Social Justice & Design
PUBP 6748/LMC 6748

Instructor: Robert Rosenberger
Time and Location: Wednesdays 1:05-3:55, Stephen C. Hall Building 005
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Course Description:

This advanced seminar has a theoretical and a practical focus. It first asks how theories of social justice can be understood and reformulated when seen from a science and technology studies (STS) point of view, a point of view that is informed by traditional critical theory and an emergent philosophy of design. Whereas critical theory mainly focuses on the material conditions of human existence, philosophy of design addresses the question how technologies materialize values and thereby shape the human condition. Whereas critical theory attempts to achieve social justice by changing the ways material goods are accumulated and distributed, philosophy of design is concerned with how technologies change the ways we act in the world with and through made things and how the design of technologies fosters or inhibits freedom, and empowers or represses people. The seminar explores how science and technology have been variously contested and enrolled in epistemological and material struggles for social justice, and the role that STS scholarship can or should play in those spheres.

Thus we will explore how issues of justice are designed into and emerge from the technologies of our world, from our personal computing devices, to the built environment, to industry, to our social institutions. This will require the participants to consider not only themes of design practice and user experience, but also the nature of justice, difference, materiality, and technological mediation. The readings are correspondingly varied, including abstract philosophical texts, concrete cases, and empirical studies.

To engender class discussion, students will write short entries on the readings ahead of each session so that we all come prepared with opinions. The main readings will be summarized through an in-class presentation and a student-led discussion. In addition, most main class readings will be supplemented with examples of concrete work and debate in relevant discussions from environmental justice, to disability studies, to feminist epistemology, to the critique of anti-homeless design.
Required Texts:

Two books are required reading for this course. They are available at both the campus bookstore and The Engineer’s Bookstore.


We will also read a large number of articles that will be posted on t-square.

Assessment:

- Active participation in seminar discussion: 20%
- Blogs about the readings completed in advance of each session: 30%
- In-class presentation of reading material: 20%
  Each student in the course will be assigned one course reading for which they will provide a summary and discussion questions for the class.
- A final paper/project, according to student interest and professor approval: 30%
  Appropriate formats might include, but are not limited to: a research paper that applies theories from this class to dissertation research; a review essay about books in student’s field in light of this class; a design project that engages and applies concepts from this class; a draft of a dissertation chapter, conference presentation, journal article, or some other professional publication.

This issue of plagiarism will not be taken lightly. Students should familiarize themselves with Georgia Tech’s plagiarism policies at www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu
Work retrieved from books, articles, the internet, other students’ writings, or any other source should not be passed off as one’s own. I will not hesitate to refer plagiarizers to the Office of the Dean of Students.
### 8/24: Introductions & Fire Hydrants

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**8/31: Actor-Network Theory**


**Anti-homeless Design:**

### 9/7: Politics


**Privately-Owned Public Spaces:**

### 9/14: Cyborgs


**Algorithms:**
9/21: The Philosophy of Justice


9/28: The Philosophy of Justice continued


Disability:

10/5: Morality and Design


Body Cameras:

10/12: Morality and Design continued

### 10/19: Standpoint Theory


**Gender and Design:**

### 10/26: Critical Theory


**Environmental Justice:**

### 11/2: Course Project Proposals and Feedback

- Presentation on your proposed final essay or other project

### 11/9: Democracy and Design


### 11/16: No Class

Wed 11/16: CLASS CANCELED

### 11/23: Thanksgiving holiday

Wed 11/23: THANKSGIVING

### 11/30: Class presentations

- Presentation of final essay or other project