CT 153 / PHI 2665 – Ethics & Technology

Spring Semester 2019, AC02 (New Academic Block) TR 009, Wednesdays and Fridays 8:30 to 10:00
Professor: Danny Weltman | danny.weltman@ashoka.edu.in | dannyweltman.com
Office Hours: Thursdays, 10:00 to 12:00, in AC02 (New Academic Block) 320 and by appointment

About This Course: Topic and Goals

In this course, we will learn about philosophical issues involving the intersection of ethics and technology, and we will also learn about how to approach writing tasks, especially expository and analytic writing tasks.

Below are the **goals** for this course. The course is designed to help you accomplish the following:
- Learn about some topics in ethics and technology and hear what people have to say about them
- Improve your skills at accurately and concisely summarizing complicated ideas
- Improve your skills at articulating your viewpoint about complicated ideas
- Learn how to reflect on your writing goals and your writing process with an eye towards improvement

Course Content

Aside from the readings for the first three weeks, the course topics will be chosen via vote. The list of possible readings and the schedule are in a separate document. All readings are available on the course web site at https://canvas.instructure.com/courses/1511980. ***Please* bring the readings to class each day**, either printed out or in *easily accessible* electronic form.

Assignments and Grading

There are five kinds of assignments in this class: **weekly reading quizzes**, **weekly writing assignments**, **writing meta-cognition assignments**, **in-class peer feedback assignments,** and a **final portfolio/meta-cognition self-evaluation**. Late assignments will not be accepted except in case of emergency. (Computer issues are not an emergency.)

Weekly Reading Quizzes (10% of your grade) are to help you focus on the important parts of the reading and to get instant feedback on whether you have understood the reading. Quizzes are due 11:59 PM Tuesday night. There is 1 quiz per week for a total of 13. Your lowest 3 quiz scores will be ignored.

Weekly Writing Assignments (40% of your grade) are the main way you will practice writing. They are due 11:59 PM Monday night. There are 13, one per week. Your lowest 3 scores will be ignored.

Writing Meta-Cognition Assignments (15% of your grade) are opportunities to reflect on your writing process and evaluate what works, why it works, what doesn't work, and why it doesn't work. There are 4.

In-Class Peer Feedback Assignments (15% of your grade) are chances to develop your skills at offering feedback on another person's writing and to get more feedback on your own. There are 4.

The **Final Portfolio/Meta-Cognition Self-Evaluation** (10% of your grade) is a final opportunity to reflect on your writing process and where you are at with respect to analytic writing especially.

Class Participation (10% of your grade) is required. This includes attendance, listening respectfully to me and to your fellow students, and offering thoughtful questions and contributions to the discussion. Using mobile phones or computers for non-academic purposes, browsing the Internet, coming in late, not showing up, or otherwise ignoring people is not respectful and will reduce your participation grade.

Grade Breakdown:
- **10% - Weekly Reading Quizzes** (13, lowest 3 ignored)
- **40% - Weekly Writing Assignments** (13, lowest 3 ignored)
- **15% - Writing Meta-Cognition Assignments** (4)
- **15% - In-Class Peer Feedback Assignments** (4)
- **10% - Final Portfolio/Meta-Cognition Self-Evaluation** (due May 10th)
- **10% - Class Participation**

Class Grade Rubric:

100-97% = A+	<80-77% = C+
<97-94% = A	<77-74% = C
<94-90% = A-	<74-70% = C-
<90-87% = B+	<70-67% = D+
<87-84% = B	<67-64% = D
<84-80% = B-	<64-61% = D-
	<61-0% = F

Resources: Peer Tutor and My Website

Our course has a peer tutor, Ava Haidar (ava.haidar_ug19@ashoka.edu.in) with whom you can arrange to meet whenever you would like additional help with your writing assignments.

The resources section of my website (http://dannyweltman.com/resources.html) has resources on reading, writing, and researching philosophy. These resources include a glossary for unfamiliar words or phrases and the rubric that I use for grading your writing assignments. I encourage you to examine these resources.

