

# TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE IN PITTSBURGH



## Freshman Seminar

## FP0003, Fall 2012, University of Pittsburgh

Prof. Annette Vee; UTA: KP Plummer

Meeting time: MW 11-12:15

Meeting place: 321 Thackeray Hall

Course website: [http://www.annettevee.com/2012fall\\_techandculture](http://www.annettevee.com/2012fall_techandculture)

Prof. Vee's contact information:

Office: 628 C Cathedral of Learning

Email: [adv17@pitt.edu](mailto:adv17@pitt.edu)

Office Hours: Mondays, 2-4pm and gladly by appointment

UTA: KP Plummer: [KMP104@pitt.edu](mailto:KMP104@pitt.edu)

## Course Description

In this course, we will explore texts and ideas and assignments loosely based on *technology and culture*. We will ask (and perhaps answer): How do technology and culture intersect and affect each other? How is technology changing the ways we communicate? Because this course is designed also to transition to help you transition to your new life at Pitt, we'll be exploring some local cultures of technologies in Pittsburgh through field trips and local histories.

The theme of technology and culture will also inform the work you will do in this class. Beyond the traditional essays you may be accustomed to, you will write blog posts, create audio essays, produce short videos, and perform visual presentations. Peer review workshops, blog posts, and presentations will help to make you more comfortable composing and sharing your work with the class.

## Course Requirements

This is a four-credit course, so you should expect a fairly heavy workload. Additionally, we only meet twice per week, so you will often have multiple things due at once. Since this course includes the "Introduction to Arts and Sciences" curriculum, we'll be talking some about how to juggle the workload. To succeed in this course, you will need to stay on top of assignments, participate actively in online and in-class discussions, and respect your peers in conversation and reviews of their work. Specifically, you will need to:

- complete all course readings;

- arrive on time and prepared for class meetings and conferences;
- participate in discussions online and in-class;
- draft, revise and submit all course projects;
- review your peers' work regularly and have your own work reviewed;
- submit all drafts, projects and work **on time** (day/hour that it is due; no credit is given for late drafts; late papers will normally be docked one letter grade per day, unless you get my approval for an extension before the due date).

If, at any time, you have questions or concerns about your ability to fulfill the expectations for this course, please contact Prof. Vee or KP. We aim to help you succeed in the course, and together we can resolve any issue that may come up.

## Course Readings

Readings for each week are listed on the course calendar (see below) by the day they are due to be read. You are required to purchase one text for this course; all other readings will be available online through CourseWeb unless otherwise noted. Throughout the semester, you will also be reading your peers' work and your own. You should be interacting with all of these texts as you read them, so you may print them out to highlight and annotate them, take notes in a digital or physical notebook, or digitally annotate the texts using a program like Adobe Acrobat. We will regularly discuss your reading and writing strategies in class and in one-on-one conferences.

Required Book: Franklin Toker, *Pittsburgh: A New Portrait* (Freshman Reader, at University Book Store)

## Grading

Participation in class	10%
IAS participation	10%
Midterm blog portfolio	10%
Final blog portfolio	10%
Midterm portfolio	30%
Final portfolio	30%

However well you've done in high school, bear in mind that this course will set higher standards for writing than you've probably experienced before. It's not uncommon for papers that might have earned an "A" in high school to be considered no better than a "C" in college. Here's how the University of Pittsburgh defines each grade level:

- A = superior attainment
- B = meritorious attainment
- C = adequate attainment
- D = minimal attainment
- F = failure

Note that "meritorious" means commendable or praiseworthy: a "B," in other words, reflects a well-written paper, not an average result.

**Late work** will be docked one letter grade per day it is late, unless prior arrangements are made with me for extensions, etc. I offer extensions only in extreme circumstances.

## Essays

You will write 4 essays for this course, ranging from 500 words at the first draft to 1500 words at the final draft. Each essay will be revised at least two times, after peer review and after comments from Prof. Vee. Revising for this course does not mean editing. In other words, you will need to substantially rethink, rearrange, and revise your work. Do not be alarmed if this is new to you. Very very few students enter Pitt knowing how to revise their writing at the college level, and this course is designed to help you learn how. Your writing will not be graded until the midterm and final portfolios.

## Technology Log

At the beginning of the course, I will ask you to write a log of all of the technology you use in one day. You will turn in your raw log, accompanied with a cover letter reflecting on your use of technology for the day.

