AGING & TECHNOLOGY
Winter 2023

Instructor: Nicole Dalmer   **Class Location:** JHE 264
Email: dalmern@mcmaster.ca   **Office:** KTH 230A
Lecture: Tuesday | 2.30pm – 5.20pm   **Office Hours:** By appointment

Contents

Course Description

Experiences in later life are being shaped by significant technological changes and development. This seminar course is designed to critically explore the ways in which age and aging are increasingly intertwined with the development, deployment and use of technologies. We will take a critical approach to question and explore what it means to age with, without, or even against technologies. In doing so, we will question the assumptions that underpin and fuel the growing Age Tech industry. In this seminar, we will explore and anchor our learning to the development of socio-gerontechnology, that is, the critical scholarship on aging and technology at the intersection of Age Studies and Science and Technology Studies. As we move through the term, we will cover a range of topics at the intersection of aging and technologies, including smart homes, surveillance, health, accessibility, robots, communication, and entertainment. We will use a range of activities to support and guide our collective learning: fieldtrips, readings, videos, community-based assignments, seminars, written assignments, and presentations.

Course Objectives

- To gain a deeper understanding of important theories, concepts, and current issues related to the design and use of technologies in later life from a range of approaches and perspectives
- To identify and critically examine the assumptions that surround the AgeTech industry
- To increase understanding regarding ethical issues and questions relating to technology use (and misuse) in and for later life
- To gather, review, and critically examine representations of old age and technology use in media
- To provide opportunities for students to improve skills in critical thinking, analysis, collaborative work, research, communication, and writing.

Required Materials and Texts

There is no required text for this course. Required readings will take the form of journal articles, book chapters, news articles, and multimedia (podcasts, video, etc.). Links to these online readings and other media corresponding to weekly topics may be found on the course website on Avenue to Learn (A2L).

Communication

I can be reached at my McMaster email address (dalmern@mcmaster.ca). I will endeavor to respond within 48 hours to all relevant course email that is sent to my McMaster address in blocks of time between Monday to Friday.

For all course-related email, please include HLTH AGE 4W03: [your subject] in the email subject line. This helps flag your message in my inbox.

Class Format

This class will start on Tuesday, January 10th. Our class activities will include lectures, videos and podcasts, a fieldtrip, seminar discussions, in-class exercises, and virtual guest lectures.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Class Engagement - 35%
   a. Online participation (class exercises, seminar participation, etc.)
   b. Seminar preparation
   c. End-of-term self-assessment
2. News Scan – 25%
3. AgeTech Mythbusting – 40%

Assignments will be handed in online via A2L by 11:59pm on the day it is due. **Please submit all assignments as a Word document (.doc/.docx) and include your last name in the assignment file name**. Your assignments should be typed, double-spaced, and use a 12 point font of your choosing. Any citation style is acceptable, as long as it is correctly and consistently used. For assistance with citation style, please consult McMaster's Library website. Please do not use class lectures as a reference source.

Note that McMaster University Library is a fantastic source for research assistance! Students may call or e-mail to get help finding library resources. Students may also get online research help by using the "Ask a Librarian" virtual reference service.

Course Evaluation – Details

Assignment 1 (35%): Class Engagement (due throughout the term)
   a) **Individual Reading Notes**
   b) **Small Group Work**
   c) **Participation in Seminar Discussions**
   d) **End-of-Term Self-Assessment**

Active and thoughtful reactions to lecture materials, media, our guest lecturers, and seminars are essential to maintaining an engaged seminar dynamic. Participation grades are based on demonstrated levels of engagement throughout the term I put a high premium on a participatory class and I expect students to engage in an active, collegial, and respectful manner. Class participation means not only offering relevant and informed opinions and insights, but also asking questions, working constructively with other students, and listening/reading. Being prepared means you have read the assigned readings, have notes/links on ideas to advance during our seminars meetings, have thoughtful questions (confusions are good, too!), and much more than a summary understanding of the reading. Find a place in the texts that get your brain buzzing! Read everything twice and choose to focus on one or two places with more effort. Come prepared to contribute to our collective understanding of the topics of the week. Your

personal investments and positions in relationship to this material are important. This class will never happen the same way again, and that is because you are here, with this particular group of colleagues, at this particular moment. Your participation mark also relies on your timely submission of assignments. Your timely and considered execution of course assignments will demonstrate to me that you are actively participating in the class in relation to course materials and class conversations. It is our collective responsibility to foster an open, welcoming, and inclusive learning environment and discussion space. As such, we must commit to honest and critical engagement with the course materials and competing theoretical perspectives, while remaining respectful to each other and our space. Disruptive or disrespectful behaviour will have a negative impact on your participation and preparation grade.

