**Course Description:**
This course explores the history of twentieth century technology, primarily in the United States. We will critically analyze examples of different kinds of public and personal technologies, including: transportation, communication, domestic technologies, and computer technologies. We will study how these technologies came to be created, how they were used, and the social impact of their development. We will focus on the relationship between consumer technologies and the larger technological infrastructure they are a part of. Do we, as a society, have full control over the technologies we create? Do technologies lead to consequences beyond our control? Why do certain technologies succeed and others fail?

**Required Books:**
Claude S. Fischer. *America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940.* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), 1992. [Available through bookstore or online through the library]


**Articles and Chapters:** [Available through e-reserves, password: ep130]


**Course Requirements:**

**Paper:** [6-7 pages] 35%

This research paper asks you to write about the history of a technology of your choice. Choose any technology created during the twentieth century. Describe the development and use of the technology. Apply at least one of the concepts from class in analyzing its history. You must cite the sources you use (at least 2 secondary sources and 1 primary source, no encyclopedias). Paper topics (with potential sources) must be submitted to me and approved by the end of week 7. Possible class concepts to utilize:

- The relationship between infrastructure and consumer technology
- The interaction of components in a technological system
- The use of a technology
- Unintended consequences
- Technological failures

**2 Reading Responses:** [2 pages each] 5% each

Choose a reading from the class schedule and write a two page response of your reaction to the reading and questions you have on it. Make sure to briefly summarize the reading (1 paragraph). Questions could be on parts of the reading that you found confusing or particularly interesting. I will incorporate student responses in lectures. Submit your response via email by the Sunday evening before the week for that reading. The first reading response is for readings prior to the midterm and the second is for readings after the midterm.

Midterm: 25%

Final Exam: 30%

**Class Schedule:**

**Week 0: Introduction**

F: What Is Technology?

**Week 1: Core Concepts**

Fischer. *America Calling*. Chapter 1 (pages 1-28)


M: Technological Systems / Technology and Infrastructure

W: Use of Technology / Unintended Consequences / Technological Failures

F: Crossing the Nation

**Week 2: The Decline of the Railroad**

Goddard. *Getting There*. Preface, Prologue, Chapters 1 and 2 (pages ix-42)

Film: *The American Road* (3 parts, online, search at [http://archive.org/details/prelinger](http://archive.org/details/prelinger))

M: The Machine in the Garden
W: Government Regulation
F: *The American Road*

**Week 3: The Rise of the Highway**
Goddard. *Getting There*. Chapters 3, 6, 12, 13 (pages 43-64, 102-119, 195-225)
M: Ford’s Model T
W: Building the Highways
F: Freeways vs Cities

**Week 4: Alternative Means of Transportation**
Goddard. *Getting There*. Chapters 4 and 7 (pages 65-83, 120-137)
Film: *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*
M: GM’s Conspiracy against Trolleys
W: *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*
F: Airplanes

**Week 5: Communication Technologies: The Telephone Finds Use**
Fischer. *America Calling*. Chapters 2 and 3 (pages 33-85)
M: Invention of the Telephone
W: Diffusion and Use before WWI
F: Diffusion and Use between the Wars

**Week 6: Telephone cont.**
Fischer. *America Calling*. Chapters 6, 8, 9 (pages 182-192, 222-247, 255-272)
M: Telephone Etiquette and Social Meanings
W: Post-WWII Automobiles and Telephones
F: Midterm Exam

**Week 7: Household Technology**
W: Utilities
F: Appliances and Housework

Paper topics must be submitted by Friday, 11/15.

**Week 8: Other Communication Infrastructure**
Smith. "The Emergence of CATV: A Look at the Evolution of a Revolution.” (pages 967-982)
Wikle. “Cellular Tower Proliferation in the United States.” (pages 45-62)
M: Broadcast Television
W: Cable Television
F: Cellular Phones

**Week 9: Personal Computers and the Internet**
Ceruzzi. “From Scientific Instrument to Everyday Appliance.” (pages 1-31)
Abbate. *Inventing the Internet*. Chapter 6 (pages 181-220)
Week 10: Infrastructure Wrap-up
Goddard. *Getting There*. Chapters 14 and 15 (pages 226-245)
Film: *Revenge of the Electric Car*
  M: Resurgence of Public and Alternative Transportation
  W: *Revenge of the Electric Car*
  F: recap
Take-home final handed out.
Research paper due by Friday.

**Final Exam: Monday 12/9**