

## **L & S 160E- Technology, New Media and Contemporary Experience Paper Assignment #1**

**Description:** Throughout the first part of the semester we have been familiarizing ourselves with the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, particularly his thoughts on technology and its relationship to our contemporary experience as he formulated it in his 1954 essay "The Question Concerning Technology". Here Heidegger claims that the essence of technology reveals itself in the action of Enframing, which for Heidegger describes the process whereby humans are "challenged-forth" to reveal the real as standing reserve. Thus, for Heidegger, the essence of technology is nothing inherently technological, but rather it is the relationship it sets out between humans and the world around them. For Heidegger, this essence represents the supreme danger for humans insofar as it threatens to limit the extent to which we, as humans, are brought out at our best as revealers and unconcealers of the worlds around us. In class we have interpreted the essay to claim that Heidegger is laying out two forms of technology: 1) modern technology which concerns itself with optimization and efficiency (the subject's mastery of his object oriented world) and 2) post-modern technology which reveals the world and humans as standing reserve. 20th Century ("modern") technologies such as the assembly line and the highway system emphasize efficiency, control, and optimization. In contrast, "post-modern" technologies such as the internet, Google, smartphones, and Facebook are characterized by flexibility and their ability to be reconfigured, as exemplified by genomics, stem cells, robotics, and nanotechnology.

**Topic:** Your assignment for this paper is to select any specific technology (excluding those discussed in the second half of the class) and demonstrate how it either **fulfills or disrupts** Heidegger's description of the essence of technology (either modern or post-modern). Your work should demonstrate an understanding of both Heidegger's thought and the technology you are analyzing, and to this end it will be essential to include quotes from both the essays we have looked at in class as well as some secondary material you find on your own (relating to your chosen technology). You are not expected to understand and describe the technical details of your technology, but rather to demonstrate how it was/is used.

**Details:**

Length: 5 pages double spaced, approximately 1200 words

Due: March 31<sup>st</sup> at the start of class (no late papers accepted)

Weight: 30% of your final grade

## Tips for writing a good paper:

1. Start early.
2. Come see one of us in office hours to discuss your ideas.
3. Recall that you are constructing an argument that you are attempting to convince your reader of, so be sure to state this claim clearly at some point. To this end, avoid lengthy descriptions of things except insofar as they serve as evidence of your claim. The internet is full of descriptions of how things work and these don't need to be replicated in your paper. What's unique is your particular point, and this is what your paper should focus on.
4. Avoid relying too much on your own experience to prove your point; your experience may be yours alone. Instead find examples/sources that demonstrate how your technology is used and the relationship it sets up between humans and the world. Newspapers, periodicals, television commercials, trade publications, advertisements, and books are all viable sources to illustrate your claims. Some time on the library databases using your technology as a search term can be invaluable, but you will likely need to comb through the results. Try multiple databases to get a variety of things.
5. Make sure that your paper addresses the topic on the other side of this sheet! All too often people ignore the prompt or don't read it carefully enough and turn in a fine essay that fails to answer question at hand.
6. Read your paper out-loud to yourself; this will help you catch grammar errors and poor wording. Then have someone else read it as well. If they're not convinced of your point or don't understand what you're saying, chances are it isn't clear.
7. **DON'T TAKE OTHER PEOPLE'S IDEAS OR WORDS.** This is called plagiarism and is grounds for disciplinary action by the University. Instead, quote your sources and get credit for writing a genuine research paper that is in conversation with the larger body of thought about your topic.