PHIL 1560: Science, Technology and Ethics

Course Information

Summer 8-week term Session: Special Note from Professor

This section of this course will cover all the content (with the same workload) as is typically assigned during a 15-week semester. In order to be successful in this course, students are strongly encouraged to minimize any other employment, course work, travel, or other major time commitments. If that will not be possible from June 15 through August 7 of 2026, please consider taking the course during a regular semester. In particular, please note the following: Unit One, usually covered in four weeks, will be covered in just over two weeks. Unit Two, usually covered in five weeks, will be covered in just over two weeks. Unit Three, usually covered in six weeks, will be covered in three weeks. Please note the deadline for dropping classes without a W is Friday, June 19, which is the end of the first week of the course (see this calendar for those important dates).

Credit Hours:

The aggregation of time on tasks, assignment, and interactions in an online course will reflect rigor and expectations equivalent to the federal definition of the credit hour—15 hours of direct faculty instruction and a minimum of 30 hours of out-of-class student work for each credit hour awarded. Because this class is asynchronous, “in-class” work will involve watching lectures and shared videos and taking quizzes. “Out-of-class” work will include reading assigned texts, reviewing course content, completing discussion board activities, and writing analysis papers. If an asynchronous section does not seem like it will work for you, please know that during typical semesters there are usually in-person sections of the course, possibly offered by other instructors.

Course Description:

- This course is an interdisciplinary survey of ethical issues raised by recent developments in science and technology. Sample topics may include, but are not limited to, artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, big data, privacy, energy, medicine, and science itself. Specifically, in Professor’s sections of the course, please know: The focus of this course will be on historical and contemporary philosophical views regarding the goals and social practices tied to science and technology (as well as attempts to define these phenomena). In Professor's sections of the course there will also be a focus on ethical issues related to simulated environments.
    - There are no prerequisites
    - Purpose of the course (specific to Professor’s sections) is an introduction to ethical reflections on science and technology. Historical and contemporary philosophical views regarding the goals and social practices tied to science and

technology (as well as attempts to define these phenomena) will be considered. The course will also consider ethical issues related to simulated environments
- The course is composed of Three Units, each of which is composed of smaller "modules" (15 in total).
- Please note: Professor's sections of the class will focus on historical and late 20th century perspectives on science and technology broadly construed. Professor's sections will not focus on emerging specific technologies such as AI, GMOs, or stem cell research. For a focus on such specific technologies, you may wish to sign up for sections of the course with a different professor.

Learning Objectives

University Level Outcomes:

- **Critical Thinking:** Students will demonstrate critical thinking through the ability to evaluate, analyze, and integrate information from a variety of sources in order to develop reasoned positions and solutions to problems.
- **Communication:** Students will display competence in oral, written, and visual communication, as appropriate for their discipline.
- **Program Content Knowledge:** Students will demonstrate discipline-specific knowledge and skills in their major fields of study.

Program Level Objectives:

- **Philosophy Program Learning Goal 2**: Ethical Reasoning: students will understand ethical theories and use this understanding to think through moral and ethical problems in a principled and systematic way
- **Philosophy Program Learning Goal 4:** Students will investigate fundamental conceptions of what it means to be a person and to engage in essential human activities

Course Level Objectives (also are UNIFI Program-level Objectives 11 and 12:

- Students will develop greater understanding of their personal and civic responsibilities by applying ethical reasoning to a range of human conduct. Students will demonstrate ability to:
    - Analyze the origins and consequences of one's own personal values. (**UNIFI: SLO 11 Values**)
    - Apply ethical reasoning to important issues facing society. (**UNIFI: SLO 12**)

Course Content Requirements

Required Texts/Readings/Other Content :

- All required texts are available via Blackboard (E-Learning) and do not need to be purchased.
- Students may choose to purchase the following text; however, a pdf of excerpts from this text has been provided on Blackboard so purchase is completely optional.:

    - *Reality +: Virtual Worlds and the Problems of Philosophy*, David Chalmers. 2023 Reprint Edition (W. W. Norton and Company): 1324050349. Available in paperback, hardcover and Kindle versions.
- During Unit One, Module Four, students will need to acquire access to the show *Black Mirror* Season 3, Episode 4. This episode is available via Netflix, or can be purchased through Apple TV+ or Amazon. Students could also make the assignment related to this episode one of their drops (see "Instructional Methods" below)
- During Unit Three, Module Thirteen, students will need to acquire access to the film *A River Runs Through it* (1999). This film can be rented via other online streaming platforms. A DVD version can be checked out from Rod Library. Students could also make the assignment related to this film one of their drops (see "Instructional Methods" below)
- Students should acquire a notebook designated for our course; this should be used during lecture and shared videos, while reading assigned texts, and while outlining analysis papers.

Student/Instructor Mutual Reading Pledge

Professor pledges to do his best to make sure the assigned readings are of manageable length. In return, he asks students to pledge to complete all the readings on time, which means taking all necessary steps to ensure they have firm understandings of the content.

