



Technology and Human Values Course Descriptor

Course Title	Technology and Human Values	Faculty	Philosophy
Course Code	NCHPH757	Course Leader	TBA
Credit Points	15	Teaching Period	Either
FHEQ Level	Level 7	Date Approved	June 2020
Compulsory/ Optional	Optional		
Pre-requisites	None		
Co-requisites	None		

COURSE SUMMARY

This course explores the social, political, and ethical dimensions of emerging technologies. Technology – conceived as, *tools, processes, and methods used to achieve goals*, is as old as humanity itself. Technology so permeates our form of life that some have characterised human beings as *the technological animal*. While our relationship with technology is given, the precise nature of this relationship is not. The contemporary world and human history are replete with diverse and sometimes contradictory ways of conceiving of how people and technology interact. This course is oriented around the following general questions: (1) *What is the proper way to understand the relationship between humanity and technology?* (2) *What critical perspectives and tools can we use to evaluate the social, ethical, and political dimensions of technology?* (3) *How can we make good decisions about incorporating emerging technologies into our society and lives?* (4) *What are the relevant dimensions by which we might assess which technologies are appropriate, and to what ends?* While the exploration of ethical debates surrounding technology and our relationship to it will typically involve engaging in philosophical analysis, this course will also draw upon insights from sociology, anthropology, political science, and technology studies.

COURSE AIMS

- To develop students' understanding of methods and approaches in applied ethics.
- To develop students' understanding of the ethical issues that arise in the development and delivery of a range of emerging technologies.
- To develop students' ability to develop and deconstruct arguments, engage in abstract theorising, and communicate ideas effectively.

- To develop students' capacity to engage constructively with peers, process arguments in a charitable manner, and engage in productive class debate.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

A student will be able to:

- K1d Offer detailed critical engagement with key arguments and debates within the realm of philosophy of technology.
- K2d Show sound knowledge and sophisticated understanding of key questions and debates in the applied ethics literature.
- K3d Provide critical accounts of recent and emerging technological developments across areas such as healthcare, politics, and law.
- K4d Respond to questions about the human relationship with technology, and about how to make good decisions about incorporating emerging technologies into our society and lives.

SUBJECT-SPECIFIC SKILLS

A student will be able to:

- S1d Demonstrate a critical awareness of how philosophical concepts, methods, and approaches, can be applied to practical debates.
- S2d Identify and employ a range of philosophical devices to articulate, develop and synthesise alternative positions.
- S3d Apply theoretical frameworks to a range of concrete technological challenges, imposing structure on disparate and unfamiliar material.
- S4d Draw on relevant scholarly literature and evidence to defend a sustained independent response to a specific technological challenge facing us today.

TRANSFERABLE AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

A student will be able to:

- T1d Take initiative and personal responsibility; work independently, effectively, and to deadlines.
- T2d Identify the salient features of a complicated problem and apply theoretical tools, methods, and frameworks, to solving this problem.
- T3d Critically engage with a range of styles of literature to produce original, sophisticated, clear, and persuasive arguments in response (written and oral).
- T3d Consistently apply an excellent level of technical proficiency in written English, using an advanced application of scholarly terminology, that demonstrates the ability to deal with complex issues both systematically and with sophistication.
- T4d Understand the wider importance of embedding ethical considerations into the development and application of frameworks in a professional context.

T5d Collaborate with peers effectively and participate in constructive debate that engages with alternative viewpoints.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching and learning strategies for this course will include:

- 15 hours of full-cohort lectures
- 1 x one hour one-to-one tutorial per student

Course information and supplementary materials are available on the College’s Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Students are required to attend and participate in all the formal and timetabled sessions for this course. Students are also expected to manage their directed learning and independent study in support of the course.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

- Work independently, creatively, and to deadlines
- Work collaboratively with peers and engage in constructive debate and group problem-solving
- Conduct research and explore relevant existing knowledge
- Analyse, contextualise, and interpret complex ideas and materials
- Synthesise and evaluate information against a backdrop of uncertainty
- Present complex ideas clearly and persuasively in both written and spoken formats

ASSESSMENT

FORMATIVE

Students will be formatively assessed during the course by means of set assignments. These do not count towards the end of year results, but will provide students with developmental feedback, both written and oral. For example, a short paragraph of analysis about a studied text may be requested. The aim here is for the student to critically engage with the writer’s arguments, perhaps choosing to strengthen or deconstruct a presented case.

