

Technology and Human Values Sample Syllabus

Contact: Professor Sample McSampleface; email@tbd.com; office hours t.b.d.

Course Description: New technologies and new ways of living present new ethical challenges. We will address some topics from the following range: privacy; virtual reality; targeted advertising and internet manipulation; internet addictions of various kinds; the presentation of the self in digital life; public reason and moral grandstanding; artificial intelligence; ethics for motor vehicles; how to plan for the future; and value-theoretic questions raised by electronic music. In each case, we will read classic philosophical texts addressing the underlying issue, contemporary theoretical work on the issue itself, and an editorial or two.

Reading: Everything on this syllabus has been carefully chosen. Read each piece a few times. Read once, quickly, to get the structure of the argument, the main claims, and the conclusion(s). Read a second time to study the argument more carefully, to formulate the argument in your own words, to think up your own examples to illustrate the main claims, and to think of counterexamples to these claims. Read a third time to soak up any remaining details. Some excellent reading advice can be found online here: www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading

You are encouraged to read anything else that interests you. In general, the more you read, the better a sense you will have of the strengths and weaknesses of prominent views in any given topic, and of typical forms of argument in the area.

Texts: All texts for this class are available online (e.g. jstor.org) or in the library or on the course website.

Writing: An important goal of this course is for you to develop your skills in philosophical writing. I will distribute a guide to writing philosophical essays in the first class. The assessments are designed to help you develop these skills. Please also read Jim Pryor's 'Guide to Writing Philosophy Papers,' Strunk & White's *The Elements of Style*, George Orwell's 'Politics and the English Language,' and Angela Mendelovici's 'A Sample Philosophy Paper.'

Evaluation: There will be one quiz, two short essays, and one longer essay. The essays are designed to train you to write about complex issues clearly and compellingly. The first essay (3 pages) will be worth 20% of your grade; the second (5 pages) will be worth 30%; the third essay (5-7 pages) will be worth 35%. The quiz will be worth 10% of your grade. (I reserve the right to add short writing assignments and quizzes; these will not affect your grade.) The remaining 5% of your grade is for your participation in class. There will be plenty of opportunities for questions and discussion based on the reading and lectures.

Submission: Submit your essays in .docx (preferred) or .pdf to tbd@gmail.com by 11.59pm on the due date. Late fees (10% deduction per day) will accrue to essays late, unreadable, not properly uploaded, etc.

Attendance: You will lose 5% of your grade if you miss more than one class without a formal explanation (e.g. note from your doctor saying that you broke your leg). Arriving more than ten minutes late for class, or leaving more than ten minutes early, without a formal explanation, that counts as missing the class.

Electronics Policy: Phones and Laptops are not permitted in class without a formal explanation.

Email: Please be professional, and avoid asking anything you can find out without asking. Keep your questions brief and accept my apologies in advance for terse replies. Please send a short follow-up email if you do not receive a reply within two business days.

Honor Code: All students are expected to abide by the honor code: <insert link>. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. It is in your interest to keep a careful record of any resources you use in research and writing. Always cite any resource that you use. Do not re-use papers written for past classes.

List of Topics

Privacy in General

Velleman, 'Genesis of Shame'

Privacy of Information

Glenn Greenwald, Noam Chomsky, Edward Snowden, 'A Conversation on Privacy'.
Available here: <https://theintercept.com/a-conversation-about-privacy/>

Virtual Reality and Moral Experience

Westworld (selections)

or

Jennifer Haley, *The Nether* (play)

Gambling Machines and Facebook Feeds

Nir Eyal, *Hooked* (selections)

Facebook and Emotional Contagion

Kramer, Guillory, Hancock, 'Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks'

Adaptive Preferences, Manipulation, and Targeted Advertising

Anne Barnhill, What Is Manipulation?

Jon Elster, *Sour Grapes* (selections)

Alexander Nill & Robert J. Aalberts, 'Legal and Ethical Challenges of Online Behavioral Targeting in Advertising'

Regulating the Internet:

Angela Daly, Net Neutrality in Australia: the debate continues, but no policy in sight

Angela Daly, Dominating Search: Google Before the Law

Addiction

Peg O'Connor, Philosophy and Addiction

The Stone, available here: <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/08/out-of-the-cave-philosophy-and-addiction/>

Neil Levy, Addiction and Self-Control: Perspectives from Philosophy, Psychology and Neuroscience

Internet Addiction

Cash, Rae, Steel, Winkler, 'Internet Addiction: A Brief Summary of Research and Practice'

The Self

Galen Strawson, *Selves* (selections)

L.A. Paul, 'Transformative Experience'

Self-Presentation Online

Irving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*

D.E. Wittkower, Facebook and Dramauthentic Identity: A post-Goffmanian analysis

Public Reason in the Internet Age

Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*

Gustave le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*

Brian Feldman, 'The Dark Internet Humour of Harambe Jokes' (warning: bad language)

Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*

Moral Grandstanding

Zach Carter & Jason Linkins, 'The Quiet Poison in American Politics' (Huffington Post)

Justin Tosi and Brandon Warmke. "Moral Grandstanding,"

James Hamblin, 'My Outrage is Better than Your Outrage' (on Cecil the Lion)

Amia Srinivasan, 'Would Politics Be Better off Without Anger?'

Artificial Intelligence

Regina Rini, 'How Should A Robot Be?'

David Chalmers, The Singularity: What happens when machines become more intelligent than humans?

John Basl, 'The Moral Status of Artificial Intelligences'

Robot-Driven Cars

David Z. Morris, 'Mercedes Self-Driving Cars Would Choose Passenger Lives Over Bystanders'

Francis Kamm, *The Trolley Problem Mysteries* (selections)

Designing the Future

United Nations: Our Common Future: Towards Sustainable Development: <http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-02.htm>

Marina Benjamin and Jon Turney, 'How to design the future'

Electronic Music

Nick Wiltsher, The Aesthetics of Electronic Dance Music, Part II: Dancers, DJs, Ontology and Aesthetics