Instructional Methods

The weighted value of each assignment is as follows and adds up to 100 possible points/percent for the course:

- Unit One
    - Quizzes: Module 1-4 (lowest score dropped): **6%**
    - Discussion Modules 1-4 (lowest score dropped): **6%**
    - Analysis Paper #1: Letter to Author: **20%**
- Unit Two
    - Quizzes: Modules 5-7 and 9 (lowest score dropped): **6%**
    - Discussion Modules 5-8 (lowest score dropped): **6%**
    - Analysis Paper #2: Historical Philosophical Perspectives: **20%**
- Unit Three
    - Quizzes: Modules 10-14 (lowest score dropped): **8%**
    - Discussion Modules 10-15 (lowest two scores dropped): **8%**
    - Analysis Paper #3: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives: **20%**

Policy regarding late papers: Each assignment below is assigned a due date on the Course Schedule; late work on quizzes and discussions will not be accepted (note below that lowest scores in these categories are dropped). Late analysis papers, without advance correspondence, are subject to an immediate 10% score deduction (following a brief grace period for technical issues). If a late analysis paper is not turned in within three days of the due date, Professor will work with the student to arrange an in-person/Zoom 60-minute make-up session in which the student will complete the

assignment in a closed-book, closed-note format with a deduction of 25%. Any required make-up assignment must be completed within ten days of the original due date (within three days in Summer and Dec/Jan terms).

The following is a more detailed overview of each of the major assignment types:

- **Analysis Paper #1: Letter to Author: 20%**

Related to the Unit One material, students will prepare a letter to one of the authors we read in this unit: David Chalmers, Robert Pirsig, or Daniel Dennett. In the paper students will analyze the assigned portions of all three texts and make comparisons. The minimum length for this assignment will be 1250 words. The letter does not actually need to be distributed beyond our classroom. This assignment will count for 20 points (20%) of the overall course grade. Due dates are listed on the Course Schedule. Further details about this assignment are available via the "Handout for Analysis Paper #1: Letter to an Author." A walkthrough of that handout is included in the lecture video "Overview of Unit One: Simulated Environments." Both the lecture video and assignment handout are available within the Unit One folder on Blackboard.

- **Analysis Paper #2: Historical Philosophical Perspectives: 20%**

In Unit Two, we will focus on the topic of historical philosophical perspectives on science and technology. Students will write an analysis paper on the topic, worth 20 points (20% of the overall course grade). The minimum length for the paper will be 1250 words. Specific related readings and due dates are listed on the Course Schedule. Further details about this assignment are available via the "Handout for Analysis Paper #2: Historical Philosophical Perspectives on Science and Technology." A walkthrough of that handout is included in the lecture video "Overview of Unit Two." Both the lecture video and assignment handout are available within the Unit Two folder on Blackboard.

- **Analysis Paper #3: Late 20th C. Philosophical Perspectives: 20%**

In Unit Three, we will focus on the topic of late 20th century philosophical perspectives on science and technology. Our focus will be on the work of some of the most influential recent philosophers and sociologists of technology. At the end of that unit each student will write an analysis paper on the topic, worth 20 points (20% of the overall course grade). The minimum length for the paper will be 1250 words. Specific related readings and due dates are listed on the Course Schedule. Further details about this assignment are available via the "Handout for Analysis Paper #3: Late 20th c. Perspectives on Science and Technology." A walkthrough of that handout is included in the lecture video "Overview of Unit Three." Both the lecture video and assignment handout are available within the Unit Three folder on Blackboard.

- **Quizzes**

During most "modules" of the course, there will be multiple-choice and/or short-answer quizzes. These quizzes are designed to assess student engagement with the assigned readings. In some cases, they will be taken after students watch lecture videos and shared videos and, in those cases, will assess engagement with those materials as well. Each student's lowest quiz scores in each unit will be dropped; each student's remaining scores will count for two points each. The top three scores in each of Unit One and Unit Two and the top four scores in Unit Three will count for a grade. Overall, quizzes will be worth 20 points (20% of the overall course grade).

- **Discussions**

During most “modules” of the course, students will be assigned to post to the class discussion board, and review & respond to other students’ posts. These modular discussion activities are designed to allow students to actively engage with and collaborate on the assigned material. These activities will usually be assigned after students have completed the assigned readings, and watched lecture & shared videos. Each student’s lowest discussion board scores in each unit will be dropped; each student’s remaining scores will count for two points each. The top three scores in each of Unit One and Unit Two and the top four scores in Unit Three will count for a grade. Overall, discussion board activities will be worth 20 points (20% of the overall course grade).

Strategies for Formative Assessment

After Unit One, students will be asked to complete a formative assessment in which they reflect upon how the course is going and provide feedback. This will be completed via a quick survey (“What’s going well? What’s not going well?”). These reflections will be anonymous and are intended to enable the instructor to better guide students through the learning process for the rest of the semester.

