

Topics in 20th Century Continental Philosophy

The Philosophy of Technology

Section 001; Bessey Hall 112
Mondays and Wednesdays
3pm to 4:50pm

Dr. Kyle Powys Whyte
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Office Hours: by appointment

Required Items

Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*
Stiegler, *Technics and Time 2: Disorientation*
Beck, *The Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*

Introduction

The philosophy of technology is an important topic covered by many European philosophers. In this class, we will read well-known selections from this body of literature, and come up with our own analysis of the trends and future directions, as well as relationships with other literatures in philosophy. Some of the key problems that we will attempt to resolve are (1) the definition or essence of technology, (2) the relationship between technology and commodification, (3) the proper way to describe human entanglements with technologies, (4) power and technological risk, (5) the impact of technology on art and culture, (6) the relationship between technology and class, gender, or racial exploitation, and (7) technology and democracy, among other problems.

Deliverables

I conduct Philosophy 420 as if it were a graduate seminar. Professionalism, intellectual curiosity, and hard work are simply the traits that you must exhibit by virtue of being enrolled in it. Should your work in this course fall behind, I will meet with you personally to discuss what you plan to do about it.

Your final grade will be determined by two types of assignments. Essays: every few weeks in the schedule essays are listed. For each essay, write no more than 2 pages, single spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman. Your essay should respond to one of the prompts given in the class day before the essay is listed in the schedule. Each essay will receive a 4.0, 3.5, 3.0, 2.5, 2.0, or 1.5 grade. All the grades of your essays will be averaged at the end of the semester. The grading methodology will be individualized for each student. At various points throughout the semester you will be required to visit office hours with first drafts of your written work up to that point. We will create an individual grading rubric for your deliverables which will be the basis of your essay grades. Recaps: each student is required to do one recapitulation of the discussions for a class. For each class day, one student will give a recap of the class preceding it. If your name is listed as giving a recap, then you are giving the recap on *that* day of the class immediately following it. If you have not done a recap, or an acceptable recap, at the end of the semester, 1.0 will be deducted from your final grade.

Schedule

- 9/1: Overview of Syllabus
- 9/8: Karl Marx
Selections from *Capital*
- 9/13: No Class
- 9/15: Karl Marx
Selections from *Capital*
Recap:
- 9/20: Jacques Ellul
Selections
Recap:
- 9/22: Jacques Ellul
Selections
Recap:

Essay 1

- 9/27: Martin Heidegger
"The Question Concerning Technology"
Recap:

9/29: **Martin Heidegger**
"The Question Concerning Technology"
Recap:

10/4: **Walter Benjamin**
"The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
Recap:

Essay 2

10/6: **Herbert Marcuse**
Selections
Recap

10/11: **Jurgen Habermas**
"Technology and Society as Ideology"
Recap

10/13: **Andrew Feenberg**
"The Mediation is the Message"
Recap:

10/19: **Donna Haraway**
Selections
Recap:

10/21: **Donna Haraway**
Selections
Recap:

12/23: **Commodification, Technoculture, and the Human Workshop**

10/25: **Workshop Recap**
No Readings

Essay 3

10/27: **Peter-Paul Verbeek**
"Obstetric Ultrasound and the Technological Mediation of Morality: A Postphenomenological Analysis"
Recap:

11/1: **Michel Foucault**
Selections
Recap

11/3: **Luce Irigaray**
"A Chance to Live"
Recap:

11/8: **Isabelle Stengers**
Selections
Recap

11/10: **Isabelle Stengers**
Selections
Recap

Essay 4

11/15: **Bernard Stiegler**
"Introduction"
Recap

11/27: Bernard Stiegler
"Chapter 1"
Recap:

11/22: Bernard Stiegler
"Chapter 3"
Recap:

11/24: Bernard Stiegler
Review and Comparison
Recap

Essay 5

11/29: Ulrich Beck
Selections from *The Risk Society*
Recap:

12/1: Ulrich Beck
Selections from *The Risk Society*
Recap:

12/6: Ulrich Beck
Selections from *The Risk Society*
Recap:

12/8: Ulrich Beck
Selections from *The Risk Society*
Recap:

Essay 6

Finals Week: Last meetings on essays