

**T601: TOPICAL SEMINAR IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY  
& POLICY -- ORIGINS OF THE INFORMATION AGE**

SECTION 28390

Fall 2010

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Course Meetings: Thursdays 5:45 to 8:30 pm TV 169

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Today, the term "information age" is commonplace. We hear about it in the press, political speeches, popular books, scholarly journals, and everyday conversations. However, it was only a few decades ago that the term first entered our vocabulary. In this seminar, we will explore the origins of the information age; both as a concept and as a phenomenon. We will start with the earliest writings on the information age by Machlup, Porat, Bell, and others and work our way through the literature to the most recent thinking on the subject. We will identify important themes which weave through the literature, unearth the assumptions the authors bring to their work, and track the changes in our conceptualization of the information age. After taking stock of the literature on the information age, we will try to understand when, where, and how the information age actually started and what forces are behind the societal transformations we are currently witnessing. We will use Beniger's "The Control Revolution" as a jumping board for our own theorization about the information age. Our readings will then expand beyond the traditional literature on the information age to those from sociology, political science, history, cultural studies, business and other disciplines on information, technology, and coordination and control of human activities. By the time we are finished, we will have a good overview of the literature and a robust theoretical framework for thinking about the information age. This framework will enable us to place the latest technological and policy developments within their proper context and analyze them in a historically informed way.

READINGS

The specific articles for each class are listed in the calendar section of the course syllabus. This reading list will be modified if the class discussions move in directions beyond the areas selected for this particular seminar.

## COURSE GRADE

The relative weights of the different components of the final grade will be as follows:

Synthesis Paper 1	20%
Synthesis Paper 2	30%
Synthesis Paper 3	30%
Class Participation	20%

Synthesis Papers: There will be 3 synthesis papers (5-8 pages) in which you are expected to identify and develop themes that cut across the different readings. You are encouraged to build one synthesis paper over another so that your thoughts develop in a cumulative way over the semester. The papers will be due on the dates mentioned on the calendar.

Class Participation: Class participation is an essential element of a seminar class. The success of this seminar to a very large degree depends on the quality of contributions you make. Therefore a significant component of the overall grade has been assigned to class participation.

## CALENDAR

Date                      Topic & Readings

Sept 2                      Introduction

### **LITERATURE**

Sept 9                      Hayek (1945) – The Use of Knowledge in Society [article in American Economic Review 35(4): 519-530]

Lewis (2000) -- The New New Thing, Preface

Machlup (1962) -- The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 10

Sept 16                      Galbraith (1967) -- The New Industrial State, Chapters 1-8

Sept 23                      Drucker (1968) -- The Age of Discontinuity, Chapters 1, 2, 8, 11, 12, 16, 17, Conclusion

Sept 30                    Bell (1973) -- The Coming of Post-Industrial Society, Introduction, Chapters 1

Oct 7                      Porat (1976) -- The Information Economy, Chapters 1, 2

Nora & Minc (1978) -- The Computerization of Society, Intro, Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5

SYNTHESIS PAPER # 1: Due Monday, Oct 11

Oct 14                    Beniger (1986) -- Control Revolution, Introduction, Chapters 6, 8, 10

Oct 21                    Schement & Curtis (1995) -- Tendencies and Tensions of the Information Age, Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 7

Oct 28                    Castells (1996) -- The Rise of the Network Society, Prologue, Chapters 1, 3

Masuda (1980) -- The Information Society, Chapter 8

Duff (2000) – *Joho Shakai*: The Japanese Contribution to Information Society Studies (article in Keio Communication Review No. 22)

Akutsu (1978) -- The Japanese Path Toward an Information Society (Chapter in Information Societies: Comparing the Japanese and American Experiences)

Nov 4                      Florida (2002) -- The Rise of the Creative Class, Chapter 1

Brooks (2000) -- Bobos in Paradise, Introduction, Chapter 1

Pink (2005) – Revenge of the Right Brain

Duguid (2005) -- "The Art of Knowing": Social and Tacit Dimensions of Knowledge and the Limits of the Community of Practice [article in TIS 21(2)]

SYNTHESIS PAPER # 2: Due Monday, Nov 8

