Reading Questions for Cowan articles and Goldstein article

STS.038 Class Discussion: Wednesday, October 25, 2006

1) Why did the electric refrigerator succeed and the gas one fail?

2) In this case, what was the relationship between markets, consumer choice, and manufacturing? Who decides what gets manufactured?

3) Why study the history of failed inventions at all?

4) How does what Cowan calls the “sociological analysis” of industrialization’s effect on the family differ from her historical evidence? Does this difference matter?

5) What effect did industrialization have on the home, according to Cowan? And what effect did it have on women in particular?

6) How did ideas about women and housework change in the early 20th century?

7) What was the role of advertising in these changes?

8) How did home economists connect producers and consumers? And how does recognizing this connection help us study history, and the history or energy in particular?

9) Does the Goldstein analysis of Home Economics fit into the approach to the History of Technology described by Cowan?

10) What role did gender play in the evolution of the electric grid?