Technological Society

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Technological Society

Full course description

In this course you will explore and analyse what it means to live in a technological society. In particular, you will study how technology and society have been intertwined since World War Two. While technology has always been an intricate part of any society, in the second half of the 20th century technological change became a defining characteristic of the way societal structures, media and art are constituted and organized. In this course, you will investigate and unravel this distinctive condition.

The central idea of this course is that many current societal issues build on, resonate and reflect issues in the past. You will study five different areas in which questions about technology's role in society are central: security, mass media, environment, health and work. Taking its starting point in current challenges related to these five areas, you will seek to contextualize them in relation to parallel developments in the period 1950-2000. This course is foremost about social and cultural questions. In this course you will learn that technological development is not just about technology.

Course objectives

❯ You will learn to recognize and articulate contemporary challenges of technology in society, in particular in the areas of security, mass media, environmental pressures, health and work & consumption
❯ You will learn how to productively draw parallels between the current societal issues and developments and imaginations in the past
❯ You will learn to recognize and apply analytical perspectives to analyse the entanglement of technology, media, and politics in our contemporary society.
❯ You will be able to make a reasoned contribution to academic and societal debates on the role of technology in society

Recommended reading

See course book.

ACU2015

Period 1
5 Sep 2022   **28 Oct 2022**

Print course description 🖨

ECTS credits: 9.0

Instruction language: **English**

Coordinator:
A. Supper

Teaching methods: **PBL**

Assessment methods: **Written exam**

Keywords:
Science, Technology and Society studies; Media; Security; Environment; Health; Work; Social Shaping of Technology; technological determinism

Doing Ethnography

Doing Ethnography

Full course description

In this skills course, students are introduced to the qualitative research method of ethnography. Following an introduction to ethnographic research, the students of each tutorial group work together on collaboratively developing a research problem and design (related to the role of technology in contemporary society, which relates to the Technological Society course), which can be tackled through a series of individual methodological exercises. Students practice different methods in the ethnographic toolkit, such as conducting participant observation research, online ethnography and qualitative interviews. In bringing together the different exercises in a research report (written individually by each student), we discuss how ethnographic materials can be generated; how the results can be interpreted and analysed; and how ethnographic research can be made robust, valid and reliable.

Course objectives

Upon completion of this skills course, you will be able to:

❯ understand and explain the main characteristics of ethnographic research
❯ (collaboratively) define a research problem which is suitable to an ethnographic approach
❯ apply different ethnographic methods (participant observation, online ethnography, qualitative interviews) to the research problem
❯ communicate with research participants in a professional and ethically sound manner
❯ use different ways of recording and documenting research data
❯ account for and reflect upon methodological choices
❯ analyse ethnographic materials in relation to the research problem

Recommended reading

The core texts for this skills training are:

❯ Seale, C. (Ed.). (2018), Researching Society and Culture (4th edition) London: Sage.
❯ Taylor, S. J., R. Bogdan, & DeVault, M. L. (2016). Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods (4th edition). Hoboken: Wiley.

Both texts are methodological reference works, which provide useful background information for the research that you will conduct during this skills training.

Knowledge and Criticism

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Knowledge and Criticism

Full course description

Knowledge and Criticism examines the role of science in modern western culture in its relation to non-western cultures. Advanced science and technology are often understood as the hallmarks of all that makes us modern. How has this situation arisen? On what choices and assumptions is modern science based? Knowledge and Criticism answers these questions by going back to the founders of modern science (like Descartes and Newton), to the Enlightenment ideals of knowledge and progress (like those expressed in the French Encyclopédie), and to the reaction against all this during the Romantic era (with thinkers like Goethe and Humboldt). Students will also investigate the present: what do scientists do today, and how does their work fit into our culture and society? This course builds on your knowledge of Greek and medieval philosophy acquired in ACU1000 Apollo and Dionysus. It prepares the ground for the great modernisation themes in ACU1002 Disenchantment and Ideology. Its focus is also related to ACU2015 Technological Society.

Course objectives

Insight into the significance of science in modern western culture (in relation to non-western cultures) and knowledge of the Scientific Revolution, Enlightenment and Romanticism.

Recommended reading

- Peter J. Bowler and Morus, Iwan Rhys, Making Modern Science. A Historical Survey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).
- Steven Shapin, The Scientific Revolution (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1996).

