

PECO 5502W/PSCI 5502W/SOCI 5505 (Winter Term 2020)
The Future of Work in Bits and Bytes: Subjects, Time, and Surveillance

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Time: Thursdays, 17:35-20:25
Place: 1524 Dunton Tower
Office Hours: TBD

Course Description and Objectives:

“The old world is dying, and the new world is struggling to be born: now is the time of monsters”

-Antonio Gramsci

Gramsci’s quote could appear to loom large over us. The ecological world is certainly in a period of significant rupture and discontinuity, and what habitat that will remain fit for human life is, sadly, an open question. The geopolitical order is undergoing a significant transition as new economic center of power put former colonial powers increasingly on the periphery. It is easy to feel there are few solid pieces of ground left from which to get our bearings.

This feeling is particularly acute when we turn our attention to the social codes and economic relations that had governed the patterns, expectations and identities of working lives of our parents and grandparents. The old economy and its attendant worldviews are in the last throes of disintegration.

We are now in a game of coining placeholders to name and define the social and economic relations that are now coming into shape: the gig economy, platform capitalism, the access economy, the fourth industrial revolution, are but a few. Debates are now emerging on whether this is the end of capitalism (you know for real this time...), or perhaps merely capitalism unleashed, at last realized in its truest form least encumbered by previous social and political limitations. We ask these questions because as scholars, activists and individuals, we want to know what is coming. Any stab at an answer though demands that we put the old and new into conversation. After-all, it is by historical engagement that we may better appreciate what is sui generis to the social and economic relations of our present state, and what in fact are continuations, albeit modified, of previous social forms.

In this seminar, students will engage with three flashpoints: old and current debates on automation, work-time in different periods of production, and the historical and present relationship among capitalism, surveillance, and data production. Engaging with these flashpoints should help us begin to answer some of these questions and gain insight into emerging forces of change and opportunities of where new social, economic and political practices are at their weakest. Through these engagements, the course will offer students greater insight into the application of sociological theory to contemporary issues, as well as a firmer grasp of the future political economy of work.

Required Texts:

Richard Sennett, *Corrosion of Character*, (New York-London: W.W. Norton 1999)

Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: Frontiers: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, (Great Britain, profile books, 2019)

(In the aim of economic inclusiveness, this course is designed to involve minimal needs to purchase books. All readings beyond these primary texts are either online or will be provided as photocopies.)

Grade Distribution

The breakdown of grading is as follows:

Critical Reviews	30% of your total mark (20 marks per essay)
Final Paper	50% of your total mark (10 marks on proposal opt.)
Participation	<u>20% of your total mark (20 marks)</u>

Explanatory Notes on Assignments

Critical Reviews

You will be asked to write one critical review paper of 2500 words. I would like you to do something rather straightforward. I want you to plan an engagement with different elements of the task-based economy and to then critically appraise this experience against Richard Sennett's text "The Corrosion of Character." What does the experience tell you about Sennett's insights on the shift in work to flexible patterns, in what ways does the task work presume or configure new economic subjects? How do these subjects compare against Sennett's analysis? What is the new configuration of work-time in the task-based economy? Possible task-based engagements include but are not limited to, hiring an Uber, task-rabbit, either completing or requesting a request on the freelance website, Fiverr, www.fiverr.com, or engaging as a mechanical Turk on Amazon's platform.

The options are relatively open but make sure you select a task that challenges themes of work-time, surveillance, precarity, and the structure of work. The task you select should not make you feel physically unsafe (i.e. Uber), but it may make you socially uncomfortable and that uncomfortableness is grounds for exploration.

Final Paper

The final paper is worth 50% of your grade. It is a research paper. You may elect to convert 10% of the total mark of the paper into a research paper proposal, which I will mark and

provide feedback and return at our last class. I would like you to take on any theme from the course, but to do so through either of these two potential analytical approaches. 1). A historical comparison, where you examine some element of current political economy of work and compare it against a historical case to explore continuities and divergences. 2). An extrapolation of the current social practices into a future state. In short, try to provide a sketch on how the future might look like if certain social and economic practices were to intensify, become more global across the social field, or accelerate. In this case, you will be graded on your ability to integrate social theory and insights from this course to support your analysis.

