PHIL2020

Philosophy, Technology, and the Future of Humanity

Session 1, Online-scheduled-weekday 2022

Department of Philosophy

Contents

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
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Lecturer
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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 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://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 – 10 marks out of 100 credit will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Participation	20%	No	Week 2 - Week 11
Weekly quiz	25%	No	1/06/2022 at 11:59PM
Reflective blog	20%	No	30/04/2022 at 11:59PM
Research essay	35%	No	2/06/2022 at 11:59PM

Participation

Assessment Type [1]: Participatory task
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 15 hours
Due: **Week 2 - Week 11**
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: **1/06/2022 at 11:59PM**
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

Reflective blog

Assessment Type [1]: Reflective Writing
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 15 hours
Due: **30/04/2022 at 11:59PM**
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

Research essay

Assessment Type [1]: Essay
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 30 hours
Due: **2/06/2022 at 11:59PM**
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

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[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 (for both Internal and Fully online students)
- Synchronous online zoom tutorials or in-person tutorials (for Internal students)
- Asynchronous forums (for Fully online students)

Unit Schedule

W1 – Introduction: Philosophy and Technology (PF)

No Reading

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

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 - Co-evolution of mind and technology. (AG)

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

W4 - Cognition and technology (AG)

Reading 1: Hollan, J., Hutchins, E. & Kirsh, D. (2000). Distributed Cognition: Toward a new foundation for Human-Computer Interaction Research. *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction*, 7 (2), 174–196

Reading 2: Andrew Feenberg, "From Essentialism to Constructivism: 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.

W5 –Artificial Intelligence and Philosophy (AG)

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/>.] (Section 1-5, 8-9 of the SEP entry ONLY).

Reading 2: Margaret Boden (2016) "Chapter 2: General Intelligence as the Holy Grail", AI: Its Nature and Future, Oxford UP: Oxford.

W6 – The Singularity and Mind-uploading: Will humanity survive? (PF)

Reading 1: Chalmers, David J. "The Singularity." *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 17, no. 9 (2010): 7–65.

W7 – 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.

W8 – 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 Deskilling 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.

W9 –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.

W10 – 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.

W11 – Platform adn Surveillance capitalism (PF)

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

Reading 2: Zuboff, Shoshana. "Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization." Journal of Information Technology 30, no. 1 (March 1, 2015): 75–89.

https://doi.org/10.1057/jit.2015.5.

W12 – AI, Automation and Work (PF)

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: Jarrahi, Mohammad Hossein. "In the Age of the Smart Artificial Intelligence: AI's Dual Capacities for Automating and Informating Work." Business Information Review 36, no. 4 (December 2019): 178–87. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266382119883999.

W13 – No Lecture

Writing week.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central (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
- Assessment Procedure
- Complaints Resolution 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). 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) 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

Academic Integrity

At Macquarie, we believe academic integrity – honesty, respect, trust, responsibility, fairness and courage – is at the core of learning, teaching and research. We recognise that meeting the expectations required to complete your assessments can be challenging. So, we offer you a range of resources and services to help you reach your potential, including free online writing and maths support, academic skills development and wellbeing consultations.

Student Support

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

The Writing Centre

The Writing Centre provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- Workshops
- Chat with a WriteWISE peer writing leader
- Access StudyWISE
- Upload an assignment to Studiosity
- Complete the 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

Macquarie University offers a range of Student Support Services including:

- IT Support
- Accessibility and disability support with study
- Mental health support
- Safety support to respond to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault
- Social support including information about finances, tenancy and legal issues

Student Enquiries

Got a question? Ask us via AskMQ, or contact Service Connect.

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.