BROCK UNIVERSITY
Political Science 5P93: Political Theory Core

Technology and Politics
Professor Bradshaw
Plaza 339 **Tuesdays: 7-10 PL 411**
lbradshaw@brocku.ca
Office Hours: Tues: 6-7 Thurs 12-2
Or by appointment

George Grant was a towering figure in Canadian intellectual circles during the 1960s and 1970s. Perhaps most popularly known for his reflections upon a changing Canada (Lament for a Nation), Grant in fact devoted much more time and thought to considerations on technology. As Grant was preparing to write his collection of reflections on technology (Technology and Empire), he identified a fundamental conundrum that motivated his inquiry: "1) technical civilization in its origins and in its movement to fulfillment carries the complication that men will and should come to be the masters of the earth, and 2) in the profoundest expression of the origins of Western civilization – that is, in the writings of the greatest philosophers and theologians – the assertion is present that men are measured and defined by 'good' which we do not make." (The Collected Works of George Grant: Volume 4 1970-1988, ed. Arthur Davis and Henry Roper, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2009: excerpt from 'Techniques and Good', p. 123) .

It is from George Grant that I take the concerns that motivate this course. Grant's view is that traditionally, philosophy is a kind of knowing that grows from the wonder at that which *is*; technology, as the combination of *logos* and *techne*, is a kind of knowing that comes from what we *make.* We want in this course to explore these differing kinds of knowing. Is Grant right to claim that they are radically different? Does living inside science and technology fundamentally alter the way in which we live, and the ways in which we organize ourselves politically? Grant also said something that has always disturbed me: that we can know only something that we *love.* Is this true? If so, can we love technology?

This course aims to explore the extent to which modernity is shaped by technology. We are interested in the ways in which technology may have modified the way we think, and the manner in which we participate in democratic societies. We begin with Martin Heidegger's reflections on technology. We also read parts of Grant's Technology and Empire and excerpts from two collections of essays by contemporary political theorists wrestling with the questions posed by technology, philosophy, modernity and globalization. Then we read Jacques Ellul's classic The Technological Society. Then we read a book by Frances Fukuyama (author of the infamous "end of history" thesis) on biotechnology. Lastly, we read Matthew Crawford's Shop Class as Soul Craft: An Inquiry Into the Value of Work. Crawford's concerns are less that technology has stunted our ability to *think* than it has distorted our ability to *make.* Crawford holds a PhD in political theory from the University of Chicago, and he currently owns and runs a motorcycle repair shop in Virginia.

Texts:

1. Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings (Harper Collins) 978-0-06-162701
2. Jacques Ellul, the Technological Society (Vintage, 978-0-394-70390-9; or 978-0-394-70390-1)
3. George Grant, Technology and Empire (Anansi 0-88784-514-2)
4. David Tabachnick and Toivo Koivukoski, eds, Globalization, Technology and Philosophy (SUNY, 10:0-7914-60060-6; 13:978-0-7914-6060-3)
5. Frances Fukuyama, Our Posthuman Future: The Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution (Farrar, Straus and Giroux 0-312-42171-0)
6. Matthew Crawford, Shop Class as Soul Craft: An Inquiry Into the Value of Work (Penguin 9780143117469)
7. Arthur Melzer et. al. ed. Technology in the Western Political Tradition (Cornell 080148006X)

Course Organization:

This is a graduate student seminar, so students are expected to carry the discussion. Students will be assigned to specific weeks to lead the discussion.

Students will write one book review chosen among Ellul, Fukuyama and Crawford. Reviews are due the weeks that chosen books are assigned. Reviews should be between 900 and 1200 words (check out the **Review of Politics** or the **Literary Review of Canada** for a model)

Essays are due Monday, December 16. Papers should be approximately 25 pages.

Grading Scheme:

1. One class presentation:	**20%**
2. Ongoing seminar participation:	**20%**
3. Book review	**10%**
4. Final paper	**50%**

Reading Schedule:

Sept. 11

Introduction

Sept. 18: Heidegger (Bernadette Sockey)

Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology", and "What is Metaphysics?" both in Heidegger: Basic Writings

Sept. 25: Heidegger (Grant Yocom)

Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art" and "Modern Science, Metaphysics and Mathematics", both in Heidegger, Basic Writings

Oct. 2 : Responses to Heidegger (Jay Conte)

1. David Tabachnick, "Heidegger's Essentialist Responses to the Challenges of Technology", Canadian Journal of Political Science 40:2 June, 2007

2. Reiner Schurmann, "Technicity, Topology, Tragedy: Heidegger on 'That Which Saves' in the Global Reach", (in Melzer, Weinberger and Zinman, eds, Technology in the Western Political Tradition)

3. Catherine Zuckert, "Heidegger's Philosophy and Politics", Political Theory: 18:1 pp. 15-79

Oct. 9: Ancients and Moderns (Hugo Chesshire)

1. James H. Nicols, jr. "Technology in Classical Thought"

2. Stanley L. Jaki, "Medieval Christianity: Its Inventiveness in Technology"

3. Stanley Rosen, "Techne and the Origins of Modernity"

*(all in Melzer, Weinberger and Zinman, eds Technology in the Western Political Tradition)

Oct. 16: Destiny of Modern Technology I

1.Arthur Melzer, "The Problem With the Problem of Technology"

2.Gilbert Germain, "The Human Condition in the Age of Technology"

3.Charlotte Thomas, "Globalization, Technology and the Authority of Philosophy"

*(all in Tabachnick and Koivukoski, Globalization, Technology and Philosophy)

Oct. 23: Destiny of Modern Technology II (Melissa Rogue)

1. William Galston, "Liberal Democracy and the problem of Technology"

2. Jerry Weinberger, "Technology and the Problem of Liberal Democracy"

3. Gianni Vattimo, "Postmodernity, Technology, Ontology"

* all in Melzer, Weinberger and Zinman, eds, Technology in the Western Political Tradition

Oct. 30: George Grant (Cameron Davidson)

1. Grant, "In Defense of North America"

2. Grant, "The University Curriculum"

3. Grant, "A Platitude"

*all in George Grant, Technology and Empire

Nov. 6 : **Jacques Ellul**: The Technological Society **(Bernadette Sockey/Leah Bradshaw)**

Nov. 13: Frances Fukuyama, Our Posthuman Future: The Consequences of the Biotechnical Revolution **(Kim Wade)**

Nov. 20 : **Matthew Crawford**, Shop Class as Soul Craft: An Inquiry Into the Value of Work (**Jeremy Warkentin)**

Nov. 27: discussion of essay topics