

Georgia Tech Lorraine, European Campus of the Georgia Institute of Technology
HTS 2084: Silicon Valley and the Origins of the Global Technological Society
(Technology and Society)

Web version
Course Syllabus

Instructor

Dr. Timothy Stoneman
School of History and Sociology
tim.stoneman@hsoc.gatech.edu
Office 226, GTL Building

Time and Place

TBD

Office Hours: TBD

Mode of Interaction: In-person residential instruction

Course Attributes

HTS 2084 fulfills the social science and ethics requirements at Georgia Tech.

Course Description

We live in a digital technological world with a unique epicenter and point of origin: Silicon Valley in northern California. Silicon Valley's capacity for continuous regeneration across successive waves of technological development – from integrated chip manufacturing to smartphones and social media - have kept the region at the forefront of global innovation for over half a century

In studying Silicon Valley in depth, we will pursue three objectives. First, we will appreciate the long history of Silicon Valley well beyond the libertarian age of social media (1990s-2000s) and see how extensive government military and aerospace spending enabled the transformation of an agricultural garden of fruit orchards into a high-tech region. Second, we will appreciate the role of particular places in producing economic value through social networks and analyze how successfully the model of Silicon Valley can be replicated elsewhere in the world, especially Europe. Thirdly, and more broadly still, we will see the ecosystem pioneered in Silicon Valley, notably the embrace of open-ended technological innovation, fostered a new type of business culture and technologically oriented society that, with advanced digital infrastructure in the 21st century, has become both hegemonic and worldwide.

Because Silicon Valley has become a central cultural reference point, a wealth of popular materials exists, such as memoirs, fiction, documentaries, and films. The course will take advantage of multimedia, including documentary and feature films, as well as insider accounts of the Silicon Valley experience. Overall, we will take a critical historical approach – we will study the history of Silicon Valley in order to better reveal, and grapple with, the complex issues it poses for the present and future of humanity.

Course Objectives

Students will accomplish the following objectives:

- Students will describe relationships among languages, philosophies, cultures, literature, ethics, or the arts.*
- Students will demonstrate the ability to describe the social, political, and economic forces that influence social behavior.*
- Students will develop a critical perspective on changes in the relationship between technology, culture and society over major periods of human history.

- Students will integrate aspects of their living experience while in Europe with their classroom study and develop self-awareness of their identity as travel consumers.
- Students will demonstrate proficiency in the process of articulating and organizing rhetorical arguments in written, oral, visual, and nonverbal modes, using concrete support and conventional language.*
- Students will be able to judge factual claims and theories on the basis of evidence.*
- Students will develop effective oral and written communication skills.

(* Language is taken directly from the General Education Mission Statement of Georgia Tech's Core Curriculum, available on the Registrar website.)

Grading

Course assessment will be based on the following formula:

10%	Film review
10%	Forum participation
20%	Class discussion
20%	Test
20%	Memoir paper
30%	Final projects

Georgia Tech Lorraine is a serious academic program. While not required, attendance is strongly encouraged at all classes. Please let me know in advance if you cannot attend for an official reason. Students are expected to pay attention in class and actively discuss readings. Please do not use electronic devices, including laptops and cell phones, without special permission.

Concerning major assignments, students will complete an open review on Canvas of a major film shown in class (criteria and rubric to be provided). Students will also choose and review a memoir of a Silicon Valley insider from a list of titles provided; students will grade their own paper, following an individual meeting with the professor. Students must choose a title by [date]. Participation in the class forum ("Can Silicon Valley be reproduced in Europe?") along the lines indicated by the instructor will also constitute a portion of your grade. A single test will cover the second unit of the class and will include short answer and/or short essay questions. There will be no final exam. Instead, a final (group) project will cover in depth a critical contemporary issue of the student's choice related to Silicon Valley. Professor will provide a list of possible topics. Initial topics are due on [date], final topics by [date]. Students must complete an annotated bibliography by [date] and working thesis by [date]. Final presentations will take place on [date].

Students will receive a grade for class discussion on the following scale: 95% (regular and significant contribution) – 90% (moderate contribution) – 85% (little or no contribution). Discussion grades will be posted twice on Canvas during the semester, with the final discussion grade an average score. Discussion contributions in class should increase our group understanding rather than merely repeat points.

To receive grades of excellence, students must demonstrate close understanding of course concepts and knowledge of relevant historical material covered in lectures, readings, videos, and class discussion. Final grading will be done on a letter basis and will be rounded up on the half percentage point (i.e. 89.5% = A). Final grades will not be available through Oscar until the Monday following the end of the exam period [date]. Please do not ask to have grades changed.

Honor Policy

Students are expected to abide by the Georgia Tech honor code. All infractions will be handled through the Office of the Dean of Students and treated with the utmost seriousness.

Statement on Inclusion

The Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts supports the Georgia Institute of Technology's commitment to creating a campus free of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status. We further affirm the importance of cultivating an intellectual climate that allows us to better understand the similarities and differences of those who constitute the Georgia Tech community, as well as the necessity of working against inequalities that may also manifest here as they do in the broader society. (Statement taken from Ivan Allen College Dean's Office.)

Course Materials

There are no required textbooks. All reading material and course communication will occur through Canvas.

Course Schedule

- I. Introduction
- II. Silicon Valleys Past
- III. European Silicon Valleys?
- IV. Silicon Valleys Present
- V. Silicon Valleys Future