

STSS 4100: Professional Development II (Tech Issues and Solutions)

Course Instructor: Dan Lyles, Ph.D

Office: REMOTE

Phone: REMOTE

Office Hours:

Tuesday 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Friday 10:00am – 11:30 am

All Other Times By Appointment

e-mail: Lylesd2@rpi.edu

Course TAs:

Course Meetings:

Sec 01 (29624) WED 2:30 pm – 4:20 pm

Sec 04 (29627) TUE 8:00 am – 9:50 am

Sec 05 (29628) FRI 8:00 am – 9:50 am

Sec 09 (29632) TUE 2:30 pm – 4:20 pm

Sec 10 (29633) FRI 2:30 pm – 4:20 pm

Course Description

This course focuses on increasing students' knowledge concerning the impact of non-technical issues on the viability of technical (engineering) designs and solutions. The non-technical issues we will consider include the cognitive and physical strengths and limitations of people in the chain spanning from product/equipment designers/manufacturers to end users, as well as economic, environmental, cultural, political, ethical, health and safety, and societal influences. During the course, we will read and discuss articles and case studies in which the technical solution pursued did not have the desired effect, or led to disaster. Possible explanations include a failure to take into account the environmental, economic, socio-cultural, and/or political issues associated with the technology's ultimate usage.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the potential consequences of engineering solutions in a global, economic, environmental, political and social-cultural context by reading/discussing/debating case examples in which proposed technical solutions did not have the desired effects because those involved failed to adequately consider the aforementioned factors.
- Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the role of contemporary issues in the context of engineering.
- Students will receive basic instruction on how to write a refereed/peer-reviewed paper, and will prepare a paper on a research topic associated with this course. Students will perform and receive peer reviews on drafts of the paper.

Among others, this course responds to the following [student outcomes identified by the ABET:](#)

- An understanding of process and solutions to meet specific needs with consideration for public health and safety, and global, cultural, social, environmental and economic factors.
- An ability to recognize ethical and professional responsibilities in engineering situations and make informed judgments, which must consider the impact of engineering solutions in global, economic, environmental, and social contexts.

Students will demonstrate understanding of the material by actively participating in classroom discussions, completing assignments and project work, participating in a group presentation, and writing and reviewing a paper.

Academic Integrity

Student-teacher relationships are built on mutual respect and trust. Students must be able to trust that their teachers have made responsible decisions about the structure and content of the course, and that they are conscientiously making their best effort to help students learn. Teachers must be able to trust that students do their work conscientiously and honestly, making their best effort to learn. Acts that violate this mutual respect and trust undermine the educational process. The Rensselaer Handbook of Students Rights and Responsibilities defines various forms of Academic Dishonesty and you should make yourself familiar with these. In this class, all assignments that are turned in for a grade must represent the student's own work.

Remote Instruction Guidelines (FA 2020)

Remote instruction brings a whole host of challenges, expectations and opportunities. This semester, this course is being offered online as a remote course which will mean modifications both on the part of the student and the instructor. As such, we will operate based on the following expectations:

- Naturally, because of the unfolding COVID crisis, this syllabus is subject to change. In fact, count on it.
- This course is operating on the basis of good faith of both students and instructors – We will proceed under the assumption that unless good cause is given we are all being fair, honest and open about what is happening in our lives and with the course.
- I'm looking for good faith efforts to complete the work and engage in the material
- Everything in the course is just going to take longer than it would under normal conditions and we're going to have to make accommodations for that. (e.g. if you send an email, expect it to take time for me to get through to it as I may have several dozen or even a hundred emails to get through)
- **I'm asking you to resist the urge to panic if something goes wrong.** Given the vast number of technological systems at play, things breaking are almost guaranteed (We'll cover why that is in weeks 7, 8 and 9) so I'm asking you to be patient if things are chunky, clunky or otherwise complicated. If you are expected to turn something in, you will have the opportunity to do so even if the system is temporarily down.
- **DO NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES EMAIL ME ASSIGNMENTS UNLESS I HAVE EXPLICITLY AND SPECIFICALLY ASKED YOU TO DO SUCH. I WILL NOT REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS SENT TO MY INBOX. TURN IN EVERYTHING IN THIS COURSE TO THE APPROPRIATE SPOT IN LMS.**

