

PHI 3930 Ethics of Technology

Spring 2020

University of Florida

MWF 1:55 - 2:45pm

<u>Professor:</u>	Amber Ross amber.ross@ufl.edu
<u>Professor Office:</u>	301 Griffin-Floyd Hall
<u>Professor Phone:</u>	352-273-1811
<u>Course Location:</u>	MAT 0116
<u>Course Times:</u>	MWF 1:55 - 2:45pm
<u>Office hours:</u>	M & W 3-4pm and by appointment
<u>Course Website:</u>	On Canvas https://elearning.ufl.edu/

Course Description

This course exposes students to important interactions between ethics, economics, and public policy in assessing the social value of emerging technologies. Students will grapple with foundational concepts in ethics, economics, and policy-making. The course pairs theoretical discussions of the philosophical dimensions of economics and policy-making with concrete issues in emerging technologies. Discussion topics include: cost-benefit analysis, risk, markets and market failures, economic valuations of technology, justice and fairness, and property rights. We will apply these concepts in assessing emerging technologies like *autonomous cars*, *big data policing algorithms*, and *germline gene editing*, among others.

Course Objectives

1. Identify and explain the philosophical dimensions of foundational concepts in economics and public policy as they pertain to technology.
2. Develop a basic vocabulary for discussing the ethical dimensions of technology.

3. Analyze issues and policies concerning emerging technology through the application of ethical concepts.
4. Critique public policies, social practices, and political-economic institutions that shape, and are shaped by, scientific discovery and technological design.
5. Discern the structure of arguments, representing them fairly and clearly, and evaluating them for cogency.
6. Formulate original arguments, anticipating objections, and responding in a conscientious fashion.
7. Read and discuss complex philosophical texts from both historical sources and contemporary works
8. Speak and write clearly and persuasively about abstract and conceptually elusive matters.

Readings

All required readings will be posted under “Files” on our Canvas website:
<https://elearning.ufl.edu>

A very useful online guide for writing philosophy papers is available here:
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Graded Requirements

Emerging technology case studies (20%): We will have several in-class discussions of case studies concerning emerging technologies. Students will be assigned to discussion groups. Each group member will provide a written analysis of the case study and will use this analysis to inform the discussion. Each group will submit the “best” written analysis at the end of the discussion. Grades for the case studies will be determined by (a) participation in the case study discussion and (b) the quality of the group’s submitted written analysis.

1st Short Paper (25%): (1200 – 1500 words) This short paper involves a critical assessment of a topic that we have discussed in class. I will give you a choice of two topics for this paper, I will also provide the structure that the paper must follow.

2nd Short Paper (25%) (1200-1500 words) This short paper involves a critical assessment of a topic that we have discussed in class. I will give you a choice of two topics for this paper, I will also provide the structure that the paper must follow.

These papers should be argumentative in nature, and not merely expository, and will assess whether students have acquired:

- skill in discerning the structure of arguments, representing them fairly and clearly, and evaluating them for cogency.
- skill in formulating original arguments, anticipating objections, and responding in a conscientious fashion.
- skill in reading and discussing complex philosophical texts from both historical sources and contemporary works
- and skill in speaking and writing clearly and persuasively about abstract and conceptually elusive matters.

Short reading quizzes (15%): There will be frequent reading quizzes, designed to make sure that you are doing and understanding the readings, and to double-check that you are coming to class.

Class attendance and participation (10%): You are required to come to class on time and prepared, and to contribute in a positive way to class. Being prepared includes having completed the reading. There is a lot of reading in this class, and the reading is difficult and dense. You will lose 3% of your attendance and participation grade for every unexcused, recorded absence beyond the first two (starting in Week 2). Students may be removed from the class roster for excessive absences.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Most instances of academic dishonesty can be avoided by thoroughly citing the resources you have used to help you understand the topic on which you're writing. **If you have read something that helped you understand the material, cite it!** Failure to cite sources is the most common (and easily avoidable) academic offence.

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states:

“We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”

The Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Plagiarism on any assignment will automatically result in a grade of “E” for the course. Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida's Student Honor Code as follows:

“A student shall not represent as the student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to): a. Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution. b. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.”