## Tech Image

This assignment asks you to choose one current issue that is connected to technology and culture. Some examples of this are: privacy controls on Facebook; net neutrality; the One Laptop per Child project; prosecution of college students for illegal music downloads; educational institutions' failure to keep pace with the technological savvy of your generation, etc. After some research, you should learn enough about the issue to have a well-informed opinion on it. Then you will create a visual argument that expresses your opinion of the issue and the larger questions it raises. A reflection on your composition process will be included in this assignment.

## Local Technology Website

In a series of steps that we'll do in class and outside of class, you will construct a website on your free webspace available through Pitt. For the first weeks, you will just try out some designs and learn how to write some html and upload images to the web. The final version of your website will be focused on a local technology topic of your choice—perhaps a building in town, a technological practice in Pittsburgh's history, an organization, an issue. You'll have to do both primary and secondary research for this assignment. Your final website should be more than just a Wikipedia page on the issue/place/history. It should tell a compelling story about the topic that makes a compelling argument.

## Participation

**In-class:** Participation in the class consists of short writings in class and on the course blog, peer review, discussion, and your general contribution to the work we do together. Participation grades are by their nature subjective, which does not mean they are arbitrary.

Someone with an excellent participation grade:

- will have attended class and appeared engaged without fail;
- will have offered timely, insightful comments to his peers;
- will have always brought her readings or other materials to class;
- will have contributed regularly and thoughtfully to class discussions both online and offline.
- will have attended at least ONE of the tech field trips with Prof. Vee

Some people are more likely to speak up than others and some are more comfortable sharing ideas after they have had more time to process them; for these reasons, I offer both online (that is, written and not time-sensitive) and offline (that is, vocal and real-time) venues in which to participate in the class. It's normal to be more comfortable in one space than another, but I strongly believe that you will need to be proficient in sharing your ideas in real-time, asynchronous, written and face-to-face contexts to be a successful teacher, entrepreneur,

employee, or anything else you may want to be in the future. Therefore, I will consider your participation across all of these venues and may call on you both in class and online to give you an opportunity to share your ideas. Please see me if you have questions about how to participate more actively in any area of the class.

## Field trips

One of the goals of this course is to introduce you to the wonderful city of Pittsburgh, where you will live for at least the next 4 years. To this end, I have scheduled several field trips outside of class that are connected to the theme of our class. We will go to Hack Pittsburgh in Uptown Pittsburgh, to the Rivers of Steel historical museum in Homestead, and the Pittsburgh Maker Faire at the Children's Museum. All or most of the costs of these field trips will be covered by Freshman Programs. You are required to attend at least ONE of these field trips (counted in your participation grade), and you are encouraged to attend more. Additionally, you will post one entry and one response on the blog about each event (due several days afterward).

## IAS activities

KP is arranging several field trips to introduce you to the great sights and museums in Pittsburgh. All or most of the costs of these field trips will be covered by Freshman Programs. You are required to attend at least ONE of these field trips (counted in your IAS participation grade), and you are encouraged to attend more. Here are the IAS activities that you are required to do for this course:

- SAILS survey
- One Friday at 5 lecture (9/14, 9/21, 10/19): <http://www.asundergrad.pitt.edu/offices/freshman-programs/common-reader/events-contests.html>
- One IAS field trip with KP
- Visit the Writing Center and Math Assistance Center
- Time tracking project
- Write to Prof. Vee to set up a meeting

## Blog participation

The class blog is a central space for you to wrestle with the ideas from the class. Participation on the blog will be graded, but you will also be asked to submit two blog portfolios of your best writing to be graded. Both of these portfolios will include 3 posts and/or responses of your choice, plus a cover letter addressed to Prof. Vee reflecting on your writing on the blog.

You will be split into three groups:

Group 1=last names A-E

Group 2=last names F-J

Group 3=last names K-Z

Each week, one group will post to the blog and the other groups will comment. Posts and comments should be at least 200 words long. They are due at 11:59pm on their due date. KP and I will also occasionally post to the blog to offer you additional ways to reflect on the readings and ideas from class.

You can register for the blog here: [http://www.annettevee.com/2012fall\\_techandculture/login/?action=register](http://www.annettevee.com/2012fall_techandculture/login/?action=register) . In class, I will give you a password to use to register.

**Blog posts** should ask probing questions about the readings or ideas from class; alternatively, they may extend an idea from class or point to a current event that connects to our discussions. **Blog comments** should respond to a post by answering a posted question in a complex, thoughtful way or by extending the connection posted even further or in different directions.

