

Digital Ethics

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Summary: Advanced technology is now integrated into every part of our lives. Often without thinking carefully about the consequences, we have built the Internet, shared our lives on Twitter and Facebook, and pursued research on AI and the technological enhancement of the human body. The goal of philosophy of technology is to step back and reflect on these developments, by bringing together the work of philosophers, historians, anthropologists, and sociologists. This project is also forward-looking, inviting us to think about the norms that we should use to guide continued technological development.

The philosophy of technology is an exciting and broad field. This course serves as an in-depth introduction to the fields of applied ethics and technology studies.

The recent and tremendous advances in large language models has transformed this course. Over the course of the quarter, we will pair classic debates in applied ethics with case studies from recent developments in technology. However, these debates will be unified by a concern to grapple with some of the philosophical consequences of new tools like ChatGPT.

Texts: All texts and multimedia will be made available online.

Course Evaluation:

1. 3 reading questions, for all students, including auditors: A brief (and I mean brief, no more than a paragraph) question or comment on the upcoming meeting's readings or themes, to be posted on Canvas in advance of the next class. You are welcome to choose which topics you would like to respond to.
2. 15 page term paper, for students taking the course for credit, on a topic of your choice. I encourage you to develop an idea which extends the material discussed in the course to an area of your own expertise.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: All participants are expected to be respectful classroom citizens. In written work, you must document all of your source material. If you take any text from somebody else, you must make it clear the text is being quoted and where the text comes from. You must also cite any sources from which you obtain numbers, ideas, or other material. If you have any questions about what does or does not constitute plagiarism, ask!

Schedule: (subject to change)

Meeting 1: Introduction to Ethical Theory

- Required Reading: None
- Required Activity: Explore with ChatGPT. I will provide links and a guide on Canvas with suggestions on some topics to explore.

Meeting 2: Privacy

- Required Reading: Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Right to Privacy"
- Required Reading: Thomas Scanlon, "Thomson on Privacy"
- Required Reading: Helen Nissenbaum, "A Contextualist Approach to Privacy Online"

Meeting 3: Intellectual Property & Digital Piracy

- Required Reading: Edwin C. Hettinger, "Justifying Intellectual Property"

- Required Reading: Hugh Breakey, “Deliberate, Principled, Self-Interested Law Breaking: The Ethics of Digital ‘Piracy’ ”

Meeting 4: Human Enhancement

- Required Reading: Andy Clark, *Natural-Born Cyborgs*, Introduction & Chapter 1
- Required Reading: Julie Tannenbaum, The Promise and Peril of the Pharmacological Enhancer Modafinil

Meeting 5: Virtual Reality

- Required Reading: Robert Nozick, “The Experience Machine”
- Required Reading: David Chalmers, “The Matrix as Metaphysics”

Meeting 6: Social Media and Online Shaming

- Required Reading: Kathryn J. Norlock, “Online Shaming”
- Required Reading: Adam Pham, Alan Rubel, and Clinton Castro, “Social Media, Emergent Manipulation, and Democratic Legitimacy”

Meeting 7: Algorithms and Bias

- Required Reading: Anupam Chander, “The Racist Algorithm?”
- Required Reading: Jessie Munton, “Beyond Accuracy: Epistemic Flaws with Statistical Generalizations”

Meeting 8: AI and Consciousness

- Required Reading: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “The Turing Test” & “The Chinese Room Argument”
- Required Reading: Eric Schwitzgebel and Mara Garza, “A Defense of the Rights of Artificial Intelligences”

Meeting 9: Existential Risk

- Required Reading: Nick Bostrom, Existential Risk Prevention as Global Priority
- Required Reading: Karina Vold and Daniel R. Harris, “How Does Artificial Intelligence Pose an Existential Risk?”

Meeting 10: ChatGPT

- Required Reading: Carissa Véliz, “Chatbots shouldn’t use emojis”
- Required Reading: Reto Gubelmann, “A Loosely Wittgensteinian Conception of the Linguistic Understanding of Large Language Models like BERT, GPT-3, and ChatGPT”