

Humanities 3330-001

Ethics and Technology

FALL 2019

Instructor: Daniel Skibra

Time and Location: Monday, 1:00 – 4:00PM, Building Lakeview 202

Contact: email: dskibra@saic.edu

Office Hours: Thursday, 11:45 - 12:45pm Lakeview building # 1008, or by appointment

Course Description

Many advances in technology are generally considered to be positive: we live longer, happier lives thanks to novel medicines, refrigerators, and [insert your favorite tech here]. But the ethical waters get murky when we consider technology that can have ambiguous consequences. In this class we will examine the ethical implications of some current applications of technology such as social media, autonomous cars, surveillance technology, artificial intelligence, the internet, computer algorithms, and transhumanism by considering questions like: *Are online friendships true friendships? Can machines be moral agents? Should humans modify themselves with enhanceive technology?* Learning how to analyze an argument and how to communicate your views on a technical subject are skills which we will develop throughout the course. These skills are not only important during your university studies but are also highly beneficial in the ‘real world’ regardless of the field.

Course Objectives

Students will:

- learn to understand philosophical arguments
- develop their own informed views on the topics of study
- present the arguments of the philosophers and theorists as well their own views in clear prose
- subject both the views studied as well as their own to critical scrutiny.

Course Requirements

Assignments

3 Position Papers on topics of your Choice (3-4 pages; 20% ea.)

Paper 1 **due by Oct 21st**: 20%

Paper 2 **due by Nov 11th**: 20%

Paper 3 **due by Dec 16th**: 20%

Weekly Reading Responses (at least 10): 10%

Presentation on an Assigned Essay: 10%

Mini-Assignments: 10%

Class discussion/ participation: 10%

You need at least a 70% to get credit for this course. There are no extra credit opportunities associated with this course. All assignments for course credit are required as stated in this syllabus, and students should fully utilize all these assignments in order to successfully complete the course. Students requesting individual extra credit opportunities will be referred back to their copy of the syllabus and this course policy.

Notes on assignments

Resources for writing a philosophy paper:

- <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
- <http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf>
- https://prezi.com/z4h1_fwilbxj/a-sample-philosophy-paper/

Course Policies

Attendance

You are required to attend the class meetings; attendance will be taken. However, I understand that emergencies arise, people get sick, and other factors may legitimately prevent you from coming to a particular class. Therefore, I will adopt the following attendance policy. Your grade will not be affected by up to **2** absences. You do not need to provide any kind of written excuse or justification for these absences (although you are welcome to provide them). Importantly, you are responsible for the material covered in class. Any slides presented in class will be made available on Canvas, but class time will often not be devoted to lecture, and material will not always be on the slides. There is simply no substitute for being in class.

If you miss a *third* class, your cumulative class average will drop by 8 percentage points. For more than 3 absences, I adhere to SAIC's recommended policy. SAIC's recommended institutional policy is as follows: If a student misses MORE than three classes, whether or not for a reasonable cause, the student will fail the class, if the student does not withdraw

from the class prior to the deadline for withdrawal with a grade of “W.” **Deadline for withdrawal: Fall 2019 semester: Tuesday, October 29, 2019.** Reasonable cause to miss a class might include:

- Illness or hospitalization (the student should also contact Health Services or their academic advisor, who will relay information to the faculty in whose class the student is enrolled)
- Family illness or death (the student should also contact their academic advisor, who can relay information to all faculty)
- Observation of a religious holiday (students are expected to notify their instructors in advance to discuss reasonable accommodations for holidays they might observe).

Audit Policy

Per SAIC’s policy on non-credit enrollment, auditing this course is possible, space permitting and provided the student proposes an acceptable audit arrangement. Interested students should review SAIC’s policy on non-credit enrollment to review options and process, and then contact me to discuss specifics.

