairs, **II. Policy Statement**.

Work Requirements

Students in this course are expected to be able to complete unified, coherent documents nearly free of mechanical, logical, or structural errors. The ability to read advanced college-level texts critically is also a requirement. Students will write essays, do a presentation, take a midterm and final exam, and participate (online and in class). **All of these assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade in the course. Just because the assignments have percentage values below does not mean you will pass the course if your missing assignments do not drop you below 60%.**

Assignments/Grade Distribution

Major Assignments (50%)	pts.	Reflections & Participation (25%)	pts.	Additional Assessments (25%)	pts.
Technology and yourself, a reflective essay **(revision)**	100	Canvas Reflections	200	Midterm	100
Social Construction of Technology Essay **(revision)**	100	In-Class Participation	200	Final	150
Technology Project	100			Technology Presentation	50
Total	**300**	**Total**	**400**	**Total**	**300**

Grading Policy

Your final grade is supposed to reflect your entire work for the semester and will be based on the percentages below:

Grading Scale for Graded Assignments and Final Grade:				
A= 90 – 100	B= 80 – 89	C= 70 – 79	D= 60 – 69	F=Below 60

Definition of A, B, C, D, and F Grades

Remember, your final grade is a combination of the three areas above in the assignment percentage table. An 'A' means your work was excellent—not mediocre, average, or just good. A 'B' means your work was good—not quite excellent but definitely above average and thoughtful. A 'C' means your work was barely adequate enough to satisfy the assignment—showing a lack of effort or thought for the assignment guidelines. A 'D' or 'F' usually means assignments were late, missing, or incomplete—often this work does not demonstrate appropriate college-level work for a 4000-level course.

Late Work

An assignment is due at the beginning of the class for which it was assigned. Honestly, there is no excuse for assignments being late in a 4000-level class, but I have a policy anyway: **all late work will reduce the assignment by 10% (an entire letter grade) for each class period it is late**. Late Canvas posts will not be accepted. If you will not or cannot be in class on the day an assignment is due, the assignment is still due on Canvas by the deadline. I will not accept assignments attached to emails. If Canvas is down, submit your work when it's back up. Please discuss any problems you may have regarding attendance or late work before class if at all possible. Remember, you are responsible for making up all work missed. Something I've learned from past semesters is that if you don't turn things in on time early in the semester, you end up not turning other things in on time (or at all). Do your best to get all your work in to me on time. If you are absent, get the information from another student. Do not expect me to e-mail the class notes to you. You are responsible for making up all work missed. Of course, never e-mail me and ask, "so…like, Dr. Toscano, man…did we…like…you know…do anything the other day in class?"

Attendance

I will take attendance every day. It is very important that you attend every class in order to keep up with the work and reading. Your grade will be lowered after missing 3 classes. Your final grade will be lowered by a full letter grade for each day missed beyond 3 absences. After 6 absences you will receive a failing grade for the course. Please make an effort to come to every class on time. Don't just skip class because you feel you have three "free" days. Save your absences for emergencies. There are no such things as excused absences. Only students participating in UNC Charlotte sponsored activities (with the proper documentation) will not be penalized for missing class. I will ask you to request a meeting with the Dean of Students office if you have situations that you feel should allow you an exception to missing

more than 3 classes: https://dso.charlotte.edu/. Cars break down, parking is limited, students get sick, and traffic is brutal, but class still happens. Your participation may also be lowered for excessive tardiness.

Please note that UNC Charlotte is under a federal mandate to comply with a new financial aid rule that requires professors to identify the last date of attendance for students receiving 'D' or 'F' grades. Please visit the following webpage for more information: https://registrar.charlotte.edu/gradingholds/last-date-attendance.

Participation

This is not a drill-and-skill type of course. I expect everyone to be involved in class discussions, which are extremely important for critical thinking. You must contribute to class discussions. Twenty percent (20%) of your grade is based on participation.