A: Individual Reading Notes (due weekly, when readings are assigned)
In a seminar course, the readings are central to your learning. As such, students need to read the assigned readings at least once and bring hard copy notes to be submitted each class that include:
- A list of at least two words, terms &/or concepts that were new to you or that you feel are important across the assigned readings (and provide your short, working definition of each term or concept)
- A short summary of the main argument of each reading in your own words (2-4 sentences)
- Two discussion questions for the class (based on the readings, your work/academic/lived experiences, related news stories, etc.)

B: Small Group Work (due weekly)
For a majority of classes, we will begin with small group meetings, where you will meet with a small group to discuss the readings. Please assign one person in each group to serve as the scribe, one person to serve as the chair, and one person who will share the groups ideas with the class. **Note these positions should rotate week to week.**

The chair's role is to ensure that everyone participates equitably in the discussion while the scribe summarizes the notes on paper to be submitted to the instructor after class. These notes will include what the group considers to be: the top three concepts (usually those that were most often selected) along with definitions; very clear and concise summaries of each reading; and one thoughtful question for the class from each reading.

C: Participation in Seminar Discussions (weekly)
The final way that student participation will be assessed is through oral participation in a our larger group setting. Participation grades will be based on the ability to demonstrate a knowledge of the content of the readings as well as on their ability to critically engage with the reading material by applying and evaluating concepts or comparing ideas across weeks. Quantity does not trump quality! A student can earn an A grade by making two or three thoughtful comments that demonstrate a critical engagement with the ideas from the readings each seminar (this includes asking creative questions!). Alternatively, a

student who comments frequently but does not demonstrate any of the learning outcomes above will fare poorly.

Please note: You are certainly not expected to understand 100% of the readings prior to the small group or class discussions but rather to have tried your best to engage with the materials, identify what you do not understand and absorb what you do understand.

D: End-of-Term Self-Assessment (due on/before April 4, 2023)

To conclude the course, you will submit a self-assessment of your participation throughout the semester by April 4th. While this exercise is not weighted, it is part of your overall participation grade. This process aims to encourage self-reflection and responsibility for your learning and participation.

You will assign yourself a grade based on the reflections you have done in response to some example questions below and please provide a narrative of your justification for your score. I will use this information to guide my evaluation for your final participation grade. You might, for example, list elements that demonstrated the ways in which you participated in this community (learned, completed exercises, wrestled with ideas on the forum) as well as some hurdles you may have faced during class discussions. To guide you in this final part of the process, I invite you to consider and respond to the following questions:

- What course activity, task, or assignment was key to achieving your personal goals as a learner in our seminar community? Why/how?
- What course space helped you to feel more in a learning community? How?
- Weekly, how much time have you dedicated to this course?
- Given the course objectives, your personal goals for the course and your evaluation of your performance, what do you think your grade should be?

Assignment 2 (25%): News Scan (due February 7, 2023)

The purpose of the assignment is to get you thinking critically about the use or role of technologies in later life and how it is understood and (re)presented in different news sources. For this assignment, you will scan different news sources (in print or online) over the past ~two years for three different articles that each report on older adults' engagement (or refusal) with technologies in some form. You will cite the three different articles and give a *brief* summary of each article. Based on the knowledge gained thus far in our class and through the readings, you will then spend the bulk of the assignment critically evaluating how technologies and aging/older adults are portrayed and understood in the article. What assumptions are made? What (or who) is omitted? Who gets to have a voice? Maximum: 1200 words (excluding references).

You may wish to consult the following article as you're completing this assignment:

Fraser, S. A., Kenyon, V., Lagacé, M., Wittich, W., & Southall, K. E. (2016). Stereotypes associated with age-related conditions and assistive device use in Canadian media. *The Gerontologist, 56*(6), 1023-1032.

Assignment 3 (40%): AgeTech Mythbusting (various deadlines)

A central feature within this course is separating fact from fiction about older adults' tech use and their aptitude with tech. Students will have the opportunity to work with partners or individually in order to create a 'mythbuster' that speaks back to the public about a stereotype or erroneous assumption about older adults and technology. Each student/pair will be able to select if they will use print, radio, social media, or video as their mechanisms for busting a common myth related to aging and technology. You will sign up for your area/topic earlier in the term.

