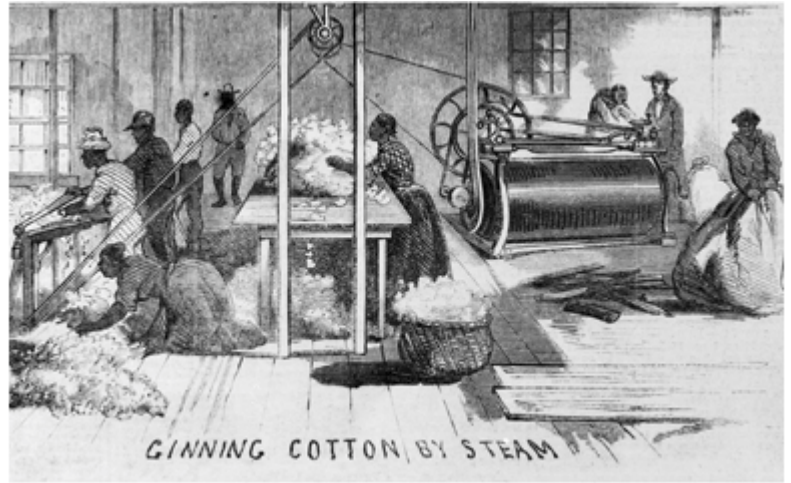| Eli Whitney patent for a cotton gin, 1794, National Archives | *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 15 February 1862 (detail), Library of Congress |

Topics in American History
Technology in American History
COURSE GUIDE*

HIS 213 GHP/WI   FALL 2018

Prof. L. Tolbert   Office: MHRA 2109
Email: lctolber@uncg.edu   Hours: MW 1:00-2:00
                                                                                          and by appointment

History Department Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/UNCGDepartmentofHistory/
History Department Website: https://his.uncg.edu/

*Note that this syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Any necessary changes in the syllabus or course schedule will prioritize effectiveness for student learning.

Course Overview and Learning Outcomes

It's obvious isn't it? Astronauts are technologically superior to cave men! Airplanes are superior to the horse and buggy. The computer is superior to the typewriter. At first glance human history looks like a record of steady progress from the Stone Age to the internet. But let's take another look at that. How should we understand the role of technology in human history? At a time when we worry about our ability to protect the integrity of election results or safeguard our personal identity, are we driving the machines or are they driving us? Karl Marx said that "the hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist." Focusing on the role of technology in the history of the

United States, this course will examine the question, "Does technology drive history?" We will explore the roles of men and women who invented and used technology through the study of specific artifacts—from the cotton gin to the electric light bulb. We'll traverse the long history of the United States from the eighteenth through the twentieth century focusing on invention as a social process and how technology influenced everyday life.

General Education Requirements

This course satisfies General Education (GEC) requirements established by the UNCG faculty for historical perspectives (GHP/GMO) and the Global Marker (GL):

General Education Program Learning Goals addressed by HIS 208:
LG1. Foundational Skills: *Think critically, communicate effectively, and develop appropriate fundamental skills in quantitative and information literacies.*

LG3. Knowledge of Human Histories, Cultures, and the Self: *Describe, interpret, and evaluate the ideas, events, and expressive traditions that have shaped collective and individual human experience through inquiry and analysis in the diverse disciplines of the humanities, religions, languages, histories, and the arts.*

Historical Perspectives (GHP)
Students use an historical approach to a specific region and period to explore the context of events (social structure, economics, political systems, culture, or beliefs), evaluate evidence and divergent interpretations, and communicate historical ideas in writing.
At the completion of a GHP course, the student will be able to:
- Demonstrate a general knowledge and appreciation of historical events, social structures, economics, political ideologies and systems, belief systems, or cultural expressions
- Demonstrate an understanding of some of the diverse historical events, forces and/or contexts in the ancient (GPM) and modern (GMO) world
- Analytically and critically evaluate historical evidence and divergent interpretations
- Communicate historical ideas clearly

Writing Intensive Student Learning Outcome: Students will be able to write in genres appropriate to the discipline(s) of the primary subject matter of the course.

