

# ESC203—Ethics

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## 1 Affordances

Affordance is request, demand, allow, encourage, discourage, refuse.

- **Real affordances:** functions attached to a given object—what, potentially, that object affords
- **Percieved affordances:** feature that are clear to the user

### 1.1 Mechanism and Conditions Framework

- Mechanism: Technology
  - **(request, demand)** initiated by object
  - **(encourage, discourage, refuse)** responses to subject inclination
  - **(allow)** could be initialted by subject or object
- Conditions: People interacting with technology
  - Perceive a range of functions
  - Having varying skills in operating/interacting (dexterity)
  - Different level of support due to cultural norms, intelectual regulations.

## 2 Central Claims of STS Theories

- *Technological Momentum*: Individuals and groups direct the development of new technologies, but investment in large socio-technical systems makes them difficult to change
- *Technological Determinism*: the idea that technology develops as the sole result of an internal dynamic, and then, unmediated by any other influence, molds society to fit its patterns
- *Social Construction of Technology*: What matters is not technology itself, but the social or economic system in which it is embedded. This maxim, which in a number of variations is the central premise of a theory that can be called the social determination of technology, has an obvious wisdom.
- *Actor Network Theory*:

## 3 Actor Network Theory (ANT)

### 3.1 Why?

- To analyze sociotechnical systems, in particular organization and power.
- More rigorous ways to analyze ever-shifting nature of technology.
- ANT attempts to improve *Technological Determinism*, *Technological Momentum* and *Social Construction of Technology* by treating technological and social actors as relational.
- Allows us to map affordances.

Political: arrangements of power and authority in human association as well as a system

### 3.2 Types of Actors in ANT

- Human actors:
- Conceptual actors:
- Artifact actors:

### 3.3 Power

- Neutral: depending on how it is used.
  - Originally concentrated in large structures like government or cooperation
  - Modern sense of power is a component of all relationships between different actors
  - **Power is always faced with resistance**
  - ANT can be used to identify sources of power and suggest ways to dismantle power

### 3.4 Example—Federal Election

It is helpful to start with one actor and establish relations with other actors.