ACU1001

Period 2
31 Oct 2022   **22 Dec 2022**

Print course description 🖨

ECTS credits: **9.0**

Instruction language: **English**

Coordinator:
R.F.J. de Bont

Teaching methods: **PBL**

Assessment methods:
Final paper, Written exam

Keywords:
Scientific revolution, Enlightenment, Rom anticism, science & society

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Finding Sources

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Finding Sources

Full course description

This skills course trains you in finding and using sources for research. The first part deals with the finding: how can I build up a useful bibliography for writing a paper? The second and third part deal with the interpretation of sources: how can I make sensible use of evidence about the past? The focus is on historical sources. But the skills of historical source analysis can also be readily translated to the assessment of other kinds of information sources – almost any kinds.

Course objectives

The course has two aims:

- It trains you to find and critically assess appropriate sources in the light of a particular research problem.
- It introduces you to historical methods (source criticism), applied to wide areas of research in the humanities and qualitative social sciences.

Recommended reading

- Bloch, M. (1992). The historian's craft (P. Putnam, Trans.). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Carr, E.H. (1961). What is history? Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

ACU1507

Period 2
31 Oct 2022   **22 Dec 2022**

Print course description 🖨

ECTS credits: **4.0**

Instruction language: **English**

Coordinator:
M. Reithler

Teaching methods:
Assignment(s), Lecture(s), Research, Work in subgroups

Assessment methods: **Portfolio**

Keywords: **Library search, Source criticism**

Research and Writing II

Research and Writing II

Full course description

In this second Research and Writing course, students will conclude their basic studies with the writing of an academic paper, in which they will examine an Arts and Culture theme of their choice and in which they will have achieved a basic level of academic competence. During period 1 and 2, students select and delineate their topic and conduct a systematic search for sources and material. They then compose a Literature Review on the basis of key sources. This review will be the starting point for the academic paper in period 3. The emphasis in this course is on the independent selection and definition of the topic of the paper, on the formulation of the research problem it addresses and the research question it sets out to answer and on building a solid and convincing argumentation that is supported by the productive use of relevant secondary sources.

Course objectives

Independently writing an academic paper on a self-chosen subject within the field of Arts and Culture.

Recommended reading

- Booth, W., Colomb, G., & Williams, J. (1995). The craft of research.
- Jackson, H. (2005). Good grammar for students.
- Rawlins, J. (2002). The writer's way (5th ed.).
- Seale, C. (Ed.). (2004). Researching society and culture.

ACU2900

Period 1
5 Sep 2022   **28 Oct 2022**

Print course description

ECTS credits:	**9.0**
Instruction language:	**English**

Coordinator:
M. Reithler

Teaching methods:
Lecture(s), Assignment(s), PBL

Assessment methods:
Assignment, Final paper

Keywords:
research skills, Research design, Writing skills, formatting, language and rhetorical skills, structuring, Argumentation

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Living in a Digital Age

Living in a Digital Age

Full course description

This course provides an overview of the historical and philosophical contexts through which digital technologies and the social worlds that they mediate were imagined and constructed. It allows students to explore how these developments are being realized in contemporary designs, policies, and debates about our sociotechnical world. Students will learn about important contemporary debates regarding the automation of labor, (lack of) diversity among designers of digital technologies, ubiquitous surveillance by states, businesses, fellow citizens, and ourselves. Students will relate these current debates to long-standing philosophical and societal controversies. They will study current technological controversies not as inevitable outcomes of a technical logic, but as products of culture. They will position themselves relative to these debates and craft reasoned arguments – accessible to a wider audience – to back their positions.

Course objectives

This course takes as its starting point the many debates, opportunities, and challenges that early 21st century digital culture poses. The course will prepare students to engage critically with this culture by understanding, first, the historical and philosophical contexts that stand behind the promises and realities of new digital technologies; and second, a comprehensive overview of the contested trajectories that characterize contemporary digital culture. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- describe the potentials and dangers of contemporary technological society through reference to concrete objects and practices
- position themselves within those debates, and provide reasoned, accessible arguments for their positions.

Prerequisites

None

ACU2018

Period 4
6 Feb 2023   **6 Apr 2023**

Print course description

ECTS credits:	**9.0**
Instruction language:	**English**

Coordinators:
- **J.W.A.P. Ward**
- **A.R. Wojcik**

Teaching methods:	**PBL**
Assessment methods:	**Final paper**

Keywords:
digitalization, digital technologies, digital culture

Art, Literature and Technoscience

Art, Literature and Technoscience

Full course description

This course explores how art and literature engage with contemporary challenges related to the impact of science and technology. How do different artistic media, from books and films to visual and sound art, engage with societal challenges of a technoscientific nature? What can art do in relation to our society? We will approach such questions through topical case studies on art and literature that explore important challenges of contemporary society, including the role of technology in food production, new surveillance technologies, the rise of robotics, and climate change. While the course focuses on the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, we will trace developments back from our current situation to the early twentieth century. In examining the role of art and literature in contemporary society, we will periodically return to the topics of form, context and participation. The case studies will be analyzed with the help of concepts such as forcework, the posthuman, materialism, autonomy, visibility, and scale. The course also includes exhibition visits, movie viewings and debates, as well as a festival organized by students.

