

Society, Ethics, & Technology I 1164-IDS 252-03 + 1164-IDS 252-04

The College of New Jersey

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Spring 2016: Tues/Fri 12:30 & 2

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Course Description:

As new technologies extend human powers and enlarge social options, they also often give rise to unforeseen and occasionally undesirable social and environmental consequences. Many lead to troubling ethical dilemmas. "Society, Ethics, & Technology" provides a framework for understanding ways in which human societies transform themselves through technological innovation and for assessing the social and ethical issues associated with technological change. Specific issues to be discussed include nuclear weapons, drones, state surveillance, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, social media, nanotechnology, and the environment. Each issue will be matched with a resource from a philosophical or religious ethical tradition in the hope that we might draw upon the rich thinking of the past to assist us as we enter a brave new future.

Goals:

This course is primarily focused on the Worldviews and Ways of Knowing goals and outcomes of the Liberal Learning Program. Class activities and assignments are selected in order to help students "think critically about what it means to be human, and to explore and interpret the human place in the universe." Students should be able to reflect on how "human beings are able to gain knowledge beyond the limits of their own personal experiences as they develop an understanding of the nature and role of technology and its impact on the environment and society." Because many decisions involving technological issues have a major impact on human lives, students should be able to "formulate a point of view on the intersection of science, religion, politics, and other forms of culture," as well as to develop the ability to make informed judgments concerning ethical values.

4th Hour:

Each week students will be expected to comment on posted news stories relevant to society, ethics, & technology. Postings will be graded and take place under *Discussions on Canvas*.
Postings must be submitted by **Fridays at 5pm**.

Texts/Readings:

1. *Ethics for the New Millennium (Ancient Wisdom, Modern World)*, Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso) (identified below as *Ethics for NM*)
2. Additional articles will be posted on Canvas. These are mandatory reading.
3. An approved Sci-Fi book of your choosing. See the list appended to this syllabus. These books are widely available in libraries, book stores, and amazon.com's used marketplace. Please pick one you have not read.

Assignments / Evaluation:

1. There is one reflection paper, "Where I get my ethics" (500 words) which should interact with the 5 views of ethics presented in class. (10% of final grade)
2. There is one thesis paper (950 - 1050 words). Prompts will be made available. (15% of final grade)
3. There are two exams: a midterm and a final. The final is cumulative but will mostly focus on the second half of the course. (20% / 20%)
4. In the final weeks students will give a presentation on themes of SET in an approved SCI-FI book of their choosing. (20%)
5. Students are expected to be present, to politely and thoughtfully participate in class discussions. (5%)
6. Students are expected to post / comment in the "4th Hour" discussions on CANVAS. (10%)

Office Hours

Tuesday & Friday 11-12:30. Locations TBA. *Please let me know you are coming.*

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Final Grade Calculation:

- A = 94% to 100%, A- = 90 to 93
- B+ = 87 to 89, B = 83 to 86, B- = 80 to 82
- C+ = 77 to 79, C = 73 to 76, C- = 70 to 72
- D+ = 65 to 69, D = 60 to 64
- F = 0 to 59

TCNJ Goals & Expectations

TCNJ Attendance Policy:

Every student is expected to participate in each of his/her courses through regular attendance at lecture and laboratory sessions. It is further expected that every student will be present on time and prepared to participate when scheduled class sessions begin.

At the first class meeting of a semester, instructors are expected to distribute in writing the attendance policies which apply to their courses. While attendance itself is not used as a criterion for academic evaluations, grading is frequently based on participation in class discussion, laboratory work, performance, studio practice, field experience or other activities which may take place during class sessions. If these areas for evaluation make class attendance essential, the student may be penalized for failure to perform satisfactorily in the required activities.

When a student must be absent from classes due to extended illness, a death in the family or similar genuine emergency, the Dean of Student Life should be informed immediately so that the appropriate notice can be provided to individual instructors. Students who must miss classes due to participation in a field trip, athletic event or other official college function should arrange with their instructors for such class absences well in advance. The Office of Academic Affairs will verify, upon request, the dates of and participants in such college functions. In every instance, however, the student has the responsibility to initiate arrangements for makeup work.

TCNJ Academic Integrity Policy:

The College of New Jersey is a community of scholars and learners who respect and believe in academic integrity. This integrity is violated when someone engages in any of the dishonest behavior described below.

Academic dishonesty is any attempt by the student to gain academic advantage through dishonest means, to submit, as his/her own, work which has not been done by him/her or to give improper aid to another student in the completion of an assignment. Such dishonesty would include, but is not limited to: submitting as his/her own a project, paper, report, test, or speech copied from, partially copied, or paraphrased from the work of another (whether the source is printed, under copyright, or in manuscript form). Credit must be given for words quoted or paraphrased. The rules apply to any academic dishonesty, whether the work is graded or ungraded, group or individual, written or oral.

SCHEDULE:

1. INTRODUCTION: BLUE PILLS AND TRUTH
TUE. JAN. 26 Introduction: From Tibet to *The Matrix*

FRI. JAN. 29 *Ethics for NM*: Preface
Ethics for NM, Ch. 1: Modern Society & Quest for Human Happiness
Ethics for NM, Ch. 2: No Magic, No Mystery

4TH HOUR: See *Discussions* on Canvas
2. ANCIENT & RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON TECHNOLOGY & POWER
TUE. FEB. 2 Wikipedia Entry: [Prometheus](#)
The Book of Genesis: [Chapters 1-11](#)
Bhagavad Gita: Chapters [One](#), [Three](#), [Four](#), & [Eleven](#)

FRI. FEB. 5 *Will to Believe*, William James (Canvas)
Ethics for NM, Ch. 3: Dependent Origination & Nature of Reality