Students found guilty of academic misconduct will be prosecuted in accordance with the procedures specified in the UF honesty policy.

Online Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester. Students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

Campus Resources

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Health and Wellness U Matter, We Care

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392- 1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS) Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575

University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies

Academic Resources

E-learning Technical Support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to

Learningsupport@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Library Support <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>

Writing Studio 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

E-mail guidelines

(1) If you need some practical information about the course you should **look at most recently updated syllabus or on the website**. E-mails requesting information which is available on the most recently updated syllabus or on the website will not be answered.

(2) If you want to discuss a substantive philosophical question you should bring it up in class or come to my office hours. E-mails asking substantive philosophical questions will not be answered. (Except maybe by a note suggesting that you come to an office hour.)

If, after reading (1) & (2) you still think you should e-mail me, you are welcome to do so at

amber.ross@ufl.edu I will try to answer e-mail within a week. You must use your 'ufl' address.

Please note: I may not read email between 4pm and 9am.

Attendance, Illness, Religious Holidays, and Twelve Day Rule

Requirements for class attendance, religious holidays, and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

Absences count negatively towards your grade starting the second week of class (Jan 13)

Excerpt from the statement on absences:

*In general, acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to participate in class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused. Other reasons also may be approved.***

**If you think you have an acceptable reason to be excused for your absence, please email me so that I can note your excused absence. I take illness (colds, flu, fever, etc) VERY seriously, so if you are ill please stay home, and if you are healthy please come to class!

How to do well in this course

1. **Be sure to read the assigned material before class.** This will help to ensure that our class time is quality time.
2. **After class, re-read the material for the session,** paying special attention to the questions that you had before. Hopefully the material will make much more sense to you now.
3. **Bring specific questions with you to class.** Even if there are aspects of the readings or study questions you didn't fully grasp, the fact that you tried should help you to narrow down what it is that you don't get.
4. **See me in office hours,** if there are still questions you are unclear about. That's what office hours are for. Don't be shy.
5. **Manage your time well.** Many students make the mistake of waiting until a few days before papers are due to start writing. That is *bad* time management. Same goes for exams. The **same number of hours** devoted to the material BEFORE class can lead to a much more efficient use of your time, better understanding, and higher grades.

On Reading Philosophy Texts

You will be expected to have done the assigned reading **before** you come to class to be able to follow and participate in the class discussion. Learning philosophy is as much learning a style of thinking and reasoning as it is learning certain contents. Therefore it is important that you try to participate actively and learn to engage with the readings critically.

You should budget enough time for the reading to be able to read each piece **at least three times**. Don't expect to be able to 'breeze through' the texts and you can avoid a lot of frustration. For all the readings you should have a pen and paper ready to take notes as you read. Philosophical writing is concerned with advancing and defending arguments. Your task will be to try to reconstruct the arguments and to critically evaluate them.

The first reading of the text should be fairly quick. Your goal here should be to get a first, rough sense of the general argument the author is advancing and the rough structure of the text. What is his or her main thesis? (write this down!) Where in the text is s/he arguing for it? Where does s/he address objections? Where does he discuss qualifications? Where does s/he motivate the argument? Don't worry, if during the first reading you don't yet understand how precisely the author is arguing for a thesis.

The second reading should be devoted to giving a reconstruction of the argument that is as sympathetic as possible. Now you should spend a lot of time on trying to understand how the author supports the main thesis, and how s/he might address potential objections. Here it is usually useful to try to jot down the following: What are the premises of the argument? How are the premises themselves supported? For example the author might appeal to shared intuitions or might claim that the premises are self-evident. What are the steps which are meant to get the author from the premises to the conclusion? (Here worlds like 'because' and 'therefore' can provide a clue.) You might think of yourself as engaging in a dialogue with the text here. Ask critical questions of the text, such as "You

say that all simple ideas are copies of impressions. Why should I be compelled to accept this?" Then search the text for answers. At this stage your aim should not yet be to try to discover flaws or problems in the argument. Aim to make the argument as strong as possible.