In-class participation means you are ready to be called on **at any time** to respond to a question, prompt, and/ or suggestion about the course material. Yes, I will call on you in class periodically, so be prepared to demonstrate that you're reflecting thoughtfully on the readings. Thoughtful reflection doesn't mean you give THE answer; instead, it means you show awareness for the complexity of our subject by describing your interpretation or asking questions that demonstrate critical thinking (as opposed to certainty). **We embrace ambiguity in this course.**

Merely showing up will not get you participation credit—you must engage the course materials. If you're not in class, you can't receive credit, so your participation grade will be affected. I will note your participation (or lack thereof) daily. Thoughtful participation means that you engage critically in our discussions or ask engaging questions about the subject. Simply making jokes or telling the class an irrelevant story about some garbage reality TV program does not warrant thoughtful participation. **Doing work for another class or distracting other students will lower your participation grade—even to the point of falling below 20% (meaning, you can have a negative participation grade).**

Please see me ASAP if you're concerned about your participation grade because you're shy or if you don't understand these requirements. Telling me at the end of April that you didn't participate because you're the quiet type or because you didn't understand what "thoughtful" meant will be too late. Even worse, e-mailing me after the semester is over to complain that participation isn't a "valid" class assignment is too late. The purpose of participation is for students to have control over their own learning and to reinforce critical thinking generally and "critical technological awareness" specifically. I am willing to provide a quasi-alternative to supplement a student's participation grade, but please note that discussion, which allows speakers to exchange ideas, is an extremely important component of critical thinking. One alternative is to do additional class reflections either under the Supplemental Participation section on Canvas or somewhere on your online presence. Please discuss this alternative with me early in the semester...like today!

Academic Integrity

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte is an academic community dedicated to teaching, scholarship, service, inclusion, and the holistic development of Students. Academic integrity is a cornerstone value of the University's intellectual community. It is important to nurture an atmosphere of honesty, fairness, trust, respect, and **mutual responsibility. Integrity is essential because it ensures that Students fairly benefit from their educational experience and pursuits of knowledge.** Violating the principles of academic integrity damages the reputation of the University and undermines its educational mission and goals.

The University recognizes that Academic Misconduct detracts from the value of a UNC Charlotte degree and has influence beyond the University community, including relationships with employers, other educational institutions, the business community, the UNC system, and the community at large.

The purpose of the Code is to:

1. support and promote an ethical learning environment;
2. create consistent standards for all members of the academic community;

3. **assist Students in learning responsibility for one's own academic work;**
4. protect the academic environment of the University community; and
5. **clarify Student values and how they relate to the behavior in question.**

Definitions of Academic Dishonesty (From University Policy: 407, Ch. 6—https://legal.uncc.edu/policies/up-407#c6)

A. **Cheating** means using or attempting to use materials, or giving assistance or materials without Authorization to another in any academic exercise that could result in gaining or helping another to gain academic advantage.
B. **Fabrication** means providing fabricated information, including inventing or counterfeiting information, in any form in an academic exercise.
C. **Falsification** means altering without Authorization any data or information, regardless of communication method (e.g., e-mail or other electronic communication), in an academic exercise.
D. **Misuse of Academic Materials** means sharing, distributing, altering, acquiring, damaging, or making inaccessible academic materials without Authorization, that could result in gaining or helping another to gain an academic advantage.
E. **Multiple Submission** means submitting academic work or substantial portions of the same academic work (including oral reports) in more than one academic exercise without Authorization.
F. **Plagiarism** means presenting the words or ideas of another as one's own words or ideas, including failing to properly acknowledge a source, unless the ideas or information are common knowledge. Plagiarism includes self-plagiarism, which is the use of one's own previous work in another context without indicating that it was used previously.
G. **Unauthorized Collaboration** means sharing the work or effort in an academic exercise with another Student or Students without Authorization.
H. **Research Misconduct** means a determination that Research Misconduct has occurred under University Policy 309, Responding to Allegations of Misconduct in Research and Scholarship and its Supplemental Procedures. (See Chapter 3, Section III of the Code.)