These general education objectives are applicable to all courses with GHP and GL credit regardless of subject matter. The specific HIS 208 course objectives described below are designed to address these General Education Program Goals.

Course Learning Objectives

Upon completing HIS 213 the student will be able to:

1. Apply enduring questions about the history of technology to specific historical examples.
2. Evaluate the role of inventors and users in the history of American technology.
3. Explain how technologies are socially produced using specific historical examples.
4. Locate and evaluate appropriate information sources to historically contextualize a primary source.
5. Demonstrate the following benchmarks for evidence use in historical writing:

Characteristic	Benchmark
Factual and interpretive accuracy	The essay interprets the documentary evidence accurately—appropriate interpretation. Fair representation of people, issues, events as opposed to misinterpretation or misunderstanding. Factual details and chronology are also accurate.
Persuasiveness of evidence	The essay substantiates the claim with evidence that is compelling, relevant, significant, and specific. • The weight of the evidence is sufficient—even compelling. • The evidence provided is relevant to the claim—clearly connects to the main point. • The selected evidence is historically significant rather than marginally related. • Evidence is specific and cites sources where possible. • Evidence is convincing to the reader.
Sourcing of evidence	• The essay notes authors of documents or other sources of evidence used to make the argument. • The use of evidence recognizes biases inherent in sources cited. • Evidence is balanced and credible.
Corroboration of evidence	• The claim responds to and accounts for the available evidence. • The essay synthesizes multiple pieces of evidence that work together to support the claim. • The essay explains how different pieces of evidence work together to support the claim. • The essay recognizes and addresses conflicting/counterevidence.
Contextualization of evidence	Contextual knowledge is used to situate and evaluate the evidence available: • In contextualizing evidence and topic, the essay recognizes historical perspectives and demonstrates an understanding of causation. • The essay uses sources in a manner that is consistent with the contemporary meaning of the sources for the original audience at the time and place of their creation.

Evaluation

The Final Grade will be calculated based on the following weighted assignments:

Unit 1 Assignments   (SLO 1, 5)   25%
    Unit 1 Discussion Board and Attendance   5%
Unit 2 Assignments   (SLO 2, 3, 5)   30%
    Unit 2 Discussion Board and Attendance   5%
Unit 3 Case Study Patent Analysis (SLO 1-5)   30%
    Unit 3 Discussion Board and Attendance   5%

Unit Writing Assignments: (55% of the Final Grade)

These written assignments will vary for each unit. In general, they will require you to evaluate specific materials addressed in each unit using appropriate citation methods. Assignment formats and lengths may vary from one well-written paragraph to a longer essay of 5-7 pages, typed. Specific instructions will be provided well in advance of due dates. We will be discussing drafts of these assignments in class writing workshops designed to help you revise and improve your analysis and communication skills. Deadlines for Unit Writing Assignments are identified in orange in the Course Schedule.

Discussion Board Assignments: (15% of the Final Grade)

There will be several informal written assignments in each unit. These assignments are intended as preparation for class discussion or writing workshops and will not be accepted for late credit. You can receive credit for these assignments if you post them by the deadline, even if you miss class. Some of the informal writing assignments are included in green in the schedule. There may be additional Discussion Board assignments as needed.

Research Project: Case Study Patent Analysis (35% of the Final Grade)

Focusing on a patent documenting a specific technology of the twentieth century, you will conduct research to historically contextualize the object. You will learn how to:

- locate and evaluate appropriate scholarship,
- historically contextualize your patent using scholarship,
- use writing and revision as an iterative process for improving your analysis, and
- document your research

The final product will be an illustrated research report that demonstrates your mastery of all 5 course learning objectives.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity

UNCG considers academic dishonesty to be a serious offense. Dishonest behavior in any form, including cheating, plagiarism, deception of effort, and unauthorized assistance, may result in such sanctions as a failing grade on an assignment or failure in the course depending on the nature of the offense. Students must follow the guidelines of the University Policy on Academic Integrity: http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/

Electronic Communication

Students are responsible for checking Blackboard and UNCG email on a regular basis. Students are encouraged to utilize email and other forms of digital communication when interacting with the instructor (lctolber@uncg.edu). When using email, students are to be professional and courteous. Students should also remember email is an asynchronous form of communication. Thus, while a prompt response may be desired, it may not always be possible (especially late at night and on weekends). Students should allow at least 24 hours (48 hours on weekends) for a response. That said, the instructor answers emails in the timeliest fashion possible.

