Assignment 1:

How to decode your score:
You could score a maximum of 7 points for each question you answered in part I.
These were the criteria (which were specified on the assignment sheet):

1 - fully answering all aspects of the question (2 points)
2 - understanding of course readings and concepts (based on how you reference
them in your essays) (2 points)
3 - the logic of your claims (2 points)
4 - your extension of concepts and arguments from course readings to new
situations/topics (1 point)

You could score a maximum of 1.5 points for part 2.
1 – topic idea (did you express it clearly?) (0.5 total)
2 – described why it was interesting (0.5 total)
3 – angle on the topic – we cut you a lot of slack on this as it was interpreted in many
unintended ways by students (0.5 total)

A 15 is essentially a 100% and an A+ (yes it was possible to score up to 15.5 and a
couple of students did score over 15!)

12 – 15.5 (A range)

8.5 – 11.9999 (B range)

Below 8.5 = needs improvement

Administrative issues:
- Don't forget to identify which of the questions you are answering. Don't write essay 1 and essay 2 when you are answering questions 3 and 4 (help us out, we are not mind readers!)
- Be mindful of the word limits +/- 50 words (warning this time, next time points off!)
- When you provide page numbers, provide the **course reader pages** not the book or chapter pages (we do check your citations!)

General feedback on assignment 1 – how might I improve my grade on future assignments?

Read the questions carefully and ***answer them completely*****.** The questions had multiple parts and "fully answering all aspects of the question" was one criterion for grading (as noted on the assignment sheet). A number of students missed one or more parts of the question in their answers. We set the word count per question to 500 words to keep the assignment manageable for you to complete and for us to grade. Consequently you need to write efficiently. Say things once and (for example) avoid sentences that start, "in other words."

Some students made the mistake of **reifying theories/concepts**. Technological determinism, Social Construction of Technology, Actor-Network Theory, etc. are theoretical perspectives that offer different explanations for what we observe in the world. These theoretical perspectives are not **properties** of technology or of the world. Therefore it does not make sense to talk about, "Facebook's technological determinism." Rather you can speak about whether statements made by Facebook employees reflect a technologically determinist view of the technology. You could give a technologically determinist argument about the "Facebook resisters" and what it would suggest about the impact their resistance is likely to have on the technology itself or other users.

Inaccurate references to readings that reflect a sentence-by-sentence understanding, but **missed some element of the big picture**. For example, the introduction to Fischer <u>America Calling</u> referred to a number of "intellectual approaches to technology and society." Some students made the mistake of confusing approaches Fischer was critical of for ones he supported. Some failed to correctly identify which was Fischer's own framework (answer: the user heuristic model).

General issues of organization, logic, and clarity - if you had problems with any of these issues, ask yourself, 'did I start and complete the assignment the night before it was due and in one sitting?' If the answer is yes, consider starting your assignment a day earlier and let it sit overnight. When you reread it the next day with fresh eyes you are more likely to catch some of these errors and lapses. If you got a perfect or nearly perfect score on one question and a poor score on another –

this also might reflect a time management issue. Did you spend most of your time on the question you scored well on and then rush through the other one?

"extension of course concepts" was another grading criteria. We are not looking for you to simply parrot back to us the readings, discussions from class, and examples we considered, but to show an ability to integrate and relate these concepts to one another and apply them to what's happening in the world. One straight-forward way of "extending" course concepts: when asked for an example (i.e. of the socio-technical gap) use one you came up with on your own and that we did not discuss in class. We discussed Facebook extensively in class in relation to the socio-technical gap so we were not particularly impressed when students used this as their example to answer question 2 unless you found a new aspect of it to consider.

Final paper topic:

Scope: some students selected topics that are far too broad to be tackled in a 20 page paper. Narrow down your scope to something more manageable so that you can actually make and convincingly support a claim with your argument. You will not be able to convincingly argue about how 'the rise of virtual/online social spaces has affected our conception of social life.' Which virtual social spaces might you consider (i.e. e-mail, mobile phones, MMOPGs, social network sites) or what kinds of activities (i.e. online dating, online education)? What population of users in what part of the world? What specific aspects of how we conceive of social life might you consider, for example, which seem most vulnerable to change?

Novelty: we are hoping for you to find something you have a personal interest in, not for you to merely pick a paper topic from the list we provided. The list might suggest general topics to consider and approaches to use that have a 203 flavor, but you will need to do something different with that topic (not simply write a paper someone wrote in a prior year).

Relevance to 203: Some topics sounded very close to ones you might have dealt with in previous classes – especially law classes. Using the same general topics is fine, but make sure you address 203 issues.

Issues with specific readings:
The socio-technical gap was misunderstood by some students. Some described it as the gap between what we want a technology to do for us and what it is able to do. Certainly that is part of how a socio-technical gap might be experienced, but this is overly general and imprecise. Rather the socio-technical gap is more narrowly about the role technologies now often play in supporting the <u>social</u> world, even mediating social interaction. The gap arises from the "flexible, nuanced, and contextualized" qualities of human <u>social</u> activity and interaction that technologies are not able to fully support.

Especially on question 3 - lots of people used Bijker's SCOT framing but did not fully understand the concept of "relevant social groups" equating users to one relevant social group and non-users to another. Recall that what defines a "relevant social group" is a *shared interpretation of a technology.* Non-users may have different interpretations of the technology and thus compose more than one "relevant social group." For example you might have a group of non-users who have a lot of issues with online privacy and handing over control of their personal information to a large and powerful firm. Another group of non-users might be bothered by the lazy reliance on Facebook updates to keep up with friends rather than phone calls and refrain from using Facebook for this reason.

Only a few people referred to Latour and Actor-Network Theory in answering question 4 (about Google and the future of libraries and librarians) though it was written with some obvious clues to reference ANT (i.e. "non-humans" and "delegation"). A reminder that part of doing well in answering the questions is picking the best readings to use in your answer.