Course objectives

By the end of this course you will

- have acquired understanding of artistic responses to current multifaceted societal challenges;
- be able to apply interdisciplinary concepts such as immersion, the posthuman, materialism, materialism, and scale to the analysis of these challenges;
- be able to discuss the role of art in relation to contemporary technoscientific society;
- be able to apply methods learned in the skills courses to the analysis of artworks, literary texts and artistic practices.

Prerequisites

This course is open to all students, but builds on the skills course Analysing Art (ACU1502), among others. Taking the course in combination with the skills course Analysing Arts II (ACU2508) or Interviewing (EUS3500) is recommended.

Research Methods: Interviewing

Research Methods: Interviewing

Full course description
In this skills-training, you are trained in the craft of qualitative, semi-structured interviewing. You will learn through a hands-on approach, by arranging, preparing, conducting, recording, transcribing and analysing a research interview on a topic of your choice in small groups. Lectures and readings address the methodological premises, techniques for designing topic lists and formulate good questions, and approaches to coding qualitative data. Practical sessions serve to practice these skills, discuss your experiences, and offer opportunities for extensive feedback by tutors and peers. The assessment is a portfolio of your interview materials, analysis and reflections. Please note that this is an elective skills training and available places may be limited; in period 4 students choose two out of the four offered skills of 3ECTS each.

Course objectives
At the end of this course, students will have gained:

• An insight into methodological advantages and disadvantages of interviewing;

• First hand experience in conducting and analysing interviews, based on data gathered by the students themselves;

• An understanding of how to use qualitative interviewing as a social science research method.

Recommended reading
Rubin, H. J. & Rubin, I.S. (2012). Qualitative Interviewing. The Art of Hearing Data. (3rd edition). London: Sage.

EUS3500

Period 4
6 Feb 2023　　　　**6 Apr 2023**

Print course description 🖨

ECTS credits:　　　　　　　　3.0

Instruction language:　　　**English**

Coordinator:
J.L.M. Bruyninckx

Teaching methods:
PBL, Presentation(s), Skills, Work in subgroups

Assessment methods:
Assignment, Portfolio

Keywords:
Qualitative methodology, semi-structured interviewing, qualitative data analysis, coding

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Authority, Expertise and Environmental Change

Authority, Expertise and Environmental Change

Full course description
Scholars agree that the present-day world is undergoing rapid environmental change. Some even see a new epoch arising in which humans have an all-pervasive impact on the planet: the so-called 'Anthropocene'. Global warming, plastic pollution and biodiversity loss are just some of the environmental challenges that come with this increased human impact. In this course, we will explore the ways in which modern societies respond to these challenges. How are environmental problems defined? Who is ascribed expertise when it comes to finding solutions? Who has the political authority to govern the global environment? How, finally, are alternative environmental futures imagined and decided upon? Rather than as just a technical issue we will, thus, study the environment as an object of scientific controversy, political struggle and societal debate.

Course objectives
The course aims to generate understanding of how authority and expertise with regard to the environment is generated in present-day society. Students will be trained to use these insights for analysing concrete environmental controversies and writing a policy brief.

Prerequisites
None

ACU2023

Period 5
11 Apr 2023　　　　**9 Jun 2023**

Print course description 🖨

ECTS credits:　　　　　　　　9.0

Instruction language:　　　**English**

Coordinator:
R. Zeiss

Teaching methods:　　　　　**PBL**

Assessment methods:　　**Final paper**

Keywords:
Authority, expertise, the environment, the Anthopocene, climate change

Doing Conceptual Analysis II

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Doing Conceptual Analysis II

Full course description

Building upon Doing Conceptual Analysis (ACU1508), in this course students will be introduced to different methodologies for the study of concepts and conceptual change. The course will combine a focus on conceptual history (such as Reinhart Koselleck's Begriffsgeschichte or Quentin Skinner & the Cambridge School of Intellectual History) with a look at different philosophical approaches to the study of concepts (Isaiah Berlin, Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault). From this, students will investigate two case studies, the concept of "technology," and the conceptual pair "romanticism/enlightenment", by reading different conceptual analyses undertaken by different authors.

Course objectives

There are two main objectives in this course. First, you will be able to reflect upon different ways in which concepts can be investigated by getting acquainted with methodological debates. The second objective will be to teach you how to develop those skills that are essential to working with concepts (finding sources, analyzing meaning, reflecting on conceptual change, and so forth).

Prerequisites

ACU1508 Conceptual Analysis