You are welcome and encouraged to post more often than you are required to. The goal is for the blog to be a conversation about our ideas, not a series of monologues (as class discussion boards often are). Do not simply agree or disagree with your peers; nothing is ever that simple. Instead, comment on specific points and extend ideas and complicate theories. If you're doing it right, the word minimum shouldn't be your primary motivation; instead, you should think about spending the time and space necessary to reflect on complex ideas. Although you should generate and reflect on difficult ideas in your post, you are encouraged to write in a relatively informal, online style. Include links and images to illustrate your points. The blog is public (although your name will be anonymized) and so you should consider your posts carefully.

## Policies and Procedures

### Attendance

Regular attendance in this course is required. Because this is a low enrollment course, your presence and contributions affect everyone. Regular attendance also means that you are writing and responding to writing regularly, and it means that your peers and I can give your writing the attention it deserves. For these reasons, you need to be in class, on time, prepared, every meeting. You have one free absence. Beyond that, I reserve the right to lower your final grade by one-half a letter grade for each time you miss class. If you miss more than two weeks total of this course (4 class meetings), you will not pass the course.

It is your responsibility to get the assignments, class notes, and course changes from a classmate if you do miss a class. It is also your responsibility to keep track of and complete the missing work. In-class work cannot be made up. If you miss class on the day a written assignment is due, make arrangements to turn it in on time. As mentioned above, every day a project is late the grade drops by one letter grade.

I understand that things happen and occasionally you may need to miss a class because you're sick, you've missed your flight back to campus, or you have pressing personal or family issues. The policy above allows for one absence for any reason without penalty. If you need to be absent for some extraordinary reason—because of a severe accident or illness, a family emergency or death, a religious holiday—please let me know, and we will work something out. For such absences, either prior notification or subsequent documentation will be required.

### Guidelines for Written Work

I have specified word limits for assignments rather than page limits so that you do not need to use wide margins or tiny, strange fonts to display your work. Please use reader-friendly fonts such as Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, Garamond, or Helvetica and sizes that are humane for your readers (10-12 point). For work that you bring into class in hard copy for peer review, please double spacing. For work you turn in online, please use single spacing. Work due in class is due physically in class, when class begins. Work due online is always due at 11:59pm of the due date.

### Academic Integrity

The University asks us to include in our course descriptions this quotation from Pitt's Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (February 1974):

The integrity of the academic process requires fair and impartial evaluation on the part of faculty and honest academic conduct on the part of students. To this end, students are expected to conduct themselves at a high level of responsibility in the fulfillment of the course of their study. It is the corresponding responsibility of faculty to make clear to students those standards by which students will be evaluated, and the resources permissible for use by students during the course of their study and evaluation. The educational process is perceived as a joint faculty-student enterprise which will perforce involve professional judgment by faculty and may involve—without penalty—reasoned exception by students to the data or views offered by faculty.

Plagiarism hurts the relationships and scholarship we construct during this class. Assignments for this course are designed to be relevant to your specific contexts—your personal literacy narrative, your future work as a teacher or learner, etc.—and are therefore rarely plagiarized in full. More commonly, students plagiarize by improperly quoting and documenting their sources. We will review how to properly document sources in class and I am happy to answer questions about how you can ensure that work you do for the class is your own. Additionally, please visit the English Department’s site defining plagiarism and explaining how to properly document sources: [http://www.englishlit.pitt.edu/lit\\_plagiarism.html](http://www.englishlit.pitt.edu/lit_plagiarism.html).

Should you plagiarize, consequences are severe: students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, noted above, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process that I initiate. A minimum sanction of a failing grade for the paper or project will be imposed.

## Disability Resources

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please inform me and the Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS) as early as possible in the term. You can reach DRS at (412) 648-7890 or (412) 383-7355 (TTY) and you can visit their office at 216 William Pitt Union. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

## The Writing Center

The Writing Center is a free tutorial service for Pitt students. Writing Center consultants can help you learn how to generate ideas, organize your writing, and understand assignments. They can help you understand and deal with any sentence-level problems that you have, too. It’s a great place to go in order to have a reader respond to your work so that you can do some intensive work on your writing. You can call for an appointment at (412) 624-6556 or make an appointment online: <http://www.rich36.com/pitt/>.

The writing center is located in 317B of O'Hara Street Student Center. Visit the Writing Center website at <http://www.english.pitt.edu/writingcenter/> for more information.

