The automobile is the epitome of modernity. It influences almost every aspect of our lives, whether it’s how we live and work, how we perceive one another and our social status, to issues such as time, space, and even dating. From parking lots to advertising to auto workers, this course explores the immense impact of the automobile-- both the positive consequences and the negative influences-- on the social, cultural, environmental, and economic landscape of Canada and North America. Indeed, this course looks at the automobile's impact upon local, national and continental spaces, utilizing the car as a vehicle by which to understand a wide range of socioeconomic and political changes over the last century.

In the Fall Term, students will partake in intensive seminar discussion of these issues. The topics addressed during the fall term include only a fraction of the issues available for discussion. Students are encouraged to also consider examining topics not covered in the seminar readings for their research papers/presentations.

In the Winter Term, students will focus on their research papers. In January and February, students will conduct independent study, research and writing towards the completion of their major papers. The seminar will meet only a few times during this period. Beginning in March, students will begin presenting their research findings to the seminar and submitting their final papers.

The aim of this course is for students to develop their own opinions on just what the impact of the automobile has been on life in Canada, and within a North American context. Students will develop and sharpen these views by critically assessing historical works together, and by individually providing book reviews and presenting their research findings to the seminar. It should be emphasized that this is first and foremost a history course, and that all of these activities shall be rooted within the historical discipline.

There are no exams or tests in this course.

ALL aspects of this syllabus are subject to change. Please read the syllabus carefully.

Required Materials:

Course Evaluation:

Seminar Participation: 30%
Review Essay/Presentation: 15%
Research Paper + Progress Report: 45%
Paper Presentation: 10%
Total: 100%

Basis for Evaluation:

This course focuses upon three of the main activities historians undertake in their work: Reviews, presentations, and original writing. In our course, this means we will focus on book reviews, presentations, and essays to determine the student’s final grade. All of these activities are conducted with an eye towards critical evaluation—students actively critique and assess the basis of others’ (and their own) work in a balanced and fair manner. Thus, there is also a heavy emphasis on seminar participation.

The Review Essay:

In the Fall Term, students will write a minimum four-page (at least four full pages) review of one of the review readings from a given week, worth 15% of the final grade. This will be a critical assessment of the effectiveness of the work, examining the monograph from the standpoint of its argumentation, sources, style, methodology, etc. It is imperative that the student develop a cogent critique of the work, and provide evidence to support their position/thesis as to the effectiveness of the monograph under consideration. Please refer to other published reviews as a guideline for this assignment. As fourth year students, you are expected to provide a well-defined and reasoned assessment of your book.

As part of this process, the student will give a ten to fifteen minute presentation of their assessment/findings to the class, providing an overview of the student's review, a context of the reading, and a framework for further discussion. This presentation should build upon and develop further themes discussed in the seminar for that week. The presentation will be worth one-third of the assignment weight, or 5% of the final grade. Students will be graded on clarity, presentation style, connection to seminar discussion, and overall effectiveness of their review.

The Research Paper:

In the Winter Term, students will write a minimum 25-page (that is text, and does not include notes or bibliography) major research paper worth 40% of the final grade. Students have three different options in the types of papers that will be acceptable in this course:

- Option 1: Literature Review/Historiographical Essay:
  This type of paper is a historiographical overview of at least five major works that examine a given field or subfield within the themes discussed in the “Car in History” course. The paper should contextualize the issue (using other secondary sources), address the main points of debate that the works examine, and provide a detailed critique and analysis of those works and their contributions to the historiographical debate and the historical question under examination. Questions to be considered can include: How do these authors differ in their interpretations of
a common issue within the historical subfield? Why types of approaches do they utilize? How do their sources impact upon their interpretations? What is your assessment of the effectiveness of each author, and why?

