PHIL 2160: Ethics and Information Technology

Fall 2021, Section 581

Instructor

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Office Hours. Mondays and Wednesdays *11:00am - 12:00pm* on [Zoom](). Zoom meetings can be made by appointment.
Video Lectures will be posted on their corresponding date.

Course Description

In the last 30 years daily life has changed for most people in the global north. New technologies have changed the way we work, play, and interact with others. In this course we will perform a critical analysis of many of these changes and their associated technologies. We will consider the ethical issues that have emerged in their development. We will consider arguments about the ethics of social media, echo chambers, artificial intelligence, machine learning algorithms, video games, virtual reality, and more! We'll leave this course with a better understanding of how modern technologies shape our lives, and some of the reasons we might want to be more considerate and reflective of which technologies we permit.

Required Reading

All required readings are available in the 'Course Readings' module on the course canvas page.

Course Requirements

Exam (60%). For each of the 3 units of the course, there will be an *exam*. These exams may be composed of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, short answer, and/or essay questions. Exams can be found in the '[Exams]()' module.

The exam dates are set on the course schedule:

- o Exams are only open on the day of the exam.

- If you know that you will not be able to take one of the exams on its scheduled day, ***contact me ahead of time.***

Reading Quizzes (20%). For every session with a reading assignment there will be a corresponding reading quiz. Reading quizzes are always due ***the day before*** the reading is covered in class. Reading quizzes can be retaken *once*. Reading quizzes can be found in the '[Reading Quiz](#)' module or by clicking the Quizzes tab.

Discussion (20%). Every two weeks we will discuss the material that we have covered in that period of time. This is your primary opportunity to express yourself and engage with other students in the course. You will be expected to produce an **original post** of at least 200 words, and two **response posts** of 50-100 words. **Original posts** will be due Friday evening by 5:00pm, while both **response posts** will be due the following Monday at noon. Discussion forums can be found in the 'Discussion' module or by clicking the Discussions tab.

For direction on **original posts** and **response posts**, see 'Discussion Suggestions' in the '[Discussion](#)' module.

What Does a Philosopher Look Like?
Like many disciplines in the academy, philosophy has historically been dominated by white men. Stereotype threat is a psychological phenomenon that causes people to underperform in a discipline in the face of a stereotype that says that "people like them" aren't good at that discipline. However, telling students that there are no actual differences in performance in a class can defuse the anxiety that the stereotype creates and subsequently undermines those tendencies to underperform. The stereotype that says that only white men can be good philosophers is false. For more on this, visit: http://looksphilosophical.tumblr.com/

On Seeming Smart
Regardless of whether you've studied philosophy prior to this course, you might often find yourself feeling intimidated by the way philosophers write or talk. This might be because philosophy, like all disciplines, employs its own jargon and concepts that you either might not have encountered before, or that you might have seen used differently. Jargon can be useful, but it can also be used to exclude people and make them feel like they don't have a place in the conversation. Don't feel that way and don't be intimidated!
If you don't know what a term means, ask for a definition. If you don't know how a concept is being used, ask for clarification. For a very helpful essay that speaks to this (among other important things) see ["On Being Good at Seeming Smart"](#).

University Policies

Classroom Behavior

Both students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote or online. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Requirements for COVID-19

As a matter of public health and safety due to the pandemic, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements, and public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. Required safety measures at CU Boulder relevant to the classroom setting include:

- maintain 6-foot distancing when possible,
- wear a face covering in public indoor spaces and outdoors while on campus consistent with state and county health orders,
- clean local work area,
- practice hand hygiene,
- follow public health orders, and
- if sick and you live off campus, do not come onto campus (unless instructed by a CU Healthcare professional), or if you live on-campus, please alert [CU Boulder Medical Services](#).

Students who fail to adhere to these requirements will be asked to leave class, and students who do not leave class when asked or who refuse to comply with these requirements will be referred to [Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#). For more information, see the policies on [COVID-19 Health and Safety](#) and [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#). If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please see the "Accommodation for Disabilities" statement on this syllabus.

Before returning to campus, all students must complete the [COVID-19 Student Health and Expectations Course](#). Before coming on to campus each day, all students are required to complete a [Daily Health Form](#).

Students who have tested positive for COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for or had symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and complete the [Health Questionnaire and Illness Reporting Form](#) remotely.

Accommodation for Disabilities

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the Disability Services website. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see Temporary Medical Conditions on the Disability Services website.

Preferred Student Names and Pronouns

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

Honor Code

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the Honor Code Office website.

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, or protected-class discrimination or harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, anonymous reporting, and the campus resources can be found on the OIEC website.

Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, dating and domestic violence, stalking, discrimination,

harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

Religious Holidays

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Let the instructor know if you require accommodations for religious observances and they will be provided.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

Course Schedule – Subject to change at instructor's discretion. You will be informed when any changes occur.

Week 1		
Mon 9/27		Dusek - *What is Technology*
Thur 9/30		Nguyen – *Escape the Echo Chamber*
Week 2		
Mon 10/04		Rini – *Fake News and Partisan Epistemology*
Thur 10/07	**Dusek, Nguyen, Rini, and Vosoughi et al Original Post (10/08)**	Vosoughi et al – *The spread of true and false news online*
Week 3		
Mon 10/11	**Dusek, Nguyen, Rini, and Vosoughi et al Response Post**	Bail et al – *Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarization*
Thur 10/14		Harris – *How Technology is Hacking your mind*
Week 4		
Mon 10/18		Bermudez – *Social Media and Self Control* **Exam 1** *(10/20)*
Thur 10/21	**Bail et al, Harris, Bermudez, Owens and Cribb Original Post (10/22)**	Owens and Cribb – *My Fitbit Thinks I Can Do Better!*
Week 5		
Mon 10/25	**Bail et al, Harris, Bermudez, Owens and Cribb Response Post**	Hasnas – The Mirage of Product Safety
Thur 10/28		Luck – The Gamer's Dilemma
Week 6		
Mon 11/01		Ramirez and LaBarge – Real Moral Problems in the Use of Virtual Reality
Thur 11/04		Himma – Ethical Issues Involving Computer Security, pgs. 191-206
Week 7		
Mon 11/08		Kahn – Just Cause and Cyberattacks
Thur 11/11	**Hasnas, Luck, Ramirez and LaBarge, Himma, Kahn, Bostrum Original Post (11/12)**	Bostrom – The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence
Week 8		
Mon 11/15	**Hasnas, Luck, Ramirez and LaBarge, Himma, Kahn, Bostrum Response Post**	**Exam 2**
Thur 11/18		Frank and Nyholm – Robot Sex and Consent
Week 9		
Mon 11/22		
Thur 11/25		
Week 10		
Mon 11/29		Jenkins – The need for moral algorithms in autonomous vehicles
Thur 12/02		Wong – Democratizing Algorithmic Fairness
Week 11		

Mon 12/06		Stahl - Indiscriminate Mass Surveillance and the Public Sphere
Thur 12/09	**Frank and Nyholm, Jenkins, Wong, Stahl, Burkell Original Post (12/10)** **Response Post (12/13)**	Burkell – Remembering me: big data, individual identity, and the psychological necessity of forgetting
FINAL EXAM		