

## Technology in the Field

Intensive Engagement, Reflection, and Critique of Technology and Communication

25% of Grade, Total Number of Points: 100

CMAT 465 –COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Revolution doesn't happen when society adopts new technologies—it happens when society adopts new behaviors. (Clay Shirky)

**Assignment Rationale:** Through this assignment you will couple your knowledge of technology with theoretical frameworks to understand human engagement with technology in an organizational or community context. As organizational/community consultants in a field setting, your charge is to systematically observe technology (in relationship with communication, relationships, roles, tasks), articulate a research question to understand how this relationship can best meet organizational/individual goals, identify gaps/need (e.g., which tasks are not being fulfilled optimally, what needs to be done, how would it address the need and help achieve the goal, evaluate pragmatics of implementation of proposed technological solution (costs, barriers, benefits), and suggest recommendations (i.e., present a well-researched technological alternative to improve/address problem as identified).

**Assignment Brief:** To reflect upon and critique how human interactions and behaviors shape technology use (and hence development) through a semester-long immersive field engagement. Your investigation of human engagement with technology will be (a) conducted in a field site, (b) be theoretically driven (refer to your BS3 text), and (c) will be presented to the class (and/or community guests) at the end of the semester. You will obtain approval for your research question from me by Thursday, February 11, 2016.

**Goal:** To understand the role of technology in facilitating communication processes in a field context.

**Guiding RQ:** How can technology improve communication processes in your field context?

### Guidelines

1. **Identification:** Identify an organizational/community setting where you will be able to conduct observations through the semester (public library, a non profit organization e.g., Halo, a firehouse, an office, or a retail setting). [Week 1—2; Deadline Feb 4<sup>th</sup>]
2. **Observations:** Focus your observations to map out: tasks—technology—organizational role of member responsible. [Week 3—5; Deadline Feb 25]
  - a. **Field Work Journals:** Systematic tabular collection of observations (1 hour per day for 2 days/week) for above during the three week period [Week 3—5]
  - b. **Field Observations (in-depth):** Detailed observations of how technology facilitated, complicated, or became a challenge in accomplishing the communication processes involved with the task. Identify theoretical framework [Week 3—5] (2 hours/day, 2 days/week)
  - c. **Field Interviews (Informal):** Detailed interviews with members from the organization (recorded and transcribed) seeking to understand their reasons for use of that technology, its perceived benefits, challenges, barriers to its use, what is a problem they identify for their task, and what would be their recommendations to help address that problem [Week 3—5]
  - d. **Discussion:** Research Goal: What is your goal for the field site? [Week 3; Deadline Feb 11]

3. **Analysis—Observations:** Conduct analysis of your observational and interview data to summarize your observations into key themes. [Week 9—11]
  - a. **Draft Analysis Document:** Analyze your table from (2a) for tasks-technology, member-technology, task-member-technology links (Week 9, Deadline Mar 24<sup>th</sup>); (2) Analyze your observations (from 2b) for barriers, benefits, ease of use, challenges, complications, advantages (Week 10, Deadline March 31); (3) Analyze your interviews (from 2c) for individual reactions, barriers, advantages, feelings regarding their specific technology use for specific tasks (Week 11, Deadline April 7<sup>th</sup>).
  - b. **Discussion:** Posit tentative recommendations for your organization (Week 11)

**Recommendations [Week 12, Deadline April 14<sup>th</sup>]**

1. For the gaps, need, barriers, and challenges identified above in 3(a), research alternatives that would answer the need, eliminate the problem. Your research should include specifics on: cost/benefits, ease of usage, how it meets barriers, how it addresses need.
2. Your technological recommendation must connect the dots to its historical evolution and use FCC and trade and industry sites to connect these dots.
3. Meet with your organizational/site to present your recommendation and get feedback.

**Finalize Portfolio [Week 13]**

**Submission and Presentation**

**Paper Submission: [Preparation Week 15-16] 30 points**

1. Binder with your observation data, tables, photographs, first page photocopies of research, interview transcripts.
2. A 10—15 page, double spaced paper with the following chapters: Site Characteristics; Theory; Observations; Analysis; Recommendations; Reflections
3. All research material etc. will be included in Appendix and labeled clearly.

**Presentation: 35 points**

1. Use power point, handouts, photographs, poster, and/or a range of original evidence.
2. Invite your site members and representatives to the presentation. It is expected there will be one field representative member present in the audience.
3. Walk us all through your project. Solicit and engage with community feedback.

**Participant-Observation: Volunteer work and reflection at your organization {2 hours/member, 10 points, per schedule worked out individually with community organization}**

**Grading**

1. Thoroughness, research, engagement, documentation (range of original evidence), organization, originality of insights, presentation, and enthusiasm will be graded.
2. Presentation will be graded for creativity, synthesis and demonstration of your output, conciseness, enthusiasm, and quality of content.
3. Response to Q&A with class, instructor, and external participants will be assessed.
4. \*\*\*You start with **15 points** for this assignment in anticipation of your meeting each deadline through the semester. These points are yours to lose. Each missed deadline will penalize you – 2 points per missed deadline (i.e., you can go into negative points if you miss multiple deadlines).\*\*\*
5. Group member peer review: **10 points**
6. Any three members of a group can request a review of a group member's performance. If all members raise a concern, the group member can be ejected, and, if allowed to complete project, will have to do so on his or her own initiative.