## Technology etiquette

Please turn off your cell phone **before** class begins and keep it inside your book bag, purse, etc—do *not* keep it on your desk during class. I allow and encourage the use of computers, netbooks, tablets, etc. in class for those who want to take notes digitally during class. These devices are *not* for socializing during class, however—during class you must log out of Facebook, Twitter, IM and the message boards you follow. Studies show that these activities are distracting to your ability to learn and participate. You may visit our blog, Wikipedia or dictionary sites, etc. to help you understand a concept we’re discussing in class, but be prepared to explain any of your in-class Internet use to the entire class. If you are socializing online or on your phone (including texting) during class, then you will be considered absent for that class period. Please contact me if you have specific questions about this policy.

## Course Schedule

*Life is complicated; consequently, this schedule is subject to change.*

### **Week 1 (Aug 27 & 29): Introduction to the course**

Mon: Icebreakers, intro to the course, look at map of Pittsburgh, diagnostic writing

Weds: *Reading due:* Anne Lamott, “Shitty first drafts”

*Reading due:* William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*, pp. 1-12

*Writing due:* Your first blog post & comment: tell an anecdote about your relationship with technology

### **Week 2 (Sep 3 & 5): Writing in college**

*Blogs: All groups comment on profvee’s post by Tues, Sep 4*

Mon: Class canceled for Labor Day

Weds: *Reading due:* Ruth Schwartz Cowen, “In the beginning,” from *A Social History of Technology*

*Writing due:* Essay #1: 500 words on your relationship with writing (peer review in class)

### **Week 3 (Sep 10 & 12): Intro to technology & culture**

*Blogs: Group 1 posts by Sun night, Sep 9; Groups 2 & 3 respond by Tues night, Sep 11.*

Mon: “Introduction,” p. 1-39 in Toker’s *Pittsburgh: A New Portrait*, pay special attention to the history of technology in Pittsburgh

*IAS activity due:* Write me to set up a meeting

*Writing due:* Essay #1 due online on CourseWeb

Weds: *Reading Due:* Langdon Winner’s “Technologies as Forms of Life”

*Writing due:* Technology log: one day log of your uses of technology, plus a short reflection

*IAS activity due:* Have visited the Writing Center and Math Assistance center in Ohara.

[Sept 11-14, outside of class: 15min confs with Prof. Vee in 628C CL. Discuss short writing.]

[Sept 14: Franklin Toker presents “The Idea of Pittsburgh” at 5pm, 125 Frick Fine Arts (FP Lecture #1)]

### **Week 4 (Sep 17 & 19): Workshops**

*Blogs: Group 2 posts by Sun night, Sep 16; Groups 1 & 3 respond by Tues night, Sep 18.*

Mon: *Writing due:* Essay #2 Peer review

*IAS reading due:* Read Pitt’s policy on Academic Integrity: <http://www.as.pitt.edu/faculty/policy/integrity.html>

Weds: Workshop with Nina Barbuto, from Assemble

*Reading due:* Visit Assemble’s website (<http://assemblepgh.org/>) and Facebook page

(<http://www.facebook.com/assemblePGH>)

Prof Vee will assign neighborhood groups.

[Sept 21: Carl Kurlander, “A Pittsburgh Comeback Story,” 5pm, 125 Frick Fine Arts (FP Lecture #2)]

[Tech Field Trip: Pittsburgh Maker Faire, Sat. Sept 22, 10am-4pm, Children’s Museum]

[do your Pittsburgh Neighborhood visit sometime this weekend or next week]

### **Week 5 (Sep 24 & 26): Library visit**

*Blogs: Group 3 posts by Sun night, Sep 23; Groups 1 & 2 respond by Tues night, Sep 25.*

Mon: Library Day: Meet in Hillman Library  
*Reading due:* Pitt Library Guide & SAILS survey <http://pitt.libguides.com/ias>  
*Reading due:* Toker, "Oakland"

Weds: Class canceled  
*Writing due:* Essay #2 (at least 750 words) online on CourseWeb

### **Week 6 (Oct 1 & 3): Pittsburgh neighborhoods and history**

*Blogs: Group 1 posts by Sun night, Sep 30; Groups 2 & 3 respond by Tues night, Oct 2.*

Mon: IAS: Present Neighborhood projects  
*Reading due:* our neighborhoods' sections in Toker

Weds: *Reading due:* Ruth Schwarz Cohen, "The Industrial Revolution in the Home"  
*Reading due:* Reginald Braithwaite's "A Woman's Story"  
<http://raganwald.posterous.com/a-womans-story>

