

Department of Anthropology

ANTHRO 2286A-200: Computers, Culture, and Connectivity

BRIEF COURSE OUTLINE

Fall 2025

Date: June 24, 2025

Instructor and course information:

Instructor: Dr. Jeremy Trombley

Method of delivery: Blended, 2 in-person lecture hours and 1 asynchronous online.

Credit value: 0.5

Antirequisites: None.

Prerequisites: None.

Course Description:

You are surrounded by computers. They link us together across enormous distances, allow us to complete tasks at untold speeds, and open new realms of artistic expression. But computers are not just technical devices. They also shape the way that we experience the world around us and our social behaviors and norms. They are, in turn, shaped by the social contexts in which they are created. How are our lives changing, for better and worse, because of computers? How can we think about computers and computation in new and inspiring ways? This course will help you to begin to answer these questions and more.

This course is designed to encourage you to think differently about computation – to think about it as primarily a human social practice. In it you will learn about the history of computation, how computation has shaped our social lives over the last century, and how we can study computation from an anthropological perspective. You will be introduced to concepts from the anthropology of science and science and technology studies and will learn to analyze and critique technological narratives to understand how they intersect with existing social ideologies and cultural norms. In keeping with the topic, this is a blended course, so we will have an in-person and online component to this course. In-person classes will consist of lecture and in-class activities designed to help you think critically about computers and computation in your everyday lives. The online component will primarily consist of discussion of the readings and other relevant topics.

A full course schedule including a week-by-week breakdown of topics and assigned readings will be available on the course's OWL Brightspace site before the first day of class.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the history of computation.
- Reflect on computation as a human practice shaped by social and cultural contexts.
- Discuss the intersections of race, gender, class and computation in the past and present.
- Analyze and critique technological narratives.

- Conduct independent research on the social dimensions of computational technologies.
- Challenge widespread assumptions about computing and develop fresh, alternative views.

Course Materials:

No textbook

Evaluation:

Grades will be based on the following:

Engagement	25%
In-Class Exercises (x12)	50%
Group Documentary Project	20%
Course Reflection	5%

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