LER 590: Technology, Innovation, and the Future of Work, Fall 2018

Wednesdays, 11 am to 1:50 pm, 331 Armory Building
Syllabus Version: 8/15/2018 (check Compass for latest version)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Will your job be replaced by a robot? Will technological change lead to mass unemployment and civil unrest? How can employers, policy makers, and workers adapt to the changing landscape of employment in the 21st century? In this course, we will study a wide variety of trends in modern employment, including automation, the gig economy, offshoring, and algorithmic hiring and staffing. We will approach these developments from diverse disciplinary perspectives in order to understand the economic, sociological, and technological antecedents and consequences of innovation and technological change. In addition, implications for public policy and human resource management will be emphasized.

This course is intended for students who want to deeply engage with the issues surrounding technological change and employment. My role as instructor will be to facilitate this process as we learn together about these developing topics. To this end, the class format will be primarily seminar style, with the expectation that all students will closely read each week's readings and actively participate in class discussions. This class is reading intensive, and may require more weekly reading and writing than other LER classes.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The primary course requirement will be weekly reading response essays. Each week I will post reading questions that you will respond to in a draft response essay (two double-spaced pages). This will be due the Monday before class by 9 pm. This gives me a chance to review your responses before the class meets. After each class, you will be required to deepen your analysis and extend the response by an additional page (three pages total), building on what you learned from the class discussion. This is due by the following class meeting (e.g. 1 week after the class). All essays will be submitted via the course website. Responses should reference the reading from the current week, however you may also draw on previous readings or other outside resources. All response essays must include appropriate in text citations as well as a reference list. There will be 11 total weekly responses, and I will drop the lowest grade. (60% of final grade.)

In addition, there will be a group term project. This will involve researching a topic that we did not cover in class, writing a 10 page paper, and presenting your findings to the class. More details will be provided. (20% of final grade.)

Finally, this class is a discussion-based class and will rely heavily on your active participation. (20% of final grade.)

COURSE READINGS

There is no required textbook for this class. Most course readings will be available via the course website. You will be required to purchase a digital coursepack from Harvard Business School Publishing for a few of the readings. The link will be available on the course website. Readings will draw from academic articles, popular press articles, business cases and excerpts from the following books:

Beckert, Sven (2014) *Empire of Cotton: A Global History.*

Goldin, Claudia and.Katz, Lawrence F. (2009) *The Race Between Education and Technology*.

Levy, Frank,and Murnane, Richard J. (2004) *The New Division of Labor: How Computers are Creating the Next Job Market*

Weil, David. (2014) *The Fissured Workplace.*

COURSE SCHEDULE (Summary)

Note: A detailed reading list will be provided on the first day of class.

Class 1: August 29th. Introduction, Course Overview.

Module 1: Technological Change

Class 2: September 5th. Historical Case Study: The Industrial Revolution (Part 1)

Class 3: September 12th. Historical Case Study: The Industrial Revolution (Part II)

Note: No class on September 19th. There will still be a reading response due, which we'll discuss in class the following week.

Class 4: September 26th. Task-based View of Technological Change

Class 5: October 3rd. Technological Change and Education

Class 6: October 10th. Managing Technological Change

Class 7: October 17th. Societal Impacts of Technological Change

No reading response due this week.

Module 2: The Changing Structure of Employment

Class 8: October 24th. Topic Overview

Class 9: October 31st. Gig Economy

Class 10: November 7th. Temporary Help

Class 11: November 14th. Off-Shoring

No Class on November 21st (Thanksgiving Break)

Module 3: Automating Human Resources

Class 12: November 28th. Algorithmic Hiring and Staffing

Class 13: December 5th. Automating HR Functions

   No reading response due this week.

Class 14: December 12th. Presentations and Class Wrap-up

   No reading response due this week.