Participation

Graduate seminars depend heavily on attending class regularly and engaging with your fellow colleagues on readings, and sharing ideas. I want to encourage this approach for this class. However, I also recognize that there are all kinds of dynamics that make some more comfortable to share ideas than others, and for that matter a high quantity of interventions should not be valued more high quality thoughts and insights shared that come less frequently. To this end, I would like to try and evaluate participation in two ways:

1). 12% of your participation will come from your role in leading a weekly discussion. This involves you coming to class a brief 10-minute presentation on the readings with a few questions you would like to pose to the class for discussion.

The remaining 8% of your attendance will be evaluated on your engagement in the classroom. To be clear, I am trying to evaluate these both on your insight into the readings, but also your engagement with others in the class. In particular, do you ask your colleagues questions with intent for them to clarify and expand their thinking, support their insights, and engage one another respectfully when you disagree. When I was a graduate student, there was a tendency to try prove to the professor that you have a better answer than your colleagues and this makes for a rather abysmal game of self-comparison.

However, the reason we come together in this seminar every week should ultimately be to work together to try to unpack some of the rather seismic social and economic shifts that are taking place. We will get further on these matters if we genuinely try to support one another's inquiries than if we simply expend time trying to prove to one another that we deserve to be here.

While I will do my utmost to be observant of this and provide fair marks according to these criteria, I recognize that much of this isn't just my perception of how you work together but you perceive we work together over the coming weeks. **For this reason, I will use a mixed method approach of my own evaluation of your participation and blind assessments from your peers to come up with the final mark of the 8%.** We can discuss how this will operate more in our first class.

Also, in terms of regular attendance, I am under no illusion that our evening course is the

only thing going in your life, and life happens: people get dumped, partners get sick, and sometimes, especially in our long winters, people find themselves laid low by depression and anxiety. All these things can take you away from our weekly meetings.

So, I will take attendance, but I will not penalize you for missing class. If you are away for two consecutive seminars without providing notification, you can expect me to follow-up.

Policy for Late Assignments:

I provide deadlines on assignments because I think we don't have them we tend to put things off and put things off and then the easy relaxed, no worries approach to receiving your work because a source of considerable stress and anxiety. I do provide extensions, because, as mentioned, I recognize things happen; however, you need to get in touch with me and ask for an extension and to do so before the paper is actually due. If you do not do this and provide no explanation, I will deduct 3% per a day.

Tentative Lecture Outline and Reading List

Week of January 6th: Guiding Threads and Introduction

Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights on his mission to the United States of America, July 2018, pp. 1-20

Kristy Milland, "From Bottom to Top: How Amazon Mechanical Turk disrupts employment as a whole" Brookfield Institute, March 4th 2019,
<https://brookfieldinstitute.ca/commentary/from-bottom-to-top-how-amazon-mechanical-turk-disrupts-employment-as-a-whole/>

The Future of work Five Game Changers, Policy Horizons, June 2019. Government of Canada publications, <https://horizons.gc.ca/en/2019/06/20/the-future-of-work-five-game-changers/>

Optional: Aaron Henry, 2017, "A Generation of Scrappers" Montreal Review, January 2017, <http://www.themontrealreview.com/2009/A-Generation-of-Srappers.php>

Week of January 13th: Historical Origins of Automation and Crisis

Marx, Karl, Grundrisse, 1973 ed. Marin Nicolaus, 690-711

Adam Smith, Wealth of Nations, selections.

