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STS.036 Technology and Nature in American History  
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## STS.036

### Reading questions for Leo Marx, “*Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept*” and Raymond Williams, “*Ideas of Nature*”

#### Raymond Williams, “*Ideas of Nature*”

- What is Williams’s central question about the history of the word *nature*?
- According to Williams, how did evolution affect the conception of nature? (73-74)
- Why is labor as a category of analysis so important to Williams? (76)
- According to Williams, what was to be gained from drawing a clear line between the categories of human and nature (76-77)?
- What is Williams’s attitude towards those 18<sup>th</sup>-century British who pursued leisure in a wild or designed natural landscape? (77-79)
- What does Williams see as the consequences of the perception of nature as “out there” during the rise of industrial capitalism? (80-81)
- Williams mentions two kinds of anti-capitalist sentiment—the Romantic reaction of Wordsworth and others (80), and a modern urge to create an illusory rural past (82). How does he evaluate each reaction?
- What are the contemporary problems posed by an artificial human-nature divide, as Williams sees it? (83-84)
- How does Williams want his readers to reconceptualize or understand the world around them? What specifically does he think we fail to understand? What are the dangers he sees in this lack of understanding?

#### Leo Marx, “*Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept*”

- What does Marx mean by a “semantic void”? (967)
- What does Marx mean by a “discursive” hazard? (968) What is the danger he is warning of?
- Who are Luddites and technocrats? (968)
- What does Marx mean by the “rhetoric of the technological sublime”? (969)
- What does the ideology of progress (as Marx sees it in the 18<sup>th</sup> century) have to do with nature? (970)
- What are some of the most important characteristics of large-scale technological systems as Marx describes them? (972-74)
- What are some of the appeals and the limitations of the abstractness associated with the word *technology*? (978)
- What is the point of the automotive industry example? (980-81)
- What is reification, and what is the problem with it? (981-83)
- Why does technology necessarily inhibit clear and rigorous thinking? (983)
- What is the most dangerous thing about technology as a concept, according to Marx’s conclusion? (984)
- What does Marx mean when he says technology functions as a mask? (984) What does it mask? How does the mask metaphor relate to Marx’s concerns about the unfortunate state of a so-called technological society at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?