The assignment will comprise two components:
a) Part 1: Report on the topic you'll be investigating (**due March 7th**)
   a. What is the topic? Why have you selected this topic?
   b. What is known about older adults' engagement with this topic (support your thinking with outside research)?
   c. What are prevailing stereotypes or assumptions that shape this topic?
   d. What are key elements (concepts, facts, definitions, etc.) pertaining to your topic that you will include in your final output and why?
b) Part 2: Mythbusting output (**due March 28th**)
   a. On March 28th, all outputs will be presented/viewed during class

Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1: January 10, 2023
  Introduction to the course

Readings:
- Waddington, R. (2021). Funny things mom says while trying to figure out the Internet. *Globe and Mail*. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/first-person/article-funny-things-mom-says-while-trying-to-figure-out-the-internet/

Week 2: January 17, 2023
  Topic: Gerontechnology: An overview

Readings:
- Neven, L., & Peine, A. (2017). From triple win to triple sin: How a problematic future discourse is shaping the way people age with technology. *Societies*, *7*(3), 26-37.
- Peine, A., Marshall, B. L., Martin, W., & Neven, L. (2021). Socio-gerontechnology: Key themes, future agendas. In Peine, A., Marshall, B. L., Martin, W., & Neven, L. (Eds.). *Socio-gerontechnology: Interdisciplinary Critical Studies of Ageing and Technology* (pp. 1-23). Routledge.
- Joyce, K., & Loe, M. (2010). A sociological approach to ageing, technology and health. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, *32*(2), 171-180.

Video:
- Meet MIT AgeLab's AGNES (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czuww9rp5f4)

Week 3: January 24, 2023
  Topic: The "Grey Divide"

Guest lecture: Dr. Stephanie Hatzifilalithis
Postdoctoral Fellow
MIRA (McMaster Institute for Research on Aging)

Readings:
- Fernández-Ardèvol, M., & Grenier, L. (2022). Exploring data ageism: What good data can('t) tell us about the digital practices of older people? *New Media & Society*, 14614448221127261.

- Fang, M. L., Canham, S. L., Battersby, L., Sixsmith, J., Wada, M., & Sixsmith, A. (2019). Exploring privilege in the digital divide: Implications for theory, policy, and practice. The Gerontologist, 59(1), e1-e15.
- Köttl, H., Gallistl, V., Rohner, R., & Ayalon, L. (2021). "But at the age of 85? Forget it!": Internalized ageism, a barrier to technology use. *Journal of Aging Studies*, *59*.
- Quick reads:
  - Hatzifilalithis, S. & Dalmer, N. (2022). *Ageism in tech: Older adults should be included in the design of new technologies*. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/ageism-in-tech-older-adults-should-be-included-in-the-design-of-new-technologies-187119
  - Kelly, J. (2021). *Tech job posting 'We hire old people' went viral for highlighting ageism*. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2021/08/26/tech-job-posting-we-hire-old-people-went-viral-for-highlighting-ageism/?sh=51415494272a
- Podcast:
  - CodeNewbie. (2019). What does ageism in tech look like? https://open.spotify.com/episode/2LZrMUBsCnN1EqoLPFZPlD?si=869b3b8255ea46f9&nd=1
- Optional reports:
  - Australian Communications Consumer Action Network. (2021). *Reducing perceived risk and promoting digital inclusion for Older Australians*. Retrieved from: https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2021-08/apo-nid313717.pdf
  - Good Things Foundation. (2021). *Digital exclusion and health inequalities*. Retrieved from https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Good-Things-Foundation-2021-–-Digital-Exclusion-and-Health-Inequalities-Briefing-Paper.pdf
  - OATS. (2021). *AGINGconnected: Exposing the hidden connectivity crisis for older adults*. Retrieved from: https://agingconnected.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Aging-Connected_Exposing-the-Hidden-Connectivity-Crisis-for-Older-Adults.pdf

Week 4: January 31, 2023
Topic: Technologies and Place

Readings:
- Aceros, J. C., Pols, J., & Domènech, M. (2015). Where is grandma? Home telecare, good aging and the domestication of later life. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, *93*, 102-111.
- Peek, S. T., Luijkx, K. G., Rijnaard, M. D., Nieboer, M. E., van der Voort, C. S., Aarts, S., ... & Wouters, E. J. (2016). Older adults' reasons for using technology while aging in place. *Gerontology*, *62*(2), 226-237.

Week 5: February 7, 2023
Fieldtrip: Westdale Smart Home

Note: News Scan assignment due February 7th (11:59pm EST)

Note: Sign up for AgeTech Mythbusting topics will open on February 8th

Week 6: February 14, 2023
Topic: Privacy and Surveillance

Readings:
- Kenner, A. M. (2008). Securing the elderly body: Dementia, surveillance, and the politics of "aging in place". *Surveillance & Society, 5*(3), 252-269.
- Berridge, C., & Wetle, T. F. (2020). Why older adults and their children disagree about in-home surveillance technology, sensors, and tracking. *The Gerontologist*, *60*(5), 926-934.
- Mortenson, W. B., Sixsmith, A., & Beringer, R. (2016). No place like home? Surveillance and what home means in old age. *Canadian Journal on Aging/La Revue canadienne du vieillissement*, *35*(1), 103-114.

