

Please note that the course involves a field trip in Metz on *either* June 6 or 27 (your choice)

Georgia Tech-Europe, European Campus of the Georgia Institute of Technology
HTS 2084 RMZ - Technology and Society
Summer 2025
Course Syllabus

Instructor

Dr. Timothy Stoneman
School of History and Sociology
Office 226, GTL Building

Time and Place

9:30-10:45am, **Red Room**
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Course Attributes

HTS 2084 fulfills the social science and ethics requirements at Georgia Tech

An Introduction to Myself

I am the product of three influences in my background: the northeast, the ACC, and France. I grew up in the greater New York area, but spent a high school year studying abroad (like you) in France. I attended Duke and double majored in history (no surprise!) and comparative literature (French/Russian). I tried careers in pre-law and retail banking before settling on high-school teaching in the Atlanta area. I completed my PhD at Georgia Tech in 2006 in the history and sociology of science and technology (HSOC) and started teaching at GTL in summer of 2005 ! After a “postdoc” at MIT for two years, I ended up back in the ACC as a VAP at Clemson University and then returned to GTL in France in 2011, this time for good. I have been at GT-E ever since (along with my family!).

Course Description

Technologies have formed the basis of material culture and influenced the course of social change throughout human history. Yet the shape of technologies’ influence on society has varied significantly with time and place in a way that often goes unnoticed by engineering students. The present course combines the history of technology with world history. While the word “innovation” is modern, creative technical activity, along with changing social practices, is as old as humankind. Through a series of historical case studies – prehistoric fire, medieval cathedrals, artisanal French bread, railways, and smart phones – we will see how engineering (broadly defined) evolved over major eras of the past. In the process, we address three basic questions concerning technology and society. First, what exactly is technological change – how does it occur and how does it differ from the way we talk about the topic? Second, what are the social roots, or origins, of technological change, or “innovation” – what role do various social groups and institutions, as well as various ideas, play in encouraging or inhibiting such change? And, third, what are the social consequences (and costs) of technological change and who benefits from its gains? Put differently, how should we discuss “progress”? We cannot answer any of these questions in the abstract. Instead, we must address them in specific historical settings – hence, our case studies.

Course Objectives

Students will accomplish the following objectives:

- Students will deepen their understanding of technological change, including the process of innovation.
- Students will develop a critical perspective on changes in the relationship between technology, culture and society over major periods of human history.
- Students will demonstrate proficiency in the process of articulating and organizing rhetorical arguments in written, oral, visual, and nonverbal modes, using concrete support and conventional language.*

(* Language is taken directly from the General Education Mission Statement of Georgia Tech’s Core Curriculum, available on the Registrar website.)

Core IMPACTS

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

Ethics Requirement

In order to fulfill the ethics requirement at Georgia Tech, HTS 2084 will align course-level objectives, content, and assessments with the following criteria of student success:

- An ability to recognize ethical and professional responsibilities in real-world contexts.
- An ability to assess actions or decisions based on established ethical principles and theories, or through deliberative processes.
- An ability to consider the implications of actions, both broadly (e.g. global, economic, environmental, or societal) and for individuals.

Field trips

We will take a single required full-day field trip to class-related historic sites in Metz on *Friday, January 31*, including Metz cathedral, as well as a trip to Metz's two train stations on *Wednesday morning February 26*. You will receive class time credits for the field trips (two classes). We will also visit Institut Lafayette during class time on Tuesday, March 25.

Grading

For details on grading, see the "Grading policy" document on Canvas under Files/Course documents.

Honor Policy

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Any student suspected or cheating or plagiarizing on an assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.*

(* Language is taken directly from the GT Syllabus Essentials, 2023-2024.)

Students are expected to abide by the Georgia Tech honor code. All infractions will be handled through the Office of the Dean of Students and treated with the utmost seriousness.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at 404.894.2563 or their website, as soon as possible, to discuss your needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Then, make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your learning needs.*

(* Language is taken directly from the GT Syllabus Essentials, 2023-2024.)

Statement on Inclusion

The Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts supports the Georgia Institute of Technology's commitment to creating a campus free of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status. We further affirm the importance of cultivating an intellectual climate that allows us to better understand the similarities and differences of those who constitute the Georgia Tech community, as well as the necessity of working against inequalities that may also manifest here as they do in the broader society. (Statement taken from Ivan Allen College Dean's Office.)

Miscellaneous

Class calendar – The class will use Canvas Modules to regulate the flow of class, including all activities and deadlines. Please also read the Canvas Announcement for important dates on the course calendar, including field trips, no classes, and special lunch (optional).

Electronics - Please do not use electronic devices in class, including laptops and cell phones, except for explicit in-class assignments. Use of electronics detracts from discussion and is a distraction to the people around you.

Food and drink - Food and drink are not allowed in the classroom (per GT-E policy), except on special class occasions (such as baguette and cheese tasting).

Course Materials

There are no required textbooks (and associated costs). All reading material will be provided through Canvas. The course will utilize Canvas as its class website and management tool. You should see the course website for all assigned texts.

Course Units

- Introduction
- Case studies
 - Paleolithic fire
 - Gothic cathedrals
 - Artisanal French bread
 - Railway systems
 - Smartphones
- Research presentations
- Debate