Finally it is time to be critical. During a third reading you ought to try to see if you can uncover weaknesses in the arguments. If someone would want to disagree with a conclusion, there are two general ways in which one might attack the author's arguments. One, you can disagree with one or more of the premises. That is you might accept that *if* we grant the premises, *then* the conclusion follows, but you might disagree with one or more of the premises. (But then you should ask yourself how you would respond to the attempt to motivate the premises.) Or, two, you might disagree with one or more of the steps in the argument. That is, you might be willing to accept the premises, but you might deny that this commits you to the conclusion as well. If you have an objection of the latter kind you should try to explain why it is possible to accept the author's premises and yet deny his or her conclusions. (Of course you also might have objections of both kinds.)

A careful reading of a difficult text takes time. Learn to read patiently and slowly, and before you get frustrated, remember that even professional philosophers struggle with some of the texts you are reading. One of the most wonderful aspects of reading philosophy is that it allows you to engage in conversations with some of the deepest and most original thinkers. Enjoy the challenge!

TENTATIVE Reading & Discussion Schedule

While we will largely stick to this schedule, we may decide to cut or extend some topics.

All will be posted in the Readings folder under the Files tab on Canvas. **Check Canvas Regularly for the current schedule!**

<i>Week 1: Introduction to the Course and Philosophy of Technology</i>		
Mon, Jan 6	Introduction to course	
Wed, Jan 8	Technology and Society Technology: What is it?	Langdon Winner, "Technologies as Forms of Life" Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Philosophy of Technology" (Section 2.5)
Fri, Jan 10	Technology and Society: In	Emmanuel Mesthene, "The Role of Technology in Society"

	Sickness and in Health	
<i>Week 2: Background: Ethical Theory</i>		
Mon, Jan 13	<i>Philosophy, Metaethics, Normative Ethics, and Applied Ethics</i>	Shelley Kagan (1998) “Preliminaries” (1 – 22)
Wed, Jan 15	Normative Ethics: Utilitarianism	John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , ch. 2
Fri, Jan 17	Normative Ethics: Deontology	Robert Nozick, “Moral Constraints and Moral Goals” (83-89) Topics for Paper 1 Posted on Canvas
<i>Week 3: Technology and Ethics</i>		
Mon, Jan 20	No Classes- MLK Day	
Wed, Jan 22	Technology as an Ethical Issue: The Case of Nuclear Weapons	Anscombe, “Mr. Truman’s Degree” (excerpts)
Fri, Jan 24	Property Rights	John Locke, “Of Property”
<i>Week 4: Technology and Property</i>		
Mon, Jan 27	Property Rights	David Hume, “Of Justice and Property” Paper 1 Due 11:59pm
Wed, Jan 29	Case Study 1: Technology and Intellectual Property	These Stunning AI Tools are about to Change the Art World (Slate)
Fri, Jan 31	Case Study 1 Wrap	Case Study 1 Due 11:59pm
<i>Week 5: Technology and the Market</i>		

Mon, Feb 3	Technology and Property	Thomas Paine, "Agrarian Justice"
Wed, Feb 5	Public goods and market failures	Tyler Cowen, " Public Goods " Jonathan Anomaly, "Public Goods and Government Action"
Fri, Feb 7	Technology, public goods, and government intervention	Robert E. McGinn, "Technology, Demography, and the Anachronism of Traditional Rights"
<i>Week 6: Economic Evaluations of Technology</i>		
Mon, Feb 10	Case study 2: Facebook, democracy, and market failures	Russian content on Facebook, Google and Twitter reached far more users than companies first disclosed (WashPo) Why Fake News Spreads like Wildfire on Facebook (Chicago Tribune)
Wed, Feb 12	Case Study 2 Wrap	Case Study 2 Due 11:59pm
Fri, Feb 14	Cost-benefit Analysis and Technology	HuffPost: Schweitzer, "Managing Risks in Public Policy: Impact vs.. Probability?" Sunstein, "Cost-Benefit Analysis and the Environment" (351-354) Kelman, S. Cost-Benefit Analysis: An Ethical Critique"
<i>Week 7: Risk</i>		
Mon, Feb 17	CBA (cont)	Broom, "Lives" (156-166) David Schmidz, "A Place for Cost Benefit Analysis"
Wed, Feb 19	Small Probabilities of Great Harm	Kristin Shrader-Frechette, "Technological Risk and Small Probabilities" (skip section 2.23 "A rejoinder" on pp. 437 – 438; and last paragraph of p. 440 until beginning of 2.4)
Fri, Feb 21	Alternatives to CBA	Stephen Gardiner, "A Core Precautionary Principle" (Sections I – III and VII to the end)
<i>Week 8: Technology, Work, and Distributive Justice</i>		
Mon, Feb 23	Automation and Employment	Watch video: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver: Automation (segment begins at 2:50)

