

## **Is Technology Neutral? Science and Technology Studies for the Future**

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Think about life before the smartphone. Does the mere thought send you into panic or rather nostalgia? There is no doubt smartphones have made life simpler and more productive in a host of ways, but at what cost? Smartphone addiction is a serious problem. Half of smartphone owners admit to using them while driving, and one in ten admit to using their smartphones even in the shower and during sex. There are myriad other problems, individual and societal, created by the smartphone, and this could be said for virtually every new technology. However, we rarely stop and seriously think about the effects, good or ill, the introduction of new technologies will have on society. Science and Technology Studies is a relatively new course of university study merging two broad areas of research. Firstly, research on the nature and practices of science and technology addresses the scientific method, the credibility of science discovery, how science and technology develops and the relationship between science and religion. Secondly, research on the impacts and control of science and technology addresses the risks science poses to peace, security, community, democracy, environmental sustainability, and human values. This second research area is focused on how scientific decisions are made and what factors play into those decisions. Such decisions are not easy and the effects cut across a wide swath of society. In general, Science and Technology programs attempt to bring together those who drive new technology and those who are affected by new technology. These programs are cross-disciplinary with a strong ethics and humanities component combined with a comprehensive science education; the basic objective is to build a bridge between disciplines that do not ordinarily meet in the undergraduate curriculum in order to provide the skills necessary to holistically evaluate potential technological advances for benefits and potential risks in the short and long term. This talk will briefly review curricula and objectives of current Science and Technology programs with an eye on how such programs can help prepare students to drive future conversations on technological advances.

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