Late Assignment Penalty

Meeting deadlines is essential for your learning and success in this class. Please note that *unless arrangements have been made well in advance of due dates*, late assignments will be penalized by a 3% reduction in the final

grade for every day the assignment is late. Assignments later than one week will not be accepted for credit without an extremely impressive explanation. The unit assignments are designed to develop your learning in progressively more difficult analytical challenges. It is essential that you complete this work on schedule. Informal writing assignments will not be accepted for late credit because they address preparation for class discussion. You may submit an informal assignment for credit by the due date If you know you will be absent on a day when an informal writing assignment is due.
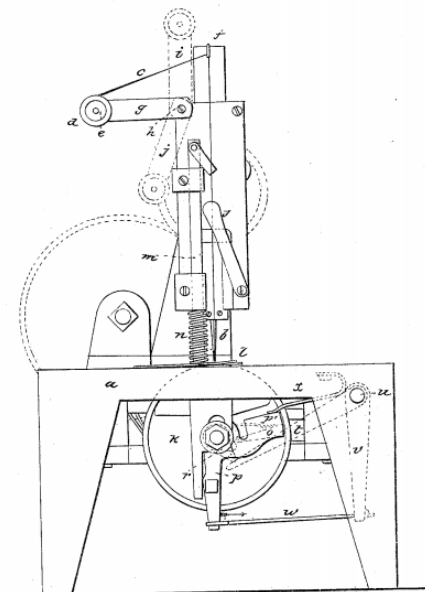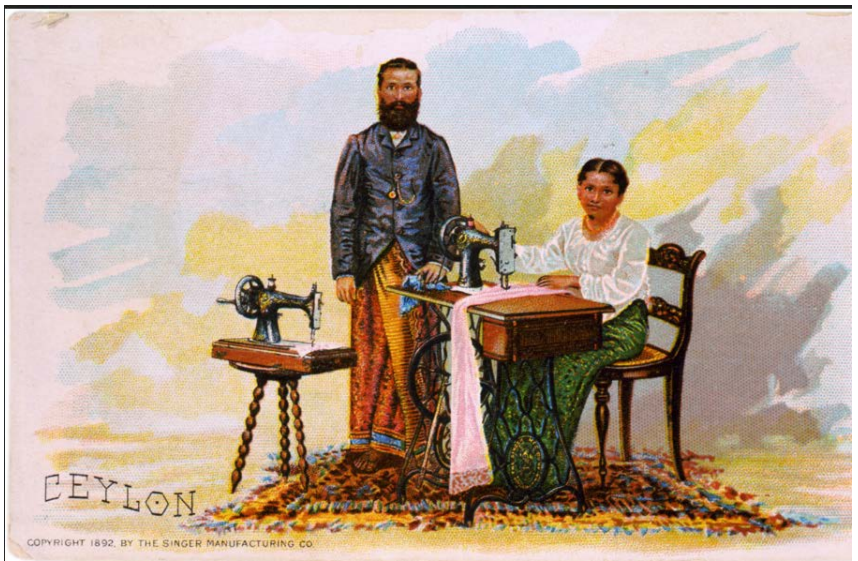
Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory and is counted as part of the class preparation and discussion grade. Documentation for absences will not be collected except in cases where an extended absence may be necessary (for example, hospitalization). Note that *a student who seriously neglects attendance and class preparation risks failing the course*. I will take attendance at the beginning of every class. **You must attend at least three quarters of the class period to be counted for full attendance for the class.**

Required Readings

Nye, David. *Technology Matters: Questions to Live With*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2007.

In addition to the required book, various primary source documents and historical essays will be posted to Canvas. Check the schedule for reading assignments.

I.M. Singer, Sewing Machine Patent, 1851	Singer Trade Card, "Ceylon," 1892

Course Schedule

August 15   Introductions

Unit 1. Asking Big Questions About Technology and History

August 20   Can We Define "Technology?"
<u>Read:</u> Nye, Chapter 1

August 22   Does Technology Control Us?
<u>Read:</u> Nye, Chapter 2
          Jill Lepore, "Does Technology Drive History?"