If you try to pass off any work in full or part as your own without proper credit being given to the original source— you will receive an 'F' in this course. If you use non-sanctioned resources (e.g., other classmates) to complete tests and exams, you will receive an 'F' in this course.

In addition to the above identification of Academic Dishonesty, students should be aware of technology-mediated concerns related to Academic Integrity. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "integrity" as "The condition of having no part or element taken away or wanting; undivided or unbroken state; material wholeness, completeness, entirety." A second definition states that integrity means, "The condition of not being marred or violated; unimpaired or uncorrupted condition; original perfect state; soundness." Therefore, anything that draws students' attention away from course activities and goals violates the essence of academic integrity because it corrupts the soundness and condition of learning. For instance, engaging in critical thinking/awareness is a sound, perfect state activity for this course; on the other hand, devoting attention to facebook, texting/messaging, non-class-related internet activities (e-mailing, etc.) violates or corrupts the learning goals of this course, specifically violating sub point #3 of the "purpose of the Code," which is intended to "assist Students in learning responsibility for one's own academic work." Although we may point to the internet in general and social media sites specifically in our discussions of 21st-Century communication, engrossing oneself in them during class to "catch up with friends" divides your attention and may be distracting to members of this class. This violation is as serious as plagiarism and will result in an 'F' in participation (the entire 15% of your grade) the first time and an 'F' in this course for a subsequent violation. This syllabus section is your warning. Yes, it is obvious when you are using laptops and handheld devices to take notes or when you use them to corrupt the learning environment.

You will also receive an 'F' in the course for other academic integrity violations. Do not expect another warning—this is it. Please see me if you need further clarification regarding cheating, fabrication or falsification of information, multiple submission of academic work, plagiarism, or complicity in academic dishonesty. Again, so there's no confusion, you will most likely fail the course if you violate any part of the academic integrity code.

Instructional Modifications

Students who have a condition that may impair their ability to complete assignments or otherwise satisfy course criteria are encouraged to meet with professionals to identify, discuss, and document any feasible instructional modifications or accommodations. Please inform me about circumstances as soon as possible. I don't need specifics, but I do need to know what accommodations to make. For information and assistance, contact the Disabilities Resource Center: https://ds.charlotte.edu/.

Statement of Academic Freedom

I strongly encourage students to use class as a place for free inquiry and intellectual growth. Although we as a class will not always agree or be comfortable with the views of others, every student has the right to their own tastes and convictions. I promise to be fair and always support your right to look at the world from your own position, but I encourage all students to branch out and consider multiple perspectives. If you think technologies have single, objectively reasoned meanings…well, you're about to get a radical new perspective in this course. Our biases filter our interpretations of the world around us. Family, culture, media, law, religion, etc. influence how we perceive the world. Your perspectives might be similar to those close to you, but your worldview isn't universally held. **I will not tolerate any harassment or abuse (emotional or physical) or any instance where others adversely affect students' learning. Remember, harassment isn't just verbal—making harassing or abusive posts won't be tolerated.**

Title IX Mandated Reporting

UNC Charlotte is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these incidents, know that you are not alone. UNC Charlotte has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware that many UNC Charlotte employees, including all faculty members, are considered Responsible Employees who are required to relay any information or reports of sexual misconduct they receive to the Title IX Coordinator. This means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, I must report the information to the Title IX Coordinator. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.

If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can contact any of the following on-campus resources, who are not required to report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator: (1) University Counseling Center (counselingcenter.uncc.edu, 7-0311); (2) Student Health Center (studenthealth.uncc.edu, 7-7400); or (3) Center for Wellness Promotion (wellness.uncc.edu, 7-7407). Additional information about your options is also available at titleix.uncc.edu under the "Students" tab.

