Spring 2023 First-Year Seminar
GEOG 062: The Culture of Technology
Instructor: Scott Kirsch, Associate Professor of Geography
http://kirschgeographies.web.unc.edu/
TR 3:30-4:45pm @ CAROLINA HALL 204

It is hard to define "technology", but we know it when we see it: cell phones; global positioning systems; genetically-modified organisms; satellites; magnetic resonance imaging; microchips; steam engines; automobiles, passenger jets; x-rays; nuclear bombs; the internet. Technological systems and artifacts, as these examples suggest, have shaped our world in critical ways, from our means of dealing with nature to our modes of dealing with each other, from economic production to political debates to the very dimensions of space and time around which social life is organized. And yet, though technology is arguably among the most human of social processes, its profound effects on social relations, everyday life, and the human environment are too often left unexamined. This first-year seminar uses the lens of culture to explore codes of meaning and values, and relations of social power, that are invested in technologies. Focusing on representations of technology in film, literature, and new media, on one hand, and on the values implicated in the making of actual technologies, on the other, the course encourages critical thinking and writing about our place in a technological world, and technology's place in ours.