		Automation: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO) Marx, Capital, ch. 15, sections 5 and 6
Wed, Feb 25	Distributive Justice: Egalitarianism	Rawls, "Justice as Fairness"
Fri, Feb 27	Distributive Justice: Libertarianism	Nozick, "Distributive Justice" (45 – 60)
<i>Week 9: Spring Break</i>		
Mon, Mar 2		No Classes
Wed, Mar 4		No Classes
Fri, Mar 6		No Classes
<i>Week 10: Technology, Work, and Distributive Justice</i>		
Mon, Mar 9	Case Study 3: Technological Unemployment	"Robots could replace 1.7 million American truckers in the next decade" (LA Times)
Wed, Mar 11	Case Study 3 Wrap	Case Study 3 Due 11:59pm
Fri, Mar 13	TBD	TBD
<i>Week 11: Privacy</i>		
Mon, Mar 16	Why Does Privacy Matter?	Rachels, "Why Privacy is Important" NYTimes- How China turned a City into a Prison (4/4/19) https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/04/04/world/asia/xinjiang-china-surveillance-prison.html Moxie Marlinspike, "Why 'I've got nothing to hide' is the Wrong Way to Think about Surveillance"

		https://www.wired.com/2013/06/why-i-have-nothing-to-hide-is-the-wrong-way-to-think-about-surveillance/
Wed, Mar 18	Privacy Harm and Big Data	Calo, "The Boundaries of Privacy Harm"
Fri, Mar 20	Privacy Harm and Big Data	Calo, "The Boundaries of Privacy Harm"
<i>Week 12: Surveillance, big data, and policing</i>		
Mon, Mar 23	Surveillance and big data policing	NYTimes- Can 30,000 Cameras Help Solve Chicago's Crime Problem? O'Neil, "Weapons of Math Destruction" Ch 5, Civilian Casualties; Justice in the Age of Big Data
Wed, Mar 25	Surveillance and big data policing	Ferguson, The Rise of Big Data Policing (86-101) [Optional: Ferguson, The Rise of Big Data Policing (62-83)]
Fri, Mar 27	Surveillance and big data policing	AI-Enhanced Policing, cont. 2nd Paper Topics Posted on Canvas
<i>Week 13: TBD</i>		
Mon, Mar 30		
Wed, Apr 1		
Fri, Apr 3		
<i>Week 14 Geoengineering</i>		
Mon, Apr 6	Geoengineering	Gardiner, "Is Arming the Future with Geo-engineering Really the Lesser Evil?" Morrow, "Starting a Flood to Stop a Fire? Some Moral Constraints on Solar Radiation Management"
Wed, Apr 8	Geoengineering	Callais, "The Slippery Slope Argument against Geoengineering"

Fri, Apr 10	Geoengineering	Tollefson, "Price of sucking carbon dioxide from air plunges," Nature 2nd Paper Due 11:59pm
<i>Week 15: Autonomous Weapons</i>		
Mon, Apr 13	Killing by Machine: The Ethics of Autonomous Weapons	"Attack of the Killer Robots" (Buzzfeed) https://www.buzzfeed.com/sarahatopol/how-to-save-mankind-from-the-new-breed-of-killer-robots
Wed, Apr 15	Killing by Machine: The Ethics of Autonomous Weapons	Purves, Jenkins, Strawser, "Autonomous Weapons, Moral Judgment, and Acting for the Right Reasons" Optional: Bradley Strawser, "Moral Predators"
Fri, Apr 17	Case Study 4: Autonomous Weapons	
<i>Week 16: TBD</i>		
Mon, Apr 20	Case Study 4 Wrap	Case Study 4 Due 11:59pm
Wed, Apr 22		