

30 mins. for preparation + 10 mins. for each presentation + 20 mins. assessment

GROUP 1

What is technocracy?

Instructions:

Rozsak provides an extensive definition of the term technocracy. Discuss how he presents the term, what examples he gives to illustrate it and why he considers it problematic. Observe how technocracy relates to the project of modernity as shown on the Introduction scans. Fordism and Taylorism refer to the reconfiguration of labor into more efficient forms. Similarly, the housing style was redesigned to better fit the needs of the industrial production – do you remember Cohen’s critique of the East London “redevelopment”? See also the image of the ‘50s public housing project Pruitt-Igoe demolished in 1972. You may search the net for any additional materials or information.

After you consider all these materials separately, try to bring them together. Discuss how these materials could be combined into a single narrative by which you explain to your peers what technocracy is. Make use of the materials to provide the historical background as well as the definition illustrated by examples from the text and finalize by providing a critique using Cohen’s view on the architectonic and social changes of the part of London. You may want to examine the role “experts” play in technocracy and see what the repercussions of expert solutions to the problems of the working-class slums were. According to Cohen, why did the seemingly rational and well-planned solutions not work? Can you extrapolate from this specific example what a possible critique of technocracy one could propose?

Materials to consider:

Rozsak’s “Technocracy’s children” (1968), scans from the “Introduction to Modernism”, Cohen’s “Subcultures conflict and working-class community” (1972), an image of the ‘50s public housing project Pruitt-Igoe

Presentation:

After you make a preparation, decide on the manner of the presentation. You can divide it into sections, pick a representative or choose other form to explain to your peers the meaning of technocracy.

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GROUP 2

Sexual revolution and/versus feminism

Instructions:

On pp.14-15, Roszak explains how the sexual revolution fits into technocracy. Consider his example of “Playboy sexuality”, what does he mean? He proposes that “the woman becomes a mere playmate, a submissive bunny, a mindless decoration [...] half the population is reduced to being the inconsequential entertainment of the technocracy’s pampered elite.”

Introduction of the pill – as described in Herzog’s text – can be seen as a technocratic solution to number of sexual problems. However, the author proposed that instead of bringing young men and women together to freely exchange sex, they were polarized around new problems. One of them was commodification of the female body. Search for the meaning of the term *commodification* – a process of becoming a commodity. Remember the angry voices reproduced in Herzog’s text? See for example, p.278: “The market value of the woman, like that of a breeding pig, is determined by age, weight and the firmness of the flesh... Since usually she has not learnt much... she must therefore behave such that the man wants to fuck her.”

Compare this complaint with the materials on feminism taken from the Introduction to Feminism – the graphic guide. The Miss America protest (1968) is described as well as some rough thoughts of Sulamith Firestone, a radical thinker who inspired the protests.

Have a look on the “How to start your own consciousness-raising group” leaflet (1971) and discuss how this group activity proposes to solve the problems identified in the texts above.

After you consider all these materials separately, try to bring them together. Discuss how these materials could be combined into a single narrative by which you explain to your peers how technocracy could be linked to the sexual revolution and how feminist theorists/activists react the problems that it posed.

Materials to consider:

Roszak’s “Technocracy’s children” (1968), scans from the “Introduction to Feminism”, Herzog’s text “Between coitus and commodification”, the “How to start your own consciousness-raising group” leaflet (1971)

Presentation:

After you make a preparation, decide on the manner of the presentation. You can divide it into sections, pick a representative or choose other form to explain to your peers the meaning of technocracy.

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GROUP 3

Are students the new class?

Instructions:

“Why should it be the young who rise most noticeably in protest against the expansion of the technocracy?”, asks Roszak on p.23. He proposes that the class struggle¹ is replaced by the generational struggle as the proletariat became complicit with the system: “The working class, which provided the traditional following for radical ideology, now neither leads nor follows, but sits tight and plays safe: the stoutest prop of the established order.” (p.35). Young people, rose as a new historical force which may, according to Roszak, challenge the technocratic society. Review pp.23-41 and see what changes and events prompted the youth – mostly university students – to come into conflict with the adult society. Be sensitive to the statistics and tendencies proposed in the text and see how they fit into the revolutionary hopes of Roszak.

Discuss the hippie phenomenon: “The incorrigibles either turn political or drop out.” (p.33) Search the term *to drop out*, what does it mean? Observe the image of Didion among San Francisco hippies – why did they marginalize themselves voluntarily leaving behind their home and campus to face poverty and poor health condition?

For those of you who read either Mailer or Didion, how do they illustrate Roszak’s claim that “what mere handful of beatniks [hipsters] pioneered in Allen Ginsberg’s youth will have become the life style of millions of college-age young.” (p.40)

After you consider all these materials separately, try to bring them together. Discuss how these materials could be combined into a single narrative by which you explain to your peers in what way young people were a counter-culture opposed to technocratic society.

Materials to consider:

Rozak’s “Technocracy’s children” (1968), Mailer’s “The White Negro” (1957), Didion’s “Slouching towards Bethlehem” (1967)

Presentation:

After you make a preparation, decide on the manner of the presentation. You can divide it into sections, pick a representative or choose other form to explain to your peers how and why the students were seen as the hope for a radical change, a renewal of values for the future.

¹ It refers to the conflict between the workers/proletariat and the capitalists – those who own the factories, machines, land and money and those who have only their labor power which they rent for a salary while all the profits made from the sale of products they produce is retained by the capitalists.