Reading Questions for *Electrifying America*

STS.038 Class Discussion: Wednesday, October 18, 2006

1) How did electrification change Muncie? And why was Muncie called “Middletown”?

2) How did Muncie residents think of electricity versus gas? What were the advantages and disadvantages of each?

3) How did consumers encounter electricity? How did engineers and business people?

4) What were the different kinds of electrical systems that were built in Muncie?

5) Who chose how electrification took place?

6) What does Nye mean when he says that “A machine’s social reality is constructed”? (page 85)

7) How did electric streetcars change American cities?

8) How did streetcars change how Americans thought about their cities?

9) Was the streetcar an inevitable invention?

10) How did the streetcar, as a technological system, get wrapped up in politics? Why?

11) What were the different impacts of streetcars in urban versus rural areas?

12) Why did trolley companies start building amusement parks? What are the connections between technology, culture, and leisure in industrial America?