

ASSIGNMENT 1: DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY REFLECTION ESSAY

Purpose: This assignment aims to evaluate the role of technology in your own life or in the lives of people you interact with. It will help you reflect upon your relationship with technology before you approach the next step in this course where you will analyze technology in relation to society and cultures.

Deliverables: 3-4 page paper.

Description: In this 3-4 page paper, you will write about a technology that has affected your life. You may write about "writing technology" or "household technologies," "media technologies," "computer technologies," or "gaming technologies." How have recent developments in digital technology changed, for better or for worse, how you communicate, how you learn and access information, and/or how you interact with others? Start by identifying one particular technology that you use or have used, describe how it has affected your communication processes or practices, and then reflect on that effect. You may engage ideas from secondary sources — be sure to identify them! — but the bulk of the essay should be based on your own personal experience.

You have three options for this paper; choose the ONE option you are most interested in. You are welcome to follow an entirely different lead.

Option 1: Visit and write about a place where a certain technology is used, sold, traded, demonstrated, etc. For example, you might find a Halo 2 tournament on campus or in your dorm and observe people playing the game on a network. Or, you might go to a wireless store and analyze the products on display. You might go to a wireless café and observe computer users. Or other such locations.

Questions you might think about to get you started include:

- o What does the environment itself look like? How is the physical space set up? What is on the walls? The floors? The doors?
- o How do people interact in the environment? Do they talk to each other? Do they use headsets to communicate with people in the same room? Do they ignore one another? Do they seem friendly? Confrontational?
- o How do people interact with the technologies available in this environment? What machines do they use? How? Why?
- o What sorts of stereotypes are held in the US culture generally about this place or use of technology?

Option 2: Reflect upon and write about a technology you have used, created, relied upon, etc.

Questions you might think about to get you started include:

- o When did you first use the technology?
- o Why did you use the technology? Did you have to use it, or did you choose to use it?
- o What were the implications of this technology (i.e. in your family, at work)? How did this technology change – or not – your life?

- o What sorts of stereotypes are held in US culture generally about this technology?

Option 3: Do a family technology history. Interview a relative – preferably one either much older or much younger than you – and ask them about their experiences with a specific type or use of technology (i.e. for communication, for work, for doing research, etc.).

Questions you might think about to get you started include:

- o What was the context of the use of the technology? Where was it used? Why? How? How often?
- o How did the cultural (social, economic, religious) setting of the time and/or place affect the use of the technology?
- o How was the technology taught or learned?
- o What effects did the technology have on this person's life? How did this technology change – or not – this person's life?
- o What sorts of stereotypes are held in US culture generally about this technology?

Some leads: Regardless of which option you choose, you *must* address the implications and effects of this technology on your life and the implications and effects of this technology on society generally. As you plan such an essay, you can also jot down (by freewriting, for example) your thoughts about your life with this technology. Here are some questions to help you discover what you have to say. In your final draft, you'll need to make sure that you don't simply answer each question in succession without providing a thread or controlling narrative.

1. *Memory:* What childhood experiences with technological devices or artifacts do you remember? What do you recall about your earliest use of technologies? Were they positive or negative experiences? What stories do your parents tell about your interactions with technology? What were the popular gadgets in your household when you were young? Did you have access to technologies that you wanted to use? Who made sure that everything worked? How often did the technologies fail?
2. *Literacy:* Who is the most "technologically literate" person you know? What makes his or her relationship with technology unique? What behaviors or characteristics does he or she exhibit? What have you learned about your own uses of this technology from him or her?
3. *Social Consequences:* Are there social consequences for your lifestyle that hinge on your technological literacy? What are they? How would your relationships with others be affected if you suddenly had no access to the technology?
4. *The Future:* What do you think it will require to be technologically literate ten years from now? What positive or negative trends in technological development do you see unfolding? How do you think they will affect you?
5. *Learning:* How do you learn new technologies? Among your friends, are you considered an "early adopter," a "late adopter," or somewhere between?

6. What technologies do you carry with you? Which ones do you have where you do most of your writing? What new technologies do you want to own? How will you use them?

EVALUATION:

An essay of the Grade A standard will have the following features:

- Introduction and Thesis: First paragraph is catchy. Thesis is evident and point to be argued well stated.
- Accuracy of Facts: All facts presented in the essay are accurate and relate back to the thesis.
- Organization: The essay is very well organized. Five paragraphs evident. One idea or scene follows another in a logical sequence with clear transitions.
- Focus on Assigned Topic: The entire essay is related to the assigned topic and allows the reader to understand much more about the topic.
- Mechanics: The essay has few, if any, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, or usage errors.