

Sample Final Examination

Held: 9 a.m. - noon, Thursday, 20 May 2010

Notes: This is a sample final examination for the Spring 2010 offering of TEC 154, the Evolution of Technology. It is intended to give the flavor of the final. There are more than twenty sample questions on this examination, even though the final examination will have twenty or fewer questions. In some cases, the sample questions are given in full form, and are similar to the questions that will be asked on the final. In other cases, the sample questions are given only as a framework (which author said ...?). These frameworks are likely to be on the exam, with particular detailed filled in. Part D of the exam provides a framework that students will apply to a reading that they do during class.

Guidelines

There are twenty problems in this exam, broken up into 5 categories. Even though you may find that different problems require different amounts of time or have different difficulties, each problem is worth the same number of points.

Write your name at the top of each page. Do your best to spell and apply rules of grammar correctly.

This exam is primarily a closed-book exam. However, you may use one sheet of notes that you have prepared in advance. *Please write your name on those notes and turn them in with the exam.*

Please **write** and **sign** the following statement on the cover page of the exam. If you are unable to sign the statement, please talk to me at your earliest convenience.

I did not cheat on this exam. I am unaware of any classmates who cheated on this exam.

A. Projects

Problem A1: Project Theses, Part I

Give the primary thesis from three of the four of the first set of presentations (Wireless videogame controllers, Electroconvulsive therapy, Birth Control, Household technologies).

Problem A2: Project Theses, Part II

Give the primary thesis from three of the four of the second set of presentations (Ethanol, Wired telephones, Cell phones, Football helmets).

Problem A3: Applying Lenses

For one of the technologies (not including your own or the one you reviewed), apply Berry's question of "what are the indirect effects of using this technology?"

Problems A4 and A5: Presentation-Specific Problems

Answer two of the four following problems posed by project participants (or by the pondering professor). You may not answer a problem on your own presentation.

These questions will be added. The list of questions received from project groups will be distributed when they are received.

Part B: Problems Based on Guest Lectures

Problem B1: Technology and the Digital in Creative Media

In certain ways, Kluber and Simon's work illustrates a different conception of Petroski's "Form Follows Failure" hypothesis. Give two ways in which the form of their pieces is a response to some kind of failure.

Problem B2: Concrete as Structural Material

In his lecture, Professor Case described pre-stressed concrete and indicated that it is an important material in modern structural engineering.

- a. What is "prestressing"?
- b. What problem is prestressing intended to alleviate?
- c. What other benefits have designers found in the use of pre-stressed concrete?

Problem B3: The Failure of GEOs

In Professor Robertson's lectures, she noted that a variety of factors led to the failure of groups to adopt genetically engineered organisms. Give three such factors.

Problem B4: Photovoltaics

In Professor Swartz's lectures, he noted a number of elements that decrease the efficiency of photovoltaics. Give three such elements.

Problem B5: Model of Computer

In Professor Rebelsky's lectures, he drew a simple model of computation on the board. Sketch that model and explain the parts.

Problem B6: Evolving Applications of Computing

In his lectures, Rebelsky followed up the work of Ceruzzi and highlighted the evolution of ways in which we use computing. What are the main applications of computing that Ceruzzi and Rebelsky described and in what order did they become applications?

Part C. Problems based on the Readings

Problem C1: Norman and Lego

In *The Design of Everyday Things*, Donald Norman uses a small Lego kit to make a point. What is that point?

Problem C3: Actors

In "Desperately seeking simplicity: how young adults with cognitive disabilities and their families adopt assistive technologies", we learn that a number of actors are involved in the selection of an assistive technology. Give three important actors and the roles they serve.

Problem C5: Identify the Author

Identify the authors the following three quotations, which were taken from readings from the second half of the semester. If you can't identify the author of a quotation, do your best to explain the context from which the quotation is likely to have come.

Problem C6: Match the Author and the Technology

Below are the names of six authors and six technologies. Indicate which author used which technology, and what purpose the technology was intended to serve.

Problem C7: The Aesthetics of Technology

Billington suggests that even when the focus of a technology is utility, it can be useful to consider the aesthetics of the technology. Describe another technology that we have considered (other than art) in which aesthetic considerations play a major role.

Part D. New Readings

Accompanying this exam are two articles on technologies that we have not studied this semester. Choose one of the two articles, read the article, and answer the following questions.

Problem D1: Thesis

What is the primary thesis of this work?

- a. In your words.
- b. In the author's words.

Problem D2: Lenses

What new perspective on technology does this article raise?

Problem D3: Politics

In "Do Artifacts Have Politics?", Langdon Winner suggests that we should ask what what groups or power structures a technology supports or hinders. What politics does the technology described in this article have?

Problem D4: Usability

Donald Norman emphasizes the usability of everyday objects. What would Norman say about the usability of the technology described in the article?

Problem D5: Failure

The evolution of each of these two technologies corresponds, in part, to Petroski's claim that we learn from failure. Explain what the technology described in the article *adds* to Petroski's central theses.

Problem D6: Democratic

In what ways is the technology described in the article a democratic or non-democratic technology?

Problem D7: Berry's Criteria

Wendell Berry gives a number of criteria for when a successor technology is "better" than the technology it replaces. Apply these criteria to the technology described in the article.

E. Miscellaneous

E1: A Good Thesis

List Eric Simpson's five key attributes of a good thesis.

E2: Ordering Technologies

Consider the following technologies described in class. Put these technologies in (approximate) chronological order: the first long-distance telephone line; the washing machine; pre-stressed concrete; genetically engineered crops; medical birth-control; ethanol.

E3: Your Favorite Reading

What was your favorite reading that we've done since the first exam? Why?

E4: New Lenses

We developed a large number of lenses in the first half of the semester that we've continued to apply for the second half of the semester. At the same time, we've found new lenses to apply. Give three of them.

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