SUMMATIVE

Assessment will be in one form:

AE:	Assessment Activity	Weighting (%)	Online submission	Duration	Length
1	Essay	100	Yes	N/A	4000 words

The written assignment will be assessed in accordance with the assessment aims set out in the Programme Specification.

FEEDBACK

Students will receive formal feedback in a variety of ways: written (including via email correspondence); oral (within one-to-one tutorials or on an *ad hoc* basis) and indirectly through discussion. Students will also attend the formal meeting, Collections, in which they will receive constructive and developmental feedback on their performance.

Feedback is provided on summative assessment and is made available to the student either via email, the VLE or another appropriate method

INDICATIVE READING

Note: Comprehensive and current reading lists for courses are produced annually in the Course Syllabus or other documentation provided to students; the indicative reading list provided below is used as part of the approval/modification process only.

BOOKS

Ronald Sandler, ed. (2014) *Ethics and Emerging Technologies*, Palgrave Macmillan (hereafter abbreviated to 'EET').

Robert C. Scharff and Val Dusek eds., *Philosophy of Technology* (2014: Wiley Blackwell, Oxford).

JOURNALS

Nyholm, S., Smids, J. (2016) 'The Ethics of Accident-Algorithms for Self-Driving Cars: an Applied Trolley Problem?' *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 19, 1275–1289

Savulescu, J (2007), 'In Defense of Procreative Beneficence', *Journal of Medical Ethics* 33(5): 284-288.

Autor, D. H. (2015), 'Why Are There Still So Many Jobs? The History and Future of Workplace Automation', *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 29, pp. 3–30

Haraway, Donna (1985), 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s' *Socialist Review* 80: 65-108.

Sparrow, R. (2007). 'Killer robots', *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 24, 62–77.

McTernan, E. (2015). Should Fertility Treatment be State Funded?, *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 32(3), 227–240.

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Living with Robots: A Conversation with Kate Darling, Waking Up podcast, 1 March 2017: <https://samharris.org/podcasts/living-with-robots/>

Julian Savulescu on Genetic Enhancement: <http://media.philosophy.ox.ac.uk/bioethicsbites/Savulescu.mp3>

Michael Sandel on Sport and Genetic Enhancement: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/culture/philosophy/sport-and-genetic-enhancement>

Mary Warnock on the Right to Have a Baby, <http://philosophybites.com/2008/05/mary-warnock-on.html>

Devlin, K. (2017). 'Sex robots', TED talk, April 2017 · Radiolab (2018). 'More or less Human', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qINV2fx7iS0>

Michael Sandel, 'The Case Against Perfection', *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2004/04/the-case-against-perfection/302927/>

INDICATIVE TOPICS

Students will study the following topics:

- Humankind's relationship with technology
- The challenges posed by automated weaponry and vehicles, relating to risk, responsibility, and control
- Doping in sport
- Genetic selection, enhancement, and eugenics
- Feminist perspectives on reproductive technologies
- Technology and human relationships, from sex robots to care work
- The impact of automation on labour and inequality
- The impact of technology on democracy
- Pandemic ethics

Title: NCHPH757 Technology and Human Values Course Descriptor					
Approved by: Academic Board					
Location: Academic Handbook/Programme specifications and Handbooks/ Postgraduate Programme Specifications/MA Philosophy & AI Programme Specification/Philosophy Course Descriptors					
Version number	Date approved	Date published	Owner	Proposed next review date	Modification (As per AQF4) & category number
2.0	April 2022	April 2022	Brian Ball	April 2025	Category 3: Changes to Course Learning Outcomes
1.0	June 2020	June 2020	Brian Ball	April 2025	