- Please be mindful that there are differences in technology, time zones and comfort in engaging in a primarily online course. While I have endeavored to make the course available and accessible to as many people as possible, there will be points where we will have to figure out the best way to proceed in real time.
- Please make sure to make available the time scheduled for your course meeting. If there are issues due to time zones, let's discuss that one on one to figure out solutions, *but unless other arrangements are made, you are expected to be present at the time your course is scheduled.*
- **Attendance** - While I am expecting every student to be present for synchronous learning during the time their course is scheduled, material for offline or asynchronous learning will be made available.
- While I am expecting every student to be present for synchronous learning, I will not be expecting people to make their webcam available for this course. **I am aware that this invites a degree of leeway and flexibility in how you show and participate in class and I am expecting you to not take undue advantage of this or act unprofessionally towards each other.**
- **Participation**- This is a highly interactive class that requires active discussion and participation. Students will come to class having read the assigned reading materials, and be prepared to discuss the information.

COURSE COMPONENTS AND GRADING

- Class Participation 20% (e.g. Submitting questions for class, asking those questions during your session, engaging with the work, participating with your group project)
- Writing Assignments:
 - Reading Responses 20%
 - Midpoint Assessment 15%
 - Final Assessment 15%
- Group Project (30%)
 - Part 1 – Developing your project
 - Part 2 – Presenting your project (Feedback and presentation)
 - Part 3 – Final Project (First Draft + Revisions)

Course Materials:

- There is no required text for this course. The readings can be found through some light use of [google scholar](#) and will be provided through LMS.
- Books featured in this course but not Required:
 - o Norman, D. (2013). *The design of everyday things: Revised and expanded edition*. Constellation
 - o Perrow, C. (2011). *Normal Accidents: Living with High Risk Technologies- Updated Edition*. Princeton university press
 - o Petroski, H. (1985). *To engineer is human: The role of failure in successful design* (No. BOOK). New York: St. Martin's Press.
 - o Wisnioski, M. H. (2012). *Engineers for change: Competing visions of technology in 1960s America*. MIT Press.

Writing Assignments

a. Reading Responses (20% of course grade)

You will write a brief (no more than a paragraph per question, though some questions require substantially less) response to key questions on the assigned readings and submit the responses via LMS. Reading responses are due on the course LMS before the class meeting. All weekly reading responses are required; at the end of the semester, only 8 papers will count towards your final grade.

Some sample questions that you should answer in your weekly reading response, AND be prepared to discuss in class are:

- What is the main argument? How do you evaluate the argument?
- What are the main sociotechnical (e.g., human factors, social, economic, cultural, political, environmental, ethical) causes/explanations?
- Who has power in this situation? What is the engineer's role in creating systems that people will use to settle disputes?
- What is the main argument in this week's reading? Explain using one example.
- How do you evaluate the argument? Is it convincing? Why/not? What are possible limitations of the argument?
- How can you apply this week's argument and/or concepts in your own research? Be as specific as you can (provide examples of how the argument/concept helps you understand certain aspects of your own research).
- Identify two questions/issues that you think deserve further discussion based on this week's readings.

b. Mid-point and Final Assessment (Each 15% - total 30% of course grade)

For both the Midterm and Final Assessment, students will write a 2-3-page paper (approx. 1500 words) on the readings and information covered in class. The paper will address key questions (which will be provided) related to the topic.

Assignment should be double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point-font with 1-inch margins on all sides. Use headings as appropriate to guide the reader (the instructor). Any figures or tables included do not count against the page requirement and should be explained thoroughly in the body of the paper. Always cite your resources, parenthetically and in the reference page. While I do not have a preferred citation style, you are not allowed to use MLA in this course. I recommend you use whatever format is common in your discipline and note that in your heading. Please don't forget your name and page numbers. *Due dates are listed on the Course Calendar.*

c. Group Research Paper and Peer Review (30% of course grade):

Overview of Paper

- Students in collaboration with their peers will write a 6-8-page research paper.
- Select an Engineering solution, technical issue, event, disaster, or success story and provide an in-depth discussion of what led up to the event, the event itself, and what happened as a result of the event.
- Conduct an extensive literature review to identify key information on your topic. Be sure to include all relevant technical and non-technical (e.g., human factors, social, economic, cultural, political, environmental, ethical) factors that led to the event.
- Your topic may be a topic discussed in class
- Students will receive peer and TA/Professor reviews on the paper and will perform a peer review.
- Students will be graded on both the quality of their paper and the quality of the peer reviews they write.

Course Calendar

Please refer to the table below for your course calendar. Note that weekly schedules vary slightly by section, because of RPI's holiday schedule.