- **Option 2: Primary Source Analysis I: The Automobile and Newspapers, Magazines, and other primary written materials**

  This type of paper explores a newspaper, magazine or other type of primary source to assess how this source reflects broader political, cultural, economic or social concerns towards an issue related to “The Car in History.” For instance, a student might look at articles found in the *Peterborough Examiner* to assess how in a particular period people in the city dealt with issues such as those considered in the course material. These could include the emergence of the car, the battle over public versus private space, regulation of the automobile, or suburbanization of Peterborough in the post-World War II period. Alternatively, students might consider different ways that these primary sources can tell us something about the automobile and its role in society. Building on class readings, a student might examine automobile advertising in, for example, the *Globe and Mail*, and investigate what it can tell us about questions such as gender, or class, or race, or a host of other issues. Papers in this option would need to be grounded in a solid secondary literature which details the methodological approach taken by students, and effectively contextualizes and frames both the issue and the source being used.

- **Option 3: Primary Source Analysis II: The Automobile and Political Debate**

  Similar to Option 2, this type of paper utilizes primary political documents, such as the Debates of the House of Commons, the Debates of the Ontario Legislative Assembly, or Peterborough Council Minutes, to examine how politicians and parties addressed issues related to automobiles, the auto industry, and the impact of the car in general, over time. For example, what was the political response to the debate over conflict between public and private space in the post-World War I period? Or how did federal or provincial politicians address the gas shortage in the 1970s? What do these debates tell us about societal or political attitudes towards a particular issue, and now these attitudes have changed over time?

  **Bibliographic length will vary,** depending on which option has been utilized by the student for the paper. While the topic for the paper is relatively very open (students are encouraged to delve deeply into any issue which may interest them and that has to do with the social, cultural, economic or political impact of the automobile), **it is required that students will meet with the instructor during designated office hours or by appointment during the Fall Term so that consultation and approval for the essay topic can be given.** Students who wish to pursue an essay that is outside of the three options are welcome to do so, though any essay which departs from these approaches must also be developed in consultation with the course instructor.

  During the research period (January-February), all students must meet with the instructor to give a **verbal report** updating the progress toward the completion of the essay. This should be **accompanied by a one-page written progress report** which will be included in the instructor’s overall assessment of the paper/presentation. Such a report may include: topic/possible thesis statement, outline of research program, a list of sources, assessment of problems encountered, etc. The seminar will also meet in January and February for a discussion regarding research questions and methods, and research advances or problems encountered. **Students are required to submit the tentative title of their paper/presentation by the beginning of the presentation period.**
The Research Paper Presentation:

Students will have a maximum of one-half hour to present their papers to the class in March and April. These presentations, which are worth 10% of the final grade, will allow students to present their arguments, research findings, and any other material they deem relevant to the dissemination of their research results (visual materials, etc.). They should also take questions from the seminar. Two fellow students will be asked to anonymously write a one-page assessment of the presentation/questions and answers, which will be used to determine the student’s presentation grade. The final paper will be due one week after their presentation, allowing the student to incorporate any changes suggested by their fellow classmates. Thus, determination of the order of presentations/final papers is up to the individual students, who can choose their particular slots during the January-February consultation/verbal-written report period (or even beforehand), on a first-come basis.

Seminar Participation:

A significant part of critical evaluation takes place in the form of class discussion. Obviously, it is imperative that students contribute effectively and fairly during the seminar, and class participation will be 30% of their final grade. All students are expected to contribute in every seminar.

Readings:

Unless otherwise indicated, required readings are posted on the WEB CT site for this course in PDF or Word formats (except for the two books). All required readings, including those not on WEB CT, are easily available in the Bata Library. Review books are not on reserve, and it is each student’s responsibility to procure the book for their review. Remember: Inter-Library loans can take up to 6 weeks, so it is essential that you look into getting your review books as soon as possible. Please discuss with Dimitry if you encounter difficulties procuring your book.
Weekly Schedule: Fall Term, 2008

Week 1: September 10
Course Introduction

Outline of the course, expectations, discussion of weekly seminars, assignments, final presentations, and sign up for review/presentation readings for Fall Term seminars.

