PHIL2020
Philosophy, Technology, and the Future of Humanity
Session 1, Online-flexible 2024
Department of Philosophy

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https://unitguides.mq.edu.au/unit_offerings/162120/unit_guide/print
General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Unit Convenor
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Lecturer
Mark Alfano
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Lecturer
Paul Formosa
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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:

UL01: explain the major theories about the philosophical and ethical issues raised by new forms of technology
UL02: analyse arguments in the relevant literatures
UL03: evaluate relevant theories and arguments critically
UL04: 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 5% penalty (of the total possible mark) will be applied each day a written assessment is not submitted, up until the 7th day (including weekends). After the 7th day, a mark of ‘0’ (zero) will be awarded even if the assessment is submitted. Submission time for all written assessments is set at 11.55pm. A 1-hour grace period is provided to students who experience a technical issue. This late penalty will apply to written reports and recordings only. Late submission of time sensitive tasks (such as tests/exams, performance assessments/presentations, scheduled practical assessments/labs will be addressed by the unit convenor in a Special consideration application.

Assessment Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Hurdle</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media presentation</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sunday 28/04/2024 @ 11:55p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Weeks 2 – 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research essay</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sunday 2/6/2024 @ 11:55p.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Media presentation

Assessment Type 1: Media presentation
Indicative Time on Task 2: 25 hours
Due: Sunday 28/04/2024 @ 11:55p.m.
Weighting: 35%
Media presentation on a topic from 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
- 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:** Weeks 2 – 12
**Weighting:** 20%

Participation in discussion and related activities

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

**Research essay**

**Assessment Type 1:** Essay
**Indicative Time on Task 2:** 35 hours
**Due:** Sunday 2/6/2024 @ 11:55p.m.
**Weighting:** 45%

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:

- A mix of live and recorded lectures
- In person scheduled students: in-person tutorials.
- Online scheduled students: zoom tutorials.
- Online Flexible students: online forums.

Unit Schedule

W1 – Introduction: Philosophy and Technology (OD) - February 22

- No reading
- No tutorial

W2 – What is technology? Optimist and pessimist views of technology (OD) – February 29


Tutorial 1

W3 - Co-evolution of mind and technology (MA) – March 7


Tutorial 2

W4 - Cognition and technology (MA) – March 14


Tutorial 3

W5 – Artificial Intelligence and Philosophy (MA) – March 21

• 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)

Tutorial 4
W6 – The Singularity and Mind-uploading: Will humanity survive? (OD) – March 28

- Tutorial 5

W7 – Artificial moral agents: Can robots be persons? (OD) – April 4

- Tutorial 6
- **Media Presentation due – Sunday 28/4/2024 @ 11:55p.m.**

W8 – Autonomous Vehicles and Carebots: How to live with machines (OD) – April 11


**MID-SEMESTER BREAK**

W9 – Videogames and morality: Do virtual actions matter? (PF) – May 2

- Tutorial 7
Quiz 7

W10 – Platform and Surveillance capitalism (OD) – May 9

- Tutorial 8
- Quiz 8

W11 – Privacy on the Internet: Do we have any and should we care? (OD) – May 16

- Tutorial 9
- Quiz 9

W12 – AI, Automation and Work (PF) – May 23

- Tutorial 10
- Quiz 10

W13 – No New Content – May 30
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 an
d 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 Advocacy provides independent advice on MQ policies, procedures, and processes

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.
Unit information based on version 2024.03 of the Handbook