Ricardo, David, Principles, Third Edition, "On Machinery"

Week January 20th: Vanguard Responses to Post-Fordist Automation

Tessa-Morris Suzuki, "Robots and Capitalism" New Left Review, 1984, 1/147: 109-121

Donna Haraway, “The Cyborg Manifesto” in *Simians, Cyborgs, Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free, 1991)

Week January 27th: Reframing the Problem of Automation and Work

Hughes, Carl, Alan Southern, 2019, “The world of work and the crisis of capitalism: Marx and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Journal of Classical Sociology” in *Journal of Classical Sociology*, vol. 19, issue 1, pp. 59-71

Wolfgang Streeck, “How Will Capitalism End,” *New Left Review*, 2014, pp. 35-64

Robinson, William, Yousef Baker, 2019, Savage inequalities: Capitalist Crisis and Surplus Humanity, in *International Critical Thought*, vol. 9 issue 3 pp. 376-393

The Future of work Five Game Changers, Policy Horizons, June 2019. Government of Canada publications, <https://horizons.gc.ca/en/2019/06/20/the-future-of-work-five-game-changers/>

Week February 3rd: Work-Time in Industrial Capitalism

E.P. Thompson, 1967, Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism, in *Past and Present*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 56-97

Paul Glennie, Nigel Thrift, 1996, “Reworking E.P Thompson’s Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism, in *Time and Society* volume 5, issue 3: pp. 275-299

Week February 10th: New Time Regimes and their Subjects

Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character*, parts 1-4

Week February 17th: No Classes

Week February 24th: New Time Regimes and Their Subjects continued.

Richard Sennett, Corrosion of Character, parts 5-8

Optional: Anne Peterson, “How Millennials Became the Burnout Generation” in *Buzz Feed* January 5th 2019, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/annehelenpetersen/millennials-burnout-generation-debt-work>

Week March 2nd: From Resumes to Ratings

For this week, please the episode “Nose Dive,” Season 3, episode 1, before attending class. We will revisit the episode during class but our re-examination in class will be guided by questions and insights you bring to class from your initial viewing.

Critical Review Due at the Start of Class

Week March 9th: Resumes to Ratings, Proto-forms of digital states?

Rachel Botsman, “Big Data Meets Big Brother as China Moves to Rate its Citizens” in Wired.

Genia Kostka, 2019, “China’s social credit systems and public opinion: explaining high levels of approval in New Media and Society, vol. 21 issue 7, pp. 1565-1593

Leah Scolere, Urszula Pruchniew, Brooke Erin Duffy, 2018, Constructing Platform Specific-Self Brand: The Labor of Social Media Promotion

Week March 16: Data, Ratings and the Historical Modification of Surveillance?

Jeremy Bentham, “The Panopticon or Inspection House” in The Panopticon Writings ed. Miran Bozovic. London: Verso, 1995) p. 29-95

Sir William Petty, “Writings on The Wall of London” in *A General Police System: Political Economy and Enlightenment*, ed. George Rigakos, John L McMullan, Gulden Ozcan, (Red Quill Books: Ottawa, 2009) pp. 33-51

Rigakos, George, Richard Hadden, 2001, “Crime, Capitalism and the Risk Society: Towards the Same Olde Modernity” in *Theoretical Criminology*, vol. 5 (1) pp. 61-84

Week March 23rd: Data, Ratings and the Historical Modification of Surveillance?

Shoshana Zuboff, 2019, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for the Future at the Frontier of Power –read Part I*

**Research paper proposals due

Week March 30th:

Shoshana Zuboff, 2019, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for the Future at the Frontier of Power, read, Part II, and “Utopia of Certainty in Part III*

April 25th: Final Paper’s Due

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.

carleton.ca/pmc

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and is survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: students.carleton.ca/course-outline

Plagiarism

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview

with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They may include a mark of zero for the plagiarized work or a final grade of "F" for the course.

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).

Grading

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Final standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points is:

Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale	Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale
90-100	A+	12	67-69	C+	6
85-89	A	11	63-66	C	5
80-84	A-	10	60-62	C-	4
77-79	B+	9	57-59	D+	3
73-76	B	8	53-56	D	2
70-72	B-	7	50-52	D-	1

Approval of final grades

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by an instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Carleton E-mail Accounts

All email communication to students from the Institute of Political Economy will be via official Carleton university e-mail accounts and/or cuLearn. As important course and University information is distributed this way, it is the student's responsibility to monitor their Carleton and cuLearn accounts.

Official Course Outline

The course outline posted to the Political Economy website is the official course outline.