“Unofficial” auditing of this or any course i.e. “sitting in” is prohibited. Participation in specific class activities by non-enrolled students is prohibited without advance, specific consent from the instructor.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

SAIC is committed to full compliance with all laws regarding equal opportunities for students with disabilities. Students with known or suspected disabilities, such as a Reading/Writing Disorder, ADD/ADHD, and/or a mental health condition who think they would benefit from assistance or accommodations should first contact the Disability and Learning Resource Center (DLRC) to schedule an appointment. DLRC staff will review your disability documentation and work with you to determine reasonable accommodations. They will then provide you with a letter outlining the approved accommodations for you to deliver to your instructors. This letter must be presented before any accommodations will be implemented. You should contact the DLRC as early in the semester as possible. The DLRC is located within the Wellness Center on the 13th floor of 116 S Michigan Ave. and can be reached via phone at 312.499.4278 or email at dlrc@saic.edu.

Writing Center Resources

Writing Center

Lakeview Building, 116 S. Michigan Ave., 10th Floor

writingcenter@saic.edu

312.499.4138

<http://www.saic.edu/academics/academicresources/writingcenter/>

Appointments

Schedule in advance: <https://www.supersaas.com/schedule/saic/WritingCenter>

Short-notice: Call 312.499.4138 to see if there are any openings

Hours

Monday - Thursday: 9:00 AM - 7:15 PM

Friday: 9:00 AM - 5:15 PM

Walk-in hours: Monday - Thursday: 4:15 - 7:15 PM

Email/ Communication

The best way to reach me outside class is via email. However, give me 24 hours to respond during the week. If you email me after 5pm on Friday, don't expect a response until Monday morning. Most of the time, I will be able to respond to you sooner than this, but When there is a paper due, get all of your questions to be 48 hours before the due date.

I will answer *simple, specific* questions over email pertaining to the course material or the logistics of the course. I can also address simple interpretive questions you have with the material, or arguments you are trying out for your papers. To address anything more involved, you'll need to meet with me in office hours. (I highly encourage you to come to office hours in any event.)

Technology & Digital Devices

In this class, we will regularly engage in small group instruction and activities, as well as discussions with the whole class. Technology such as cell phones, tablets, and laptops easily become a distraction and create an obstacle to engagement during class time. For this reason, the policy of the class will be as follows. Do not use these devices during class time. Any lecture slides will be made available on the online course site, and any notes you might need to make should be taken by hand. There are two exceptions. First, if you have the need for such a device as an accommodation. (If you have a need for such a device, please consult the instructor.) Second, for class time that is dedicated to revising, editing, or peer reviewing assignments for this class, laptops and such devices will be allowed. I will make clear in advance when class time will be devoted to such tasks.

Participation

Participation in class discussion constitutes a significant part of your grade. You will be expected to attend class having done the readings and thought about them enough to discuss the arguments they make, to ask informed questions about them, and to engage with the other members of the class on these matters. Two expectations in service of these aims are worth making explicit. First, you'll need to be well-prepared, having read and thought about the assigned readings before class. Secondly, we will all need to foster a respectful, open environment where we can clarify, interpret and critically engage the philosophical

issues dealt with in readings. Maintaining a respectful classroom atmosphere is crucial, and part of your responsibility.

Academic Misconduct

From the SAIC Student Handbook: “Academic misconduct includes both plagiarism and cheating, and may consist of: the submission of the work of another as one’s own; unauthorized assistance on a test or assignment; submission of the same work for more than one class without the knowledge and consent of all instructors; or the failure to properly cite texts or ideas from other sources. Academic misconduct extends to all spaces on campus, including satellite locations and online education. Academic integrity is expected in all coursework, including online learning. It is assumed that the person receiving the credit for the course is the person completing the work. SAIC has processes in place that protect student privacy and uses LDAP authentication to verify student identity.”

Specific procedures for faculty to follow in the case of academic misconduct are detailed in the Student Handbook.