Disabilities

If you have disabilities which require some form of accommodation, please contact me ahead of time so that I can make the necessary arrangements.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Any time you use **words**, **phrases**, **ideas**, or **anything else** in your writing that you did not think up on your own, you must **cite** your source the best of your ability. Words and phrases from others must be enclosed in quotation marks to show that you did not write them yourself. Failure to cite a source is **plagiarism** and it's not okay. Plagiarism may result in a zero on the assignment or in other point reductions. You should not need to use (or cite) outside sources for this class, but if you do use them, you must cite them. It is perfectly okay to use points made by your classmates in class or on the discussion boards, *as long as you cite them to the best of your ability.* The one exception is that you do not need to cite me for your writing assignments in this class.

Preliminary Readings and Assignment Schedule

All reading assignments should be read prior to the class meeting for that reading. Reading quizzes are due each week on Tuesday night at 11:59 PM and are about the reading for Wednesday. Writing assignments are due 11:59 PM Monday night and are about the reading or readings for the previous week.

Initial Topics: January 23 through February 7

In the first three weeks of the course we will cover two topics I have already picked: computer use and pet cloning. Then we will look at a third topic, which is the relationship between technology and society, which will help give us a framework for thinking about the rest of the topics in class. In addition to the usual analytic writing assignment option, you will have the option to write a letter to the editor and a personal persuasive correspondence letter.

January 23 – Class introduction and discussing Berry's article
Reading: Wendell Berry, "Why I Am Not Going to Buy a Computer"
Quiz Due the night before (January 22) at 11:59 PM

January 25 – Discussing replies to Berry, letters to the editor, and writing in general
Reading: Letters in reply to Berry, and Berry's response
Writing Assignment Due next Monday, January 28 at 11:59 PM. You can write an analytic assignment or a letter to the editor.

January 30 – Discussing the ethics of pet cloning
Reading: Autumn Fiester, "Creating Fido's Twin: Can Pet Cloning Be Ethically Justified?"
Quiz Due the night before (January 29) at 11:59 PM

February 1 – The ethics of pet cloning part 2, and philosophical writing
Reading: Jennifer Parks, "Lassie, Come Home! Ethical Concerns about Companion Animal Cloning"
Writing Assignment Due next Monday, February 4 at 11:59 PM. You must write an analytic assignment.

February 6 – The role of technology in society
Reading: Philip Brey, "The Strategic Role of Technology in a Good Society"
Quiz Due the night before (February 5) at 11:59 PM

February 8 – The role of technology in society continued, its role in India, and personal letter writing
Reading: Selections from Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*, letter from Gandhi to Nehru, and response from Nehru
Writing Assignment Due next Monday, February 11 at 11:59 PM. You can write an analytic assignment or a personal persuasive correspondence letter.

Meta-Cognition Assignments will be due in class on February 22 and on three other dates TBD (depending on the topics we pick). **In-Class Peer Feedback Assignments** will take place on dates TBD (depending on the topics we pick).

Potential Topics

The remained of the readings will be chosen via vote. We will vote on the topics on offer and the winning few topics will set the schedule for the next three weeks until the mid-semester break. Before the mid-semester break, we will have another vote, because we will have had more time to think about things and because people may have suggested new topics by then. Here are the potential topics (the readings for each can be found on Canvas).

Giving ADHD medicine to children

Rights for artificial intelligences (AI)

Ethical issues in algorithms

Ethical issues in biometric identification schemes

Deaf children, genetic engineering, and cochlear implants

Can technology itself be inherently good or bads?

Ethical issues of "doxing" – publishing private information about someone

Ethical issues of facial recognition software

Fake news and echo chambers

Pills that erase traumatic memories

Human enhancement, including genetic modification

Regulating the Internet

Autonomous weapons/robots that can kill people

Lab-grown meat

Uploading a human mind into a computer

Punishing criminals by altering their behavior with neurointervention

Brain implants that predict our behavior

Self-driving cars

Sex robots

Sexual reorientation technology

Simulating wrongdoing

The role of personal values in scientific inquiry

The ethics of video games

The ethics of virtual reality simulations

Bringing back extinct animals

Using artificial intelligence to grade student assignments