August 27   Is Technology Predictable?
<u>Read:</u>   Nye, Chapter 3
Readings on the invention of the personal computer posted to Canvas

August 29   How Do Historians Understand Technology?
<u>Read:</u>   Nye, Chapter 4
          Review: Jill Lepore, "Does Technology Drive History?"

September 3   LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

September 5   Assignment due (no class)
Writing Assignment:
Choose one of the questions we have just discussed: Does Technology Control Us?, or Is Technology Predictable? and use the assigned reading to answer the question. Post your one-page essay to Canvas by noon on January 31.

September 10   Writing Workshop: Applying the Benchmarks of Historical Writing

September 12   Cultural Uniformity, or Diversity?
                     Sustainable Abundance, or Ecological Crisis?
<u>Read:</u> Nye, Chapters 5 and 6

September 17   Work: More, or Less? Better, or Worse?
                     Should "the Market" Select Technologies?
<u>Read:</u> Nye, Chapters 7 and 8

September 19   Housework and Household Tools Under Industrial Conditions
<u>Read:</u> Cowan, *Industrial Revolution in the Home reading* (posted to Canvas)

September 24   Writing Workshop: Unit 1 Essay

September 28   Writing Assignment: Unit 1 Essay due by 5:00 p.m.

Unit 2. Case Studies in Nineteenth-Century Technology

Case Study 1: The Cotton Gin

September 26   Evaluating Internet Sources about the Cotton Gin
<u>Read:</u> Evaluate internet sources posted to Canvas

October 1   Cotton Gin in World History
<u>Read:</u> Angela Lakwete, Cotton and the Gin to 1600, posted to Canvas

October 3   Cotton Gin in US History
<u>Read:</u> Angela Lakwete, selections posted to Canvas

October 8   FALL BREAK

October 10   Social Construction of the Cotton Gin
<u>Read:</u> Angela Lakwete, "Machine and Myth"

Case Study 2: The Sewing Machine

October 15   Sewing Machine Patent
<u>Read:</u> Ruth Schwartz Cowan, "The Patent System: The Public History of Invention
Singer Patent: https://patentimages.storage.googleapis.com/00/a9/a5/8bf8c0781483e7/US8294.pdf

October 17   Contextualizing the Sewing Machine Using Scholarship
<u>Read:</u> Mona Domosh, "The 'Great Civilizer' and Equalizer: Gender, Race and Civilization in Singer Advertising"
Sarah A. Gordon, "Commodfying 'Domestic Virtues'" Business and Home Sewing" http://www.gutenberg-e.org/gordon/chap4.html

October 22   Contextualizing the Sewing Machine Using Scholarship
<u>Read:</u> Mona Domosh, "The 'Great Civilizer' and Equalizer: Gender, Race and Civilization in Singer Advertising"
Sarah A. Gordon, "Commodfying 'Domestic Virtues'" Business and Home Sewing" http://www.gutenberg-e.org/gordon/chap4.html

October 24   Writing Workshop for Unit 2

October 29   Writing Assignment: Unit 2 Essay due by 5:00 p.m.

Unit 3: Patents as Historical Evidence

Developing Your Own Case Study

October 29   Introduction to the Patent Project
Read: Sherwood, "The Origins and Development of the American Patent System"

October 31   Library Workshop: Locating Primary Sources
                Meet in Hodges Reading Room (3rd Floor Main, Jackson Library)

November 5   What do internet resources show about your patent?
Writing Assignment: report on survey of internet resources

November 7   Analyzing Primary Sources
Writing Assignment: Paragraph primary source close reading analysis

November 14   Locating Scholarly Sources
Writing Assignment: report on scholarly sources

November 19   Contextualizing your patent
Writing Assignment: 1-page using a scholarly article to contextualize your patent

November 21   THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

November 26   Connecting to big questions
Writing Assignment: connect your patent to one of the big questions we studied in Unit 1

November 28   Putting it all together—presentation of research findings
                Unit 3 Case Study due