Assignment 1
Due Date: Tuesday, February 19, 2013
•   Assignment 1 is due at the beginning of class
•   Please put your name on the back of the last page of the assignment to allow us to review your work blind
•   Bring *two* stapled copies of your assignment to class.
•   Papers should be double-spaced, 12-point font (e.g., Times New Roman).
•   Cite quotes and paraphrase arguments from the readings using parenthetical documentation according to the reader's pagination, i.e. (Ackerman, p.24). You do not need a bibliography for articles and papers used in the course syllabus.
•   **Grading Criteria:** you will be graded on (1) your fully answering all aspects of the questions, (2) your understanding of course readings (how you reference them in your essays) (3) the logic of your claims (4) your extension of concepts and arguments from course readings to new situations/topics

Short essays (90%): Answer 2 out of 3 essay topics. Each essay response should be about 500 words, which is roughly 2 double spaced pages of text.

In responding to each of these questions, be sure to pick at least two texts from our syllabus in making your argument. Note: there is no one right answer. A successful answer will both provide a clear argument as well as cite evidence and theory (author and page number) from our course materials.

1. Consider the following 2 statements:
a) "The chief executive of Apple, Timothy D. Cook, has a prediction: the day will come when tablet devices like the Apple iPad outsell traditional personal computers. His forecast has backing from a growing number of analysts and veteran technology industry executives, who contend that the torrid growth rates of the iPad, combined with tablet competition from the likes of Amazon.com and Microsoft, make a changing of the guard a question of when, not if." http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/06/technology/as-new-ipad-debut-nears-some-see-decline-of-pcs.html?src=me&ref=general

b) "Pity the poor laptop. The darling of the tech world just a couple of years ago, laptops have become one of the biggest casualties of the tablet phenomenon. For consumers enamored of touch-screen tablets, laptops suddenly seem like stale, clunky gadgets whose basic clamshell design hasn't changed all that much in two decades. It opens. It shuts. Yawn. But this week at the 2013 International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, the laptop is attempting a comeback. The stodgy clamshell is being cast aside by manufacturers who are trying to create a new category of device that combines the feel and functions of tablets and laptops." http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-ces-laptops-20130109,0,785192.story

In your essay, reconcile or contrast these statements based on theoretical perspective(s) and concepts that we have discussed in class and in our readings. Specifically, be sure to discuss the differences and similarities in how these authors conceptualize the development, marketing, and adoption of technology.

3. Self-driving cars are in the news again after some auto manufacturers revealed prototypes at the CES in January. Consider this selected reader comment published in the Wall Street Journal:

"Self-driving cars are inevitable and spell the end to human-driven cars. Once they are shown to be much safer, there will be economic pressure in the form of much higher insurance premiums for human driven cars followed closely by an outright ban on public roads. By adopting driverless cars, it would be easy to double road capacity by increasing road speeds, decreasing car spacing and eliminating traffic lights and stop signs. This only works if everyone is using a driverless car. Human-driven cars will be considered a public menace."
http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390443524904577651552635911824.html

Drawing from our readings, what kind of assumptions does this statement make about the development and adoption of technology in society, and how would some of the various authors we have read respond to such a statement? Specifically, be sure to advocate a clear response to this statement from at least two theoretical frameworks we have discussed in class.

3. Review the following graph on the "long, slow death of the landline" (at least as the headline from BoingBoing read, http://boingboing.net/2012/12/28/the-long-slow-death-of-the-lan.html) and compare this with Fischer's graph of the adoption of various domestic technologies (p. 62 of your course reader)

In your essay, compare Fischer's analysis of the telephone with that of at least one other author we have read, describing the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches in studying the decline in landline phone service. Be sure to detail what each author does not consider in the study of technology, as well as how each author's work helps us better understand something like the current decline in landline use.

Part II (10%)

Answer the following question in 300 words maximum.
Describe at least two or three topic areas (but no more than three) of interest to you that could become your final paper for i203. These could be topics that we have covered in class, topics that we have not yet discussed in class but are on the syllabus, or issues that relate to social issues of information that interest you but are not even on our syllabus. Tell us about (1) your topic idea, (2) what interests you about it, (3) various angles you might take. You are not locking yourself into anything at this point. We simply want you to brainstorm and begin the process of finding a suitable topic for your final paper.

To stimulate your thinking, here are some sample final paper topics from previous years (and some ideas that we thought up)

- How Twitter and Other Communication Tools Spread Spoilers and Challenge the Freedom to Time-Shift Television
- The Diffusion of Open ID
- Issues of Ethical Hacking
- Mobile Phone Usage and Its Effects on Personal Safety
- Motivation in Open-Source Software Development

- Social Issues in Privacy within Facebook (you could even focus in on one particular issue)
- The Effects of Anonymity in Internet Systems on the Development of Self-Esteem
- Evaluating the Privacy Effect in the Use of Computer Surveillance
- Implications of Phone Sharing for Expanding Communication Access in Rural Africa
- The Uses and Abuses of Anthropomorphism in User Interface Design
- The Processes, Effects and Constraints of Digital Activism