Week 2: September 17
Beginnings: The Emergence of the “Great God Car”

Discussion Readings:
James Flink, *The Automobile Age* (Cambridge, MA, 1990), preface and 1-55 (Online, or on reserve)


Frederick deLuna, “The Rules of the Road: Left, Right or Down the Middle?” *The Beaver* 1993 73(4): 17-21


Review Readings:
James Flink, *The Automobile Age* (Cambridge, MA, 1990)

Week 3: September 24
From Jaywalking to Parking: The Auto and Early Battles over Public and Private Space

Discussion Readings:
Peter Norton, “Street Rivals: Jaywalking and the Invention of the Motor Age Street” *Technology and History* 2007 48 (2): 331-359


Review Readings:
**Week 4: October 1**

On the Line: The Car Reshapes Work

**Discussion Readings:**
John Manley, “Communists and Autoworkers: The Struggle for Industrial Unionism in the Canadian Automobile Industry, 1925-1936,” *Labour/Le Travail* 17 (Spring 1986)


**Review Readings:**

**Week 5: October 8**

Creating Consumerism: Selling and Advertising Cars

**Discussion Readings:**


**Review Readings:**
Week 6: October 15  
The Car and Gender

Discussion Readings:  


Review Readings:  
Virginia Scharff, Taking the Wheel: Women and the Coming of the Motor Age (Toronto, 1991)

October 24: No Seminar, Fall Reading Week

Week 7: October 29  
Auto Geniuses and Management Gods: Auto Industry Titans and their Impact

Discussion Readings:  
James Flink, The Automobile Age (Cambridge, MA, 1990), Chap. 5, 56-72 (Online, or on reserve)


Review Readings:  
Heather Roberts, Driving Force: The McLaughlin Family and the Age of the Car (Toronto, 1995)
David R. Farber, Sloan Rules: Alfred P. Sloan and the Triumph of General Motors (Chicago, 2002)
Week 8: November 5
Subdivisions I: Pre-War Urban and Suburban Autoscapes

Discussion Readings:
Richard Harris, *Creeping Conformity, How Canada Became Suburban, 1900-1960* (Toronto, 2004) entire

Review Readings:

Week 9: November 12
Subdivisions II: Postwar Suburban, and Exurban Autoscapes

Discussion Readings:


Review Readings:
Clay McShane, *Down the Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City* (New York, 1994)

Week 10: November 19
The Environment and Safety

Discussion Readings:


Review Readings:
Ralph Nader, *Unsafe at Any Speed* (New York, 1972)
Jack Doyle, *Taken For a Ride: Detroit’s Big Three and the Politics of Pollution* (New York, 2000)
**Week 11: November 26**

**Canada in the North American Auto Industry**

**Discussion Readings:**

Donald Davis, “Dependent Development: Canada and the Automobile in the 1930s,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 21, 3 (Autumn 1986), 106-32


**Review Readings:**
Review of Website “The Automobile in American Life and Society” ([www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/)) (See instructor for further instructions)

**Week 12: December 3**

**The End of the Auto Age? Deindustrialization, The Chrysler Bailout, and Oil Crisis**

**Discussion Readings:**


**Review Books:**
Ruth Milkman, *Farewell to the Factory* (California, 1997)

Have a great Holiday Break! See you in January…
Weekly Schedule: Winter Term, 2009

Weeks 13-18: January 7, 14, 21, 28 and February 4, 11: Research and Writing Period

During this period, students are expected to work on their research papers/presentations independently.

Students are expected to meet at least once during this period individually with their instructor to provide their individual verbal-written update on the progress of their research and writing, and to discuss any problems they might be having with the preparation of their paper/presentation.

While formal seminars will not be held, the Thursday session will instead be devoted to films related to the course, “The Car in History: Movie Nights”. While attendance is not required, students are strongly encouraged to attend. They are welcome to invite friends, roommates, colleagues, significant others, etc. Along with watching a movie, students will be encouraged to exchange information and discuss their research and writing programs.

The Car in History: Movie Nights Screening Schedule:

January 7    Final Offer
January 14   The End of Suburbia
January 21   Roger and Me
January 28   Tucker
February 4   TBD
February 11  Who Killed the Electric Car?
February 18  NO CLASS: Reading Week

OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT: As an optional assignment towards class participation, students may write a 750-word movie review of one of the films shown during the screenings.

Weeks 19-24: February 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25 and April 1: Class Presentations

There will be approximately three presentations per class, depending on the timing and length of presentations, and whatever other materials the instructor may wish to introduce during this period.