

Course: ISBU/ISSS 3888: Technology Through a Philosophic Lens

Term: Spring 2014

Instructor: Yitna Firdyiwek

Note: This syllabus may be modified depending on course circumstances.

Please take this [pre-course survey](#) before, or soon after, registering for this course.

Course description: What is generally termed "technology" has a ubiquitous presence in contemporary society. Its existence has been justified with great promises for, among other things, the efficiency of industry, the effectiveness of government, and for a marked change in the way humans learn. And in fact, the gains made in health care, transportation, and other sectors of society have been remarkable. But all this has not come without associated costs. There are questions concerning the relentless quest for scientific efficiency and the proper role of technology in an open and democratic society -- its role in individual growth and development, and its uses and abuses in the politics of a society. Justifications for modes of control and operation in the name of pragmatism have also come into question.

As users of technology, we are all challenged to be informed about the individual, social, cultural, and technical perspectives of technology and to make determinations about its suitable use in our communications, work, learning, and day-to-day living. The purpose of this course is to explore ways in which familiarity with the history and philosophy of technology can inform our personal investigations of the matter.

This course will lead students to exercise a critical perspective on the social and philosophical issues embedded in the field of technology. By the end of the semester students should be able to explain the major topics and issues in the philosophy of technology, as well as be able to define and show how they (the students) have applied critical thinking in their personal and day-to-day engagement with technology.

Course Goals: The goals of the course are:

- To become reflective about the role technology plays in the concepts we form about the world;
- To grasp the basic relationships between technology and politics, society, and culture; and
- To articulate a personal critical perspective of technology-in-practice.

Course Methodology: The instructional methods used in this course will be:

- Reading texts, viewing recorded material, and writing responses to associated questions
- Engaging in live as well as asynchronous online discussions;
- Exploring contemporary aspects of technology and reporting on findings via web logs;
- Preparing reflective team presentations on selected topics;
- Preparing a self-reflective digital portfolio using content selected from course experiences.

Course Delivery: This is a web-based course with live online meetings using UVaCollab. Meetings will be held on Tuesdays 7:00PM – 9:45 PM. Students may also be required to do out-of-class work in which case class times may vary.

Course Materials:

Required Book:

- Ferré, Frederick. *Philosophy of technology*. University of Georgia Press, 1995. Amazon: <http://www.amazon.com/Philosophy-Technology-Frederick-Ferre/dp/0820317616>

Required Journal Articles (will be provided online):

- Fieser, J. (2001). The Internet encyclopedia of philosophy: Philosophy of Technology. University of Tennessee. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/technolo/>
- Franssen, M., Lokhorst, G. J., & van de Poel, I. (2009). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Philosophy of technology. <http://stanford.library.usyd.edu.au/entries/technology/>
- Dyson, F. (2011). 'HOW WE KNOW'. New York Review of Books, 58(7), 74-74. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/mar/10/how-we-know/>
- Dyson, F. (2007). Our biotech future. The New York Review of Books, 54(12). <http://web.pdx.edu/~pmoeck/pdf/biotech%20future.pdf>

Other Material: (strongly recommended)

- Headset with microphone for live online meetings. Audio is a critical link for this type of online course to operate properly. Weak or inadequate audio connections will cause problems, not just for you but also for others in the course. Test your system ahead of time and make sure you can hear and be heard clearly.

Evaluation & Grading (to be based on collaboratively evolved rubrics):

- Class participation: 10%
- Blog Posts: 10%
- Reading Reflections: 30%
- Team Presentations: 20%
- ePortfolio: 30%

Course Policies:

Assignments: Responses must be posted by 8:00 AM on the day they are due.

Late Work: Students must contact the instructor at least 24 hours prior to due date/time if they need of an extension. Extenuating circumstances will be considered for late notification.

University Policies:

- UVa IT Policies: <http://its.virginia.edu/policy/ethics.html>
- Responsible Computing Handbook for Students: <http://its.virginia.edu/pubs/docs/RespComp/rchandbook.html>
- Honor Code: <http://www.virginia.edu/honor/on-my-honor-film/>