



PHIX2020

Philosophy, Technology, and the Future of Humanity

Session 1, Fully online/virtual 2021

Department of Philosophy

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Notice

As part of [Phase 3 of our return to campus plan](#), most units will now run tutorials, seminars and other small group activities on campus, and most will keep an online version available to those students unable to return or those who choose to continue their studies online.

To check the availability of face-to-face activities for your unit, please go to [timetable viewer](#). To check detailed information on unit assessments visit your unit's iLearn space or consult your unit convenor.

General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

A/Prof Paul Formosa

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Lecturer

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Lecturer

A/Prof Mark Alfano

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Credit points

10

Prerequisites

40cp at 1000 level or above

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

We live an increasing part of our lives online, playing videogames, and engaging with various technologies and virtual realities. Our workplaces are more automated, cars drive themselves, and robots take care of us. Is this a good thing? What is it doing to us? Where will it take us in the future? In this unit we draw on philosophical and ethical theories to explore the impacts of information and related technologies on humanity. Topics we will explore include issues around human-technology relations, such as: technological neutrality and technological determinism; embodiment, gender, and technology; and the co-evolution of mind and technology. We will examine ethical aspects of technology, such as: the impacts that online sharing has on our philosophical understandings of friendship; the right to internet privacy; how theories in moral psychology explain the ethical impacts of playing videogames; the ethics of self-driving cars and robotic care-workers; and the justice implications of the automation of work. Finally, we also look at topics surrounding the intertwining of humanity and technology and the future impacts of Artificial Intelligence (AI), such as: whether AI and the singularity is an existential risk to humanity; how technology will be used as a tool of human enhancement; and whether we will (and should) become cyborgs and stop being human.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

ULO1: explain the major theories about the philosophical and ethical issues raised by new forms of technology.

ULO2: analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.

ULO3: evaluate relevant theories and arguments critically.

ULO4: communicate clearly your own perspective on the views and arguments presented in the unit.

General Assessment Information

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – two (2) marks out of 100 will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven (7) days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline. No late submissions will be accepted for timed assessments – e.g. quizzes, online tests.

Assessment Tasks

| Name | Weighting | Hurdle | Due |
|---------------------------------|-----------|--------|--------------------------------------|
| Reflective blog | 20% | No | 1/4/2021 at 23:59 |
| Participation | 20% | No | ongoing; closes at 1/6/2021 at 23:59 |
| Weekly quiz | 25% | No | ongoing; closes 1/6/2021 at 23:59 |
| Research essay | 35% | No | 3/6/2021 at 23:59 |

Reflective blog

Assessment Type ¹: Reflective Writing

Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours

Due: **1/4/2021 at 23:59**

Weighting: **20%**

Reflective blog on class content

On successful completion you will be able to:

- analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.
- evaluate relevant theories and arguments critically.
- communicate clearly your own perspective on the views and arguments presented in the unit.

Participation

Assessment Type ¹: Participatory task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours

Due: **ongoing; closes at 1/6/2021 at 23:59**

Weighting: **20%**

Participation in online forums

On successful completion you will be able to:

- explain the major theories about the philosophical and ethical issues raised by new forms of technology.
- analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.
- evaluate relevant theories and arguments critically.
- communicate clearly your own perspective on the views and arguments presented in the unit.

Weekly quiz

Assessment Type ¹: Quiz/Test

Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours

Due: **ongoing; closes 1/6/2021 at 23:59**

Weighting: **25%**

Weekly quiz covering key ideas examined in the unit

On successful completion you will be able to:

- explain the major theories about the philosophical and ethical issues raised by new forms of technology.

Research essay

Assessment Type ¹: Essay

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **3/6/2021 at 23:59**

Weighting: **35%**

Research essay exploring one relevant topic in depth

On successful completion you will be able to:

- explain the major theories about the philosophical and ethical issues raised by new forms of technology.
- analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.
- evaluate relevant theories and arguments critically.
- communicate clearly your own perspective on the views and arguments presented in the unit.

¹ If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the [Writing Centre](#) for academic skills support.

² Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

Delivery and Resources

Resources:

- Required readings can be downloaded from Leganto.
- You must read the required readings BEFORE class.

Delivery:

- Recorded lecture content
- Asynchronous forums (for Fully online/virtual students)

Unit Schedule

W1 – Introduction: Philosophy and Technology (PF)

No Reading

MIND, BODIES AND TECHNOLOGY

W2 – What is technology? Optimist and pessimist views of technology (JPD)

Reading 1: Mary Tiles and Hans Oberdiek, “Conflicting Visions of Technology,” in *Living in a Technological Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 12–31.

Reading 2: Andrew Feenberg, “What is the Philosophy of Technology?”, in *Defining Technological Literacy. Towards An Epistemological Framework*, J. Dakers (ed.), (Palgrave McMillan, 2006), 5-16.