[IAS Field Trip, Thurs, Oct. 4, 2:30pm: Andy Warhol Museum]

[IAS Field Trip, Friday, Oct. 5: Unblurred Gallery Crawl in Friendship/Garfield]

[Around this time: IAS event: Attend Information session on Opportunities in Undergrad Research]

### **Week 7 (Oct 9\* & 10): Heritage of steel**

*Blogs: Group 2 posts by Sun night, Oct 7; Groups 1 & 3 respond by Tues night, Oct 9.*

Tues: Listen to this radio story on the Homestead Strike of 1892:  
<http://wesa.fm/sound/2012/08/08/battle-homestead>  
*Reading due:* Susan Kleinberg, "Technology and Women's Work... in Pittsburgh"

Weds: *Writing due:* Essay #3 Peer review  
 Writing exercises

[Tech field trip: Rivers of Steel Heritage Museum at 1pm on Oct 11 or 12.]

### **Week 8 (Oct 15 & 17): Technologies of surveillance**

*Blogs: Group 3 posts by Sun night, Oct 14; Groups 1 & 2 respond by Tues night, Oct 16.*

Mon: *Reading due:* Michel Foucault, "Panopticism"  
*IAS Writing due:* Time tracking project

Weds: Class canceled [IAS field trip during classtime: Phipps Conservatory]  
***Writing Due: Midterm blog portfolio***

[Oct 19: 5pm, Daniel Bain, "Rivers Run Under It: Uncovering and Revitalizing Pittsburgh's Water Resources," 125 Frick Fine Arts (FP Lecture #3)]



**Week 9 (Oct 22 & 24): Web workshops (meet in computer classroom)**

*Blogs: Group 1 posts by Sun night, Oct 21; Groups 2 & 3 respond by Tues night, Oct 23.*

Mon: Web workshop  
*Writing due:* Essay #3 online through CourseWeb

Weds: Web / Photoshop workshop  
*Writing due:* basic personal website on Pitt's server

[Tech field trip: Hack Pittsburgh trip sometime around here, Reading due TBA]

**Week 10 (Oct 29 & 31):**

*Blogs: Group 2 posts by Sun night, Oct 28; Groups 1 & 3 respond by Tues night, Oct 30.*

Mon: Library Day: Meet in Hillman Library  
*Writing due: Midterm Portfolio (Revised essays 1,2,3, Tech log, cover letter)*

Weds: Web / Photoshop workshop  
*Writing due:* 300 word local website proposal

[IAS field trip: Nov 2, 10am: Soldiers and Sailors Museum]

**Week 11 (Nov 5 & 7):**

*Blogs: Group 3 posts by Sun night, Nov 4; Groups 1 & 2 respond by Tues night, Nov 6.*

Mon: *Writing due:* Tech Image for peer review

Weds: *Writing due:* Essay #4 peer review

**Week 12 (Nov 12 & 14):**

*Blogs: Group 1 posts by Sun night, Nov 11; Groups 2 & 3 respond by Tues night, Nov 13.*

Mon: Cory Doctorow, *Little Brother*, part 1  
[http://craphound.com/littlebrother/Cory\\_Doctorow\\_-\\_Little\\_Brother.pdf](http://craphound.com/littlebrother/Cory_Doctorow_-_Little_Brother.pdf)  
*Writing due:* Website with at least 2 pages and 2 images, for peer review

Weds: Cory Doctorow, *Little Brother*, part 2  
*Writing due:* Tech Image on CourseWeb

**Week 13 (Nov 19 & 21) Current issues in tech**

*Blogs: Group 2 posts by Sun night, Nov 18; Groups 1 & 3 respond by Tues night, Nov 20.*

Mon: Cory Doctorow, *Little Brother*, part 3 and finish  
*Writing due:* Essay #4 online

Weds: Class canceled for Thanksgiving  
*Writing due:* Local website full draft and cover letter, send link to Prof Vee for comments.

**Week 14 (Nov 26 & 28):**

*Blogs: Group 3 posts by Sun night, Nov 25; Groups 1 & 2 respond by Tues night, Nov 27.*

Mon & Weds: Current issues in technology

**Week 15 (Dec 3 & 5): Final Presentations**

Mon & Weds: Presentations of websites

[IAS field trip, Dec 2, 2pm: Carnegie Museum]

**Weds, Dec 5: FINAL BLOG PORTFOLIO DUE**

**Weds, Dec 12: FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE: Essays 3 & 4, Tech Image, Local Website, cover letter**