PHIL2020
Philosophy, Technology, and the Future of Humanity
Session 1, Special circumstances 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

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<th>Unit convenor and teaching staff</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unit Convenor</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A/Prof Paul Formosa</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:paul.formosa@mq.edu.au">paul.formosa@mq.edu.au</a></td>
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<td><strong>Lecturer</strong></td>
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<th>Prerequisites</th>
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<td>40cp at 1000 level or above</td>
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<th>Corequisites</th>
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## 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 automatisation 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://students.mq.edu.au/important-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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Hurdle</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflective blog</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1/4/2021 at 23:59</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>ongoing; closes at 1/6/2021 at 23:59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly quiz</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>ongoing; closes 1/6/2021 at 23:59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research essay</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3/6/2021 at 23:59</td>
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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 in-person or online tutorials and/or 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 Learning Skills Unit 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
• Synchronous online zoom tutorials or physical tutorials (for Special Circumstances students)
• 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)

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

W4 – Artificial Intelligence and Philosophy (MA)

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

ETHICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF TECHNOLOGY

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


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


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


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


TECHNOLOGY AND THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY

W10 – Economy and politics of cognitive capitalism (JPD)
**Unit guide** PHIL2020 Philosophy, Technology, and the Future of Humanity


**W11 – Automation: dangers and solutions (JPD)**

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


**W12 – AI, Technology and Work (JPD)**


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


**W13 – No Lecture**

Writing week.

**Policies and Procedures**

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- Academic Appeals Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy
Students seeking more policy resources can visit the Student Policy Gateway (https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit Policy Central (https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central).

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
Student Enquiry Service
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

Equity 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.

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.