4TH HOUR: See *Discussions* on Canvas
3. SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES ON TECHNOLOGY
TUE. FEB. 9 *The Riddle of Amish Culture*, Ch. 1,8,9 Donald Kraybill (Canvas)
Wikipedia: [Propaganda Techniques](#)

FRI. FEB. 12 *Neo-Luddites versus Technophiles*, Gordon Graham (Canvas)
I and Thou: A Prologue, Walter Kaufmann (Canvas)
Ethics for NM, Ch. 4: Redefining the Goal

4TH HOUR: Essay: "Where I Get My Ethics"
4. NUCLEAR POWER & JUST WAR
Tue. Feb. 16 *The 1955 Test*, Andrei Sakharov (Canvas)
Voices from Chernobyl, Svetlana Alexievich (Canvas)

Fri. Feb. 19 *The Justice of the Present War*, GEM Anscombe (Canvas)
[Beyond Vietnam Speech](#), Martin Luther King
Ethics for NM, Ch. 5: The Supreme Emotion

4TH HOUR: See *Discussions* on Canvas
5. SURVEILLANCE & FREEDOM
TUE. FEB. 23 Drone Regulations & Fourth Amendment, T.Matitateyahu (Canvas)
[Snowden, Whistle Blower](#), Editorial (NY Times)
[iPhone 6 Locks out NSA](#), Sanger & Chen (NY Times)

FRI. FEB. 26 [Freedom from Fear](#), Aung San Suu Kyi
Ethics for NM, Ch. 6: Ethic of Restraint

4TH HOUR: See *Discussions* on Canvas

6. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & OUR HUMANITY
 TUE. MAR. 1 *Singularity is Near*, Ray Kurzweil (Canvas)
 Mind & Cosmos, Ch.1: Introduction, Thomas Nagel (Canvas)
- FRI. MAR. 4 *Ethics for NM*, Ch. 7: Ethic of Virtue
 [Interview with John Searle](#), Paul Almond (Machines Like Us)
 What Mary Didn't Know, Frank Jackson (Canvas)
- 4TH HOUR: See *Discussions* on Canvas
7. MID-TERM WEEK
 Tue. Mar. 8 Begin reading *Four Loves & Engines of Creation*
 SET in SCI-FI Presentation Assignments + Review
- Fri. Mar. 11 **Midterm Exam**
- 4TH HOUR: See *Discussions* on Canvas
8. **Spring Break: March 14-18**
9. INTERNET & LOVE
 TUE. MAR. 22 [What Should a Billionaire Give?](#), Peter Singer (NY Times)
 Ethics for NM, Ch. 8: Ethic of Compassion
- FRI. MAR. 25 *The Four Loves*, CS Lewis (Canvas)
 Ethics for NM, Ch. 9: Ethics & Suffering
- 4TH HOUR: See *Discussions* on Canvas
10. NANOTECHNOLOGY & CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE
 TUE. MAR. 29 **Paper Due**
- FRI. APR. 1 *Engines of Creation*: K.Eric Drexler (Canvas)
 Ethics for NM, Ch. 10: The Need for Discernment
- 4TH HOUR: See *Discussions* on Canvas
11. BIOTECHNOLOGY & THE VALUE OF LIFE
 TUE. APR. 5 Signature in the Cell, Ch. 3: The Double Helix, S.C. Meyer (Canvas)
 Ethics for NM, Ch. 11: Universal Responsibility
 Ethics for NM, Ch. 12: Levels of Commitment
- FRI. APR. 8 *Respect for Life*, CD 3.4, 338-343, Karl Barth (Canvas)
 [Unspeakable Conversations](#), Harriet McBride Johnson (NY Times)
 [Obituary](#), Harriet McBride Johnson, (NY Times)

4TH HOUR: See *Discussions* on Canvas

12. ENVIRONMENT & THE VALUE OF BEAUTY

TUE. APR. 12 [*Historical Origins of Our Ecological Crisis*](#), Lynn White (Canvas)
Only a Promise of Happiness, Ch. 1, Alexander Nehamas (Canvas)
The Beauty of the Infinite, pp.15-28, David Bentley Hart (Canvas)

FRI. APR. 15 *Ethics for NM*, Ch. 13: Further Responsibilities
Ethics for NM, Ch. 14: Peace & Disarmament

4TH HOUR: See *Discussions* on Canvas

13. SET IN SCI-FI

TUE. APR. 19 SET in SCI-FI Presentations

FRI. APR. 22 SET in SCI-FI Presentations

4TH HOUR: See *Discussions* on Canvas

14. SET IN SCI-FI

TUE. APR. 26 SET in SCI-FI Presentations

FRI. APR. 29 SET in SCI-FI Presentations

4TH HOUR: See *Discussions* on Canvas

15. CONCLUSION: RED PILLS AND SALVATION

TUE. MAY 3 *The Question Concerning Technology*, Martin Heidegger (Canvas)
Ethics for NM, Ch. 15: The Role of Religion in Modern Society

FRI. MAY 6 Wrap Up / Closing Thoughts / Evals (Bring Computers)
The Essential Gandhi, Ch. 22: Blueprint for A Better Life (Canvas)
The Essential Gandhi, Ch. 26: Love versus War and Dictators (Canvas)

4TH HOUR: See *Discussions* on Canvas

TO BE ANNOUNCED:

FINAL EXAM

HELPFUL DATES:

MAY 7-9

MAY 10-13

MAY 19-20

READING PERIOD

EXAM PERIOD

SPRING COMMENCEMENT

SET in Sci-Fi:

1. *1984*, George Orwell
2. *Boys from Brazil*, Ira Levin
3. *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley
4. *Canticle for Leibowitz