	Section 1 (Wednesday)	Sections 4 & 9 (Tuesday)	Sections 5 & 10 (Friday)
Week 1	Sept 2 nd	Sept 1 st	Sept 4 th
Week 2	Sept 9 th	Sept 8 th	Sept 11 th
Week 3	Sept 15 th	Sept 22 nd	Sept 18 th
Week 4	Sept 22 nd	Sept 29 th	Sept 25 th
Week 5	Sept 29 th	Oct 6 th	Oct 2 nd
Week 6	Oct 7 th	Oct 13 th	Oct 9 th
Week 7	Oct 14 th	Oct 20 th	Oct 16 th
Week 8	Oct 21 st	Oct 27 th	Oct 23 rd
Week 9	Oct 28 th	Nov 3 rd	Oct 30 th
Week 10	Nov 4 th	Nov 10 th	Nov 6 th
Week 11	Nov 11 th	Nov 24 th	Nov 13 th
Week 12	Nov 18 th	Dec 1 st	Nov 20 th
Week 14	Dec 2 nd	Dec 8 th	Dec 4 th

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE BEFORE CLASS
Week 1	Introduction to PD II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of syllabus Who we are and what we want to accomplish Overview of class 	Video: Changing Educational Paradigms - Sir Ken Robinson	
Week 2	A) Technology Is/Creates Power	Read: Winner- Do Artifacts Have Politics?	Reading Response 1
Week 3	A) Engineering Responsibility? Professionalism? Codes? Where does all this stuff come from? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Skill – Practical Note Taking in the age of digital Paper 	Read: Wisnioski – Engineers for Change Chapter 4: The Crisis of Technology as a Crisis of Responsibility	Reading Response 2

Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To Engineer is Human ▪ Simple vs. Complex designs and human error ▪ Acceptable vs. Unacceptable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill - How to do research. For example, practically where do you get started? 	Read: - To Engineer is Human- Henry Petroski (chapter 1) Using Sociology and History to Teach Engineering Ethics – Ronald Kline -Watch Videos For this Week	<i>Reading Response 3</i>
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Human Error/Human Factors (simple case) ▪ Discussion of Norman Doors and other simple design issues/errors ▪ Skills – Good Peer Review Feedback Vs. Not. Work in your groups to talk about it and write some about each other's work. 	Read: Donald Norman – chapter 1	<i>Reading Response 4</i>
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do we generate these insights? Where do we look for complex systems? ▪ Skills – Weak Thesis Statements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Weak Thesis Statements: Recognizing and Fixing Them • Not Required but Recommended: Williams – Style Lessons in Clarity in Grace Chapter 2 • Watch: <i>Social Life of A Small Urban Space</i> 	
Week 7	Normal Accidents (complex case)	Read: Charles Perrow – Introduction; Ch. 1 (Three Mile Island) Class Handout: <i>Midpoint Assessment</i>	<i>Reading Response 5</i>
Week 8	Normal Accidents	Read: Ch. 9 -Living with High	<i>Reading Response 6</i>

	(Complex Case)	Risk Systems	Midpoint Assessment Due
Week 9	Systems Engineering- Where might we intervene in systems to have desirable outcomes? What might a systems approach look like for solving problems?	Meadows- Leverage Points Places to Intervene in a system Penzenstadler et al- Software Engineering For Sustainability Class Assignment - Pick Groups	Reading Response 7
Week 10	Responsibility (in)Action	Watch: The Human Scale (1hr 23 minutes)	Group Assignment 1 due
Week 11	Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill- Human Error, Culture- \$\$/greed over safety, Government	Article Cluster in LMS Class Presentations: Group Pair off presenting and providing feedback to each other.	Reading Response 8 Presentation Due
Week 12	Bhopal, India Pesticide Gas Leak- ethics, Culture- \$\$/greed over safety, Government	Article Cluster in LMS Video: Documentary – “One Night in Bhopal”	Weekly Reading Response 9
Week 13	Artificial Intelligence/ Autonomous Vehicles- Ethics, human culture, human error	Article Cluster in LMS Video: Humans Need not Apply (15min)	Reading Response 10 Group Paper Submissions
Week 14	The Future of Engineering - The Engineer of the Future	Article Cluster in LMS Class Handout: Final Assessment	Reading Response 11 For Finals Week: Final Group Paper (With Revisions) Submissions Final Assessment

*** Schedule is subject to Change