Quick read:
- Masuike, H. (2022). Where a thousand digital eyes keep watch over the elderly. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/02/business/japan-elderly-surveillance.html

Video:
- Superflux Lab. (2015). Uninvited guests [Video file]. Retrieved from https://vimeo.com/128873380

Week 7: February 21, 2023
   READING WEEK

Week 8: February 28, 2023
   Topic: Technologies and Care

   Guest lecture: Dr. Constance Lafontaine
   Associate Director
   Ageing + Communication + Technologies (ACT) project

   Readings:
   - Engelhart, K. (2021, May 24). What robots can – and can't – do for the old and lonely. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/05/31/what-robots-can-and-cant-do-for-the-old-and-lonely
   - Lafontaine, C. (2020, July). Towards lively surveillance? The domestication of companion robots. In *International Conference on Human-Computer Interaction* (pp. 486-496). Springer.
   - Roberts, C., & Mort, M. (2009). Reshaping what counts as care: Older people, work and new technologies. *Alter: European Journal of Disability Research, 3*(2), 138-158.

Week 9: March 7, 2023
   Topic: Technologies and Leisure

   Guest lecture: Scott DeJong
   PhD Candidate, Concordia University
   Guest lecture title: Digital Divide is Dead: Intimacies and play as motives for senior engagement with technology

   Readings:
   - Marshall, B.L. (2018). Our Fitbits, our (ageing) selves: Wearables, self-tracking and ageing embodiment. In S. Katz (Ed.), *Ageing in everyday life: Materialities and embodiments* (pp. 197–213). Policy Press.
   - De Schutter, B. (2011). Never too old to play: The appeal of digital games to an older audience. *Games and Culture*, *6*(2), 155–170.
   - Mims, C. (2012). *There is no digital divide*. The MIT Technology Review. https://www.technologyreview.com/2012/05/31/185886/there-is-no-digital-divide/

   Video:

- Shirley Curry: The Gaming Grandma Documentary
  (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxoXrc8pwx0)

Note: Part 1 of AgeTech Mythbusting assignment due March 7th (11:59pm EST)

Week 10: March 14, 2023
    Topic: To be determined (based on student interest)

Week 11: March 21, 2023
    Reflection Week

Week 12: March 28, 2023
    Presentations

    Note: Part 2 of AgeTech Mythbusting assignment due March 28th (11:59pm EST)

Week 13: April 4, 2023
    Course Wrap Up and Reflection

    *Note: no classes in Week 14 (April 11, 2023)

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments
All assignments will be turned in via Avenue To Learn. Assignments will be handed in online via A2L by 11:59pm on the day it is due.

Please submit all assignments as a Word document (.doc/.docx) and include your last name in the assignment file name. Your assignments should be typed, double-spaced, and use a 12 point font of your choosing. Any citation style is acceptable, as long as it is correctly and consistently used. For assistance with citation style, please consult McMaster's Library website. Please do not use class lectures as a reference source.

Grades
Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+

MARK	GRADE
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

All course work will be carefully and thoughtfully graded. On occasion, students may disagree with the mark they receive. If this occurs, I would be happy to review your assignment, provided the following procedure is followed. Please wait at least 24 hours after receiving an assignment before contacting me. Write a one-page statement describing in detail why you think a grading error was made. Support your argument with examples from your assignment that demonstrate how you satisfied the assignment criteria better than your grade reflected. The statement should be submitted, along with the marked assignment, to me for review. You may submit the request for a re-grading no sooner than one week and no later than one month after the assignment was returned. I will review your assignment and will provide additional written feedback. _Please note that there is a possibility that when an assignment is reviewed, you may receive a grade lower than the original._

Late Assignments

Extensions for course assignments will only be granted under conditions of medical, family, or other extraordinary circumstances. All other late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 3% per day, including weekend days and holidays. Assignments more than one week overdue will not be accepted. Assignments submitted on time will receive a grade and written comments; late assignments will receive minimal feedback. If you have read this far, thank you! Please send me an email with your favourite type of cheese to receive an additional participation mark.

Course Modification

The instructor reserves the right to modify elements of the course during the term. If any modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

University Policies

Academic Integrity

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and

academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the *Academic Integrity Policy*, located at https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/
The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:
- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Courses with an Online Element
This course uses online elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Conduct Expectations
As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the *Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities* (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities
Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make

arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's *Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities* policy.

Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

Academic Accommodation For Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Copyright And Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.