

Sociology 503 ---- The Information Society

Professor Hachen

Spring 2001

Seminar Meetings: Every Friday from 9-11:30 a.m. in 725 Flanner.

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Seminar Objectives: In this seminar we will explore the social, political, economic, cultural and organizational impacts of the information technology revolution. Among the topics we will examine are: globalization, networked enterprises, transformation of work and employment, mass communication, conceptions of time and space, new social movements, the role of the nation state, and the crisis of democracy. Attention will also be given to assessing the adequacy of existing sociological theories for understanding the changes that are occurring as the result of the information technology revolution.

Seminar Organization: This seminar will involve a great deal of reading and discussing. Over the last few years I have come across a number of books that have struck me as very important in understanding the information technology revolution and its impacts. I have designed this seminar in order to give me the opportunity to reread this material, this time with others. Seminar sessions are intended to be conversations in which, together, we critically examine the issues raised in these books.

Readings: The pivotal work that we will be reading is Manuel Castells' three volume work *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*. The three books in this trilogy are:

The Rise of the Network Society, 2nd Edition. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000 [ISBN: 0631221409]

The Power of Identity. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997 [ISBN: 1557868743]

End of Millennium. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998 [ISBN: 1557868727]

The first half of the semester will be devoted to carefully reading these three books. During the second half we will further explore some of the issues Castells raises by reading and discussing four other books:

Kelly, Kevin. 1994. *Out of Control: The New Biology of Machines, Social Systems, and the Economic World*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley [ISBN: 0201483408]

Lash, Scott and John Urry. 1994. *Economies of Signs and Space*. London: Sage. [ISBN: 0803984723]

Rifkin, Jeremy. 2000. *The Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism, Where All Life Is a Paid-for Experience*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam. [ISBN: 1585420182]

Sennett, Richard. 1998. *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*. New York: W.W. Norton. [ISBN: 039331987]

All of these books can be purchased at the ND bookstore.

Seminar Discussion Preparation: I suggest that in order to facilitate our seminar discussions that all participants keep a notebook (or some other recording device) in which they jot down their reactions to the readings each week. When you read each week's material try to take note of three things:

- Passages, claims or arguments in the text that you don't understand or have questions about.
- Passages, claims or arguments that you found very interesting and would like to discuss more.
- Passages, claims or arguments that you do not agree with and which view as problematic.

I suggest that each of us come prepared with lists of passages of each type and then our discussions can be based around those passages which we don't understand, thought were interesting, or thought were problematic. While we will need to spend some time with the first type of passages, I want to devote most of our discussions to the latter two types of passages.

Course Requirements: Besides reading the books, attending seminar sessions and participating in discussions, seminar participants are required to write one relatively long research paper that is due at the end of the semester. The purpose of this paper is to have you explore in-depth one issue or sub-area having to do with the information society. Participants will choose an area based on their interests, conduct a thorough search for literature on their topics, read as much of the found material as is possible, put together an annotated bibliography of the material, and then write a research paper in which they critically discuss the material and formulate research questions that could be addressed in a subsequent research project.

Seminar Schedule

- 1/19 The Rise of the Network Society, Prologue and Chapter 1, pp. 1-76
- 1/26 The Rise of the Network Society, Chapters 2-4, pp. 77-354
- 2/9 The Rise of the Network Society, Chapter 5-7 and Conclusion, pp. 355-509.
- 2/16 The Power of Identity, Introduction and Chapters 1-3, pp. 1-133.
- 2/23 The Power of Identity, Chapters 4-6 and Conclusion, pp. 134-362.
- 3/2 End of Millennium, Introduction and Chapters 1-3, pp. 1-205.
- 3/9 End of Millennium, Chapters 4-5 and Conclusion, pp. 206-360

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- 3/23 Out of Control, Chapters 1-13, pp. 1-257.
- 3/30 Out of Control, Chapters 14-24, pp. 258-472.
- 4/6 Economies of Signs & Space, Chapters 1-7, pp. 1-192.
- 4/13 Economies of Signs & Space, Chapters 8-12, pp. 193-326.
- 4/20 The Age of Access
- 4/27 The Corrosion of Character