W3 - Mind and technology: co-evolution of mind and technology. (MA)

Reading 1: Sterelny K. (2011) "From hominins to humans: how sapiens became behaviourally modern". *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B.* 366: 809-822. <http://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2010.0301>

Reading 2: Clark, A. (2002). “Towards a science of the bio-technological mind”, *International Journal of Cognition and Technology*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p . 21-33.

W4 –Artificial Intelligence and Philosophy (MA)

Reading 1: Bringsjord, Selmer and Govindarajulu, Naveen Sundar, "Artificial Intelligence", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/artificial-intelligence/>>.]

Reading 2: Robbins, Scott. “AI and the path to envelopment: knowledge as a first step towards the responsible regulation and use of AI-powered machines.” *AI & Society*. (2019)

W5 – The Singularity and Mind-uploading: Will humanity survive? (PF)

Reading: Chalmers, David J. “The Singularity.” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 17, no. 9 (2010): 7–65.

ETHICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF TECHNOLOGY

W6 – Artificial moral agents: Can robots be persons? (PF)

Reading 1: Wynsberghe, Aimee van, and Scott Robbins. “Critiquing the Reasons for Making Artificial Moral Agents.” *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 2018, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-018-0030-8>.

Reading 2: Formosa, Paul, and Malcolm Ryan. 'Making Moral Machines: Why We Need Artificial Moral Agents'. *AI & SOCIETY*, 3 November 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-020-01089-6>.

W7 – Autonomous Vehicles and Carebots: How to live with machines (PF)

Reading 1: Gogoll, Jan, and Julian F. Müller. "Autonomous Cars: In Favor of a Mandatory Ethics Setting." *Science and Engineering Ethics* 23, no. 3 (June 2017): 681–700.

Reading 2: Vallor, Shannon. "Moral Deskillling and Upskilling in a New Machine Age: Reflections on the Ambiguous Future of Character." *Philosophy & Technology* 28, no. 1 (March 2015): 107–24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-014-0156-9>.

W8 –Videogames and morality: Do virtual actions matter? (PF)

Reading 1: Luck, M. (2009). The gamer's dilemma: An analysis of the arguments for the moral distinction between virtual murder and virtual paedophilia. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 11(1), 31–36.

Reading 2: Ryan, M., Staines, D., & Formosa, P. (2017). Focus, Sensitivity, Judgement, Action: Four Lenses for Designing Morally Engaging Games. *Transactions of the Digital Games Research Association*, 3(2), 143–173.

W9 – Privacy on the Internet: Do we have any and should we care? (PF)

Reading 1: Reiman, Jeffrey H. "Driving to the Panopticon: A Philosophical Exploration of the Risks to Privacy Posed by the Highway Technology of the Future." *Santa Clara High Technology Law Journal* 11 (1995).

Reading 2: Joinson, Adam N., and Carina B. Paine. "Self-Disclosure, Privacy and the Internet." In *Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology*, edited by Adam N. Joinson, Katelyn Y. A. McKenna, Tom Postmes, and Ulf-Dietrich Reips, Vol. 1. Oxford University Press, 2012.

TECHNOLOGY AND THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY

W10 – Economy and politics of cognitive capitalism (JPD)

Reading 1: Nick Srnicek, extracts from *Platform Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017) 36-50, 126-129.

Reading 2: Yves Citton, "Reflexive Attention", in *The Ecology of Attention*, trans. B. Norman

(Cambridge: Polity, 2017) 139-170.

W11 – Automation: dangers and solutions (JPD)

Reading 1: Nicholas Carr, *The Glass Cage*, chapter 4.

Reading 2: David Zoller, “Skilled Perception, Authenticity and the case against Automation”, in Patrick Lin, Keith Abney, and Ryan Jenkins (eds) *Robot Ethics 2.0. From Automated Cars to Artificial Intelligence*, (Oxford University Press, 2017), chapter 6.

Reading 3: Andrew Feenberg, “Philosophy of Technology at the Crossroads,” from *Technology and the Good Life?*, ed. Eric Higgs, Andrew Light, and David Strong (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 294–315.

W12 – AI, Technology and Work (JPD)

Reading 1: Tubaro, Paola, Antonio A Casilli, and Marion Coville. ‘The Trainer, the Verifier, the Imitator: Three Ways in Which Human Platform Workers Support Artificial Intelligence’. *Big Data & Society* 7, no. 1 (January 2020): 205395172091977.

Reading 2: Susskind, Richard, and Daniel Susskind. *After the Professions. The Future of the Professions*. Oxford University Press. 2015.

Reading 3: Nieswandt, Katharina. ‘Basic Income after Automation? That’s Not How Capitalism Works!’ *The Conversation*. 2016. <http://theconversation.com/basic-income-after-automation-that-s-not-how-capitalism-works-65023>.

W13 – No Lecture

Writing week.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central \(https://policies.mq.edu.au\)](https://policies.mq.edu.au). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Grade Appeal Policy](#)

- [Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit [Student Policies](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies) (<https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies>). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit [Policy Central](https://policies.mq.edu.au) (<https://policies.mq.edu.au>) and use the [search tool](#).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to help you improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Getting help with your assignment](#)
- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

If you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.