Evaluation and Feedback Methods

Students will receive a weighted score for each analysis paper at least one module prior to the due date for the next analysis paper. Students will receive qualitative feedback on analysis papers regarding each rubric category in the form of an assessment of "Excellent," "Good," "Ok," or "Needs works" (along with brief comments where relevant) and a quantitative overall score for each paper. Discussion board feedback will be provided in a similar (though in a briefer) manner. After feedback has been provided, students are encouraged to meet with Professor for further feedback and academic support. Student scores on modular quizzes and discussion board activities will typically be made available within two official modules of completion (if an exception to that expectation should arise, an explanation will be posted on Blackboard announcements). Individual and total category scores will be posted in the “My Grades” tools link on the Blackboard website. Students are expected to monitor their own grades on Blackboard and save all graded work. There are rubrics available on Blackboard (E-Learning) for analysis papers, quizzes, and discussion boards.

Determination of Grades

Final grades will be reported using the following scale:

92-100% = A	88-90% = B+	78-80% = C+	68-70% = D+	< 60% = F
90-92% = A-	82-88% = B	72-78% = C	62-68% = D	
	80-82% = B-	70-72% = C-	60-62% = D-	

Respecting Diverse Views:

In our meetings together we will greatly benefit from our different perspectives and ideas as well as from our own different backgrounds and experiences. This is particularly the case as

we will be focusing on philosophical and religious ideas in our course. It is expected that everyone will be included and be treated with respect.

Professional Email Standards

- When emailing Professor, please use a professional email model. The professional email model includes use of a subject, a greeting line, and a signature. If you are unsure of whether the person you are addressing will know which course you are in without having to look it up, you should provide the course name and section number as well.
- Also, keep in mind that Professor typically has many students in four or more courses each semester. Before emailing, depending on the issue, try to find the answer yourself or ask a peer. At that point, of course Professor is very happy to help (I really want you to succeed!). But make sure you write a careful email to make it as easy as possible to respond.
- If Professor emails you, he expects a response within two business days; Professor holds to the same standard for responding to students.
- Also, during any online interactions associated with this class, please remember to present yourself in a professional manner, such as you plan to do at your job after you begin your career following graduation. Visit the Albion Albion's Core Netiquette Rules for Netiquette tips. (http://albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html)

Academic Integrity:

To ensure academic integrity and to follow UNI policies on Student Academic Ethics (see: IV. Academic Ethics Violations), students will not plagiarize, misrepresent, fabricate, or cheat. Unless otherwise instructed and approved by the instructor, students will take quizzes and exams **individually**, without collaboration with other parties and/or using notes or other texts. Similarly, students will submit work (papers, presentations, and other assessments) that is their own work (in regard to violations of these ethics policies, see: V. Academic Ethics Sanctions). (https://policies.uni.edu/301).

Course Communication and Technology

Online Component:

This course is completely an online utilizing Blackboard for instruction, materials, and communication. This online component can be accessed through the UNIeLearning Suite (http://elearning.uni.edu/)

All of the handouts and information for this course will be available in Blackboard. Students are advised to check the website and their email for communication. Any changes to the course syllabus or schedule will be announced through Blackboard. Assignments are due as specified in the course schedule and on the course Blackboard page in Blackboard. Students are responsible for learning how to use Blackboard for on-time submission of assignments. Blackboard tutorials are also available on the Blackboard Learn Help website. (https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student)

Attendance, Late Work, and Makeup Work:

See UNI Policy on Class Attendance and Makeup Work (https://policies.uni.edu/306)

Technology Requirements and Digital Literacy:

The following information has been provided to assist you in preparing to use technology successfully in this course. You are required to have access to and the ability to use:

- UNI Gmail account
- Microsoft Office or Google Docs
- Reliable (High speed) internet connection. An ethernet connection is preferable to a wi-fi connection.
- Firefox and Chrome browsers are recommended.
- Zoom
- YouTube
- Google Drive and Google Apps (these are free with your UNI email account)

Technical Support:

If you experience any technical problems, contact the **Office of Online & Distance Education** at 319-273-7740 (local), 800-772-1746 (toll-free) or cesp-consult@uni.edu.

Please note: Follow the support steps outlined above, as your instructor is not the first line of support for technical problems.

For course support, Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Important UNI Policies and Statements

For other important UNI Policy statements relevant to our course, please open the "Panther Resources" folder included at the bottom of "Content" on our Blackboard Ultra Site. Topics include:

- Free Speech Syllabus Statement
- Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Policy
- Non-discrimination in Employment or Education
- Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Statement
- Accommodations of Disabilities Policy
- Student Accessibility Services
- Affirmative Action Policy
- Office of Compliance and Equity Management
- The Learning Center @ Rod Library
- Accessibility and Privacy Information
- Diversity and Inclusion Statement