Safety and Security Information

UNC Charlotte's Emergency Management offers the following safety tips. Visit emergency.charlotte.edu for more information, and Download the Livesafe app, which connects you to campus police via phone or text 24/7.
- o 911 dialed from a mobile phone connects to CMPD and can slow down response.
- o Alternatively, you can put the UNC Charlotte Police emergency number in your phone: 704-687-2200.
- Always be aware of your surroundings and know the quickest escape routes: exit doors, windows, etc.
- Safety and Security offers a variety of trainings to students. For more information, visit: https://police.charlotte.edu/safety

- Remember: Personal pepper spray is allowed on campus. These weapons are prohibited.

Action Directives included from Emergency Management's "Preparedness":

Run-Hide-Fight is the individual's Action Directive for an active assailant.
- *RUN: If outside or in a building and it is safe to flee, run and leave the campus if possible.*
- *HIDE: If you are in a building and unsure of where the threat is, find the closest room in which to hide. Close, lock and/or barricade doors if they do not lock. Do not huddle in one location. Remain quiet.*
- *FIGHT: This is a last-resort option. Do not seek the assailant. If you come into direct contact with the individual, use any means necessary to defend yourself.*

A Seek Shelter directive is normally issued during severe weather or hazardous material releases.
If a Seek Shelter is ordered:
- *Stay inside if you are indoors.*
- *If outside, quickly go to the nearest building.*
- *Once indoors, find a fitting room or space in the building to shelter. Stay away from windows.*

An Evacuation can be for either a single building, area, or the entire campus. Further information and direction will be included in the NinerAlert.

Inclement Weather/Building Issues/Apocalypse

Some buildings can have HVAC problems. Occasionally, the powers that be close buildings and classes are canceled because it is too brutally hot to remain inside. If a building related "issue" cancels class, continue to keep up with the class webpage, readings, and **Canvas** posts. The library has lots of space and many computers. We'll pick up where we left off on the syllabus when we return to class. This also goes for inclement weather and other situations that cancel class.

Important Dates and Administrative Information

The syllabus schedule on the last two pages has important dates for readings, tests, and exams. Students are responsible for not only knowing course deadlines but also knowing UNC Charlotte deadlines (drop/add, billing, vacation, etc.). Please visit the following link for the registrar's calendar: http://registrar.uncc.edu/calendar.

Right to Make Changes

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus when necessary to meet learning objectives, to compensate for missed classes, or to make our lives easier.

Schedule for Readings and Assignments

(Have readings and assignments done before class.)

January 11	**Introduction to the Course** Go over the syllabus, discuss rhetoric, discuss technology

January 16*	Asimov, Isaac. "Cult of Ignorance" on Canvas
January 18	Bazerman, Charles. "The Production of Technology and the Production of Human Meaning." *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 12 (1998): 381-387. Kuhn, Thomas S. "The Route to Normal Science." *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1962: 10-22.

*January 17th: Last day to register. If you're not registered, you will not be allowed to continue in the course.

January 23	Winner, Langdon. "Technologies as Forms of Life." *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986: 3-18. ***Whale and the Reactor* summary online**
January 25	Winner, Langdon. "Do Artifacts have Politics?" *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986: 19-39.

January 30	**Library Liaison Visit—Marc Bess** **Writing and Reflecting:** Discussion on writing as thinking Writing Workshop—**Technology and yourself,** a reflective essay
February 1	Oudshoorn, Nelly. "The Decline of the One-Size-Fits-All Paradigm, or, How Reproductive Scientists try to Cope with Postmodernity." *The Social Shaping of Technology*. 2nd ed. Eds. Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman. Philadelphia: Open UP, 1999: 325-340.

February 6 DUE	**Technology and yourself,** a reflective essay **DUE** Noble, David F. *The Religion of Technology*. Preface-Ch. 6 (pp. 1-87)
February 8	Noble, David F. *The Religion of Technology*. Ch. 7-10 (pp. 88-171)

*February 8th: Deadline to apply for May 2024 graduation

February 13	Noble, David F. *The Religion of Technology*. Ch. 11, Conclusion, and Appendix (pp. 172-228)
February 15*	Post-Valentine's Day reflection: Is love a technology? Why or why not? This is a major participation day, so skipping will seriously affect your In-class participation grade

February 20	Weber, Rachel N. "Manufacturing Gender in Military Cockpit Design." *The Social Shaping of Technology*. 2nd ed. Ed. Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman. Philadelphia: Open UP, 1999: 372-381. Cowan, Ruth Scwartz. "The Industrial Revolution in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the 20th Century." Eds. Terry S. Reynolds and Stephen H. Cutcliffe. *Technology and the West: A Historical Anthology from Technology and Culture*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997. 291-313.
February 22 DUE— Revision	**Technology and yourself,** a reflective essay **Revisions DUE** Fallows, James. "The American Army and the M-16 Rifle." *The Social Shaping of Technology*. 2nd ed. Ed. Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman. Philadelphia: Open UP, 1999: 382-394. Adams, Hunter Havelin III. "African Observers of the Universe." *Blacks in Science: Ancient and Modern*. Ed. Ivan Van Sertima. New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1983: 27-50.

February 27	Writing Workshop—**Social Construction of Technology Essay**
February 29	**No Class Meeting**—MIDTERM on Canvas: Covers Readings up to this point

March 4th – March 10th: No Class—Spring Break

March 12*	Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. Ch. 1-7 (Pages will vary based on version)
March 14 **DUE**	Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. Ch. 8-16 **Social Construction of Technology Essay Due**

March 19	Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. Ch. 17-23 & CODA (end of book)
March 21*	**Writing and Reflecting:** Research and Synthesizing your analysis and the ideas of others

*March 21: Last day to withdraw from a course or courses; grade subject to cumulative Withdrawal Policy.

March 26	Neri, Hugo. *The Risk Perception of Artificial Intelligence*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2020. • "Preface," pp. vii-x • "Introduction: Stories of the Future," pp. 1-10 • Chapter 1: "Risk, Imagination, and Artificial Intelligence," pp. 11-44
March 28	Neri, Hugo. *The Risk Perception of Artificial Intelligence*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2020. • Chapter 4: "We Thought We Could Do It: Human-Machine Symbiosis, Heavy Investments, and the Raising of Futurists in the 1980s/1990s," pp. 93-108

April 2*	Jennings, Charles. *Artificial Intelligence: Rise of the Lightspeed Learners*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2019. • "Foreword," David Hume Kennerly, pp. vii-ix • Chapter 1: "An Uncanny Ability to Learn," pp. 1-15 • Chapter 2: "Not Your Father's AI," pp. 17-15
April 4 **DUE— Revision**	**Social Construction of Technology Essay Revisions Due** Writing Workshop—**Technology Project**

*April 1st: Registration for Summer and Fall 2024 begins

April 9	Wheeler, Tom. *From Gutenberg to Google: The History of Our Future*, 2019. • Preface," pp. xiii-xvi • Preface," pp. 1-8 • Chapter 1: "Connections have Consequences," pp. 11-24
April 11	**No Class Meeting**—Keep up with the syllabus and Canvas

April 16	**No Class Meeting**—Keep up with the syllabus and Canvas
April 18	Wheeler, Tom. *From Gutenberg to Google: The History of Our Future*, 2019. • Chapter 2: "The Original Information Revolution," pp. 27-54

April 23	Presentation Discussion and semester catch up/review Presentations—5 of you must present
April 25 **DUE**	**Last Day of Class** **Technology Project Due** Presentations—the rest of you must present

April 30	**Reading Day—No Classes**
May 2	**FINAL EXAM—on Canvas** Cumulative and based on readings. Gibson's novel will be heavily weighted on the final.

Commencement May 10th and 11th (congratulations)