SOCIOLOGY SOCI 235A

TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY

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Office hours: by appointment

Fall, 2019-2020
MWF 13:35-14:25
EVO residence (420 Sherbrooke, room 101)

Introductory Comments

This course deals with the consequences and causes of technological change, with particular reference to productivity and employment. Technological innovation is a pre-requisite for growth in productivity and living standards. Successful economies have at least some organizations that are hospitable to innovation, labour relations that encourage rather than obstruct innovation, and methods for ensuring that there is an adequate supply of potential employees with skills appropriate to the use of newer technologies. These are the central topics dealt with in this course.

Course Structure

On most Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays I will come prepared to lecture. The class is too large to permit the creation of a seminar-like atmosphere. Nonetheless, at all classes questions and comments are generally welcome. Exceptionally, the classes of Friday October 4th and Wednesday December 4th will be replaced with conferences.

Course requirements

Your grade will be based on the following:

i) a mid term examination involving short answer questions on Monday 7th October, worth 35% of your final grade;

ii) a final examination worth 65% of your final grade, involving both short answer questions and essays.

Readings

1. The outcome: growth in productivity


2. The background to innovation


Henry Petroski, Invention by Design: How Engineers get from Thought to Thing. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996, Ch.5.

3. The generation of new technology


4. Technology and production organization


Sarah O’Connor, “Amazon unpacked.” Financial Times February 8, 2013. Available at https://www.ft.com/content/ed6a985c-70bd-11e2-85d0-00144feab49a

5. The employment effects of technology and globalization


6. Institutions, production organization, and the use of technology


7. Training in the context of technological change


**Availability of Readings**

There is a course pack available in the bookstore. Two of the readings is available online through the McGill library system.

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In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009 - see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ also the section in this document on Assignments and evaluation.)

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information). (Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003)