Additional resources for students:

- Read “Plagiarism: How to Recognize It and Avoid It” - a short guide prepared by the Faculty Senate Student Life Subcommittee in 2004.
- Read the Flaxman Library’s quick guide titled “AVOID PLAGIARISM.”

Extra Credit Policy

There are no extra credit opportunities associated with this course. All assignments for course credit are required as stated in this syllabus, and students should fully utilize all these assignments in order to successfully complete the course.

Required Texts

All the readings for the course will be posted on Canvas. You do not need to purchase any books for this class.

Course Outline

*Readings are due on the dates they are listed for. The optional readings are not strictly required, but they either contain helpful background material or overviews, touch on noteworthy debates, or they are classics you should read at some point, if you don’t do so for the class listed.

Date	Reading Assignment	Length
General Reflections on Ethics and Technology		
Sept 9	Jonas - <i>Technology as a Subject for Ethics</i>	8 pages
	Feenberg - <i>What is Philosophy of Technology?</i>	11 pages
	Winner - <i>Technologies as Forms of Life</i>	16 pages
Human Enhancement		
Sept 16	Lin & Alhoff - <i>Untangling the Debate: the Ethics of Human Enhancement</i>	14 pages
	Bostrom - <i>Why I Want to Be Post Human When I Grow Up</i>	25 pages
Sept 16	Levy - <i>There May Be Costs to Failing to Enhance, As Well as to Enhancing</i>	2 pages
Reproductive Technologies		
Sept 23	Sandel- the Case Against Perfection	27 pages
	de Melo-Martin - <i>the Ethics of Sex Selection</i>	14 pages
	Kass - <i>Preventing a Brave New World</i>	17 pages
the Internet, Information, and Communication		
Sept 30	Lynch - <i>Is the Internet Making us Less Reasonable?</i>	22 pages
	O'Connor & Weatherall - <i>the Social Network</i>	39 pages
Oct 7	Mukerji - <i>What is Fake News?</i>	24 pages
the Internet and Inter-personal Relationships		
Oct 7	Cocking & Matthews - <i>Unreal Friends</i>	10 pages
	Briggle - <i>Real Friends</i>	9 pages
Oct 14	Vallor - <i>Flourishing on Facebook</i>	15 pages
Self-Driving Cars		
Oct 14	Moor - <i>Are There Decisions Computers Should Never Make?</i>	14 pages
Oct 21	Lin - <i>Why Ethics Matters For Self Autonomous Cars</i>	17 pages
	Nyholm & Smids - <i>the Ethics of Accident-Algorithms for Self-Driving Cars</i>	15 pages
Data & Privacy Issues		
Oct 28	van den Hoven - <i>Nanotechnology and Privacy: the Instructive Case of RFID</i>	
	Douglas - <i>Doxing: A Conceptual Analysis</i>	12 pages
	Danks - <i>A Modern Pascal's Wager For Mass Electronic Surveillance</i>	9 pages
Computer Algorithms		
Nov 4	Mittelstadt et al.- <i>the Ethics of Algorithms: Mapping the Debate</i>	21 pages
	Danks & London - <i>Algorithmic Bias in Autonomous Systems</i>	7 pages
	Martin - <i>Ethical Implications and Accountability of Algorithms</i>	16 pages
Agricultural and Environmental Technology		
Nov 11	Schaefer & Savulescu- <i>the Ethics of Producing In Vitro Meat</i>	15 pages
	Liao et al - <i>Human Engineering and Climate Change</i>	16 pages
AI and Artificial Consciousness		
Nov 18	Kurzweil - <i>the Singularity is Near</i>	14 pages
	Basl - <i>the Ethics of Creating Artificial Consciousness</i>	13 pages
Nov 25	TBD - Topic to be determined by the class	

Date	Reading Assignment	Length
Dec 2	Critique Week - No Class	
Dec 9	TBD - Topic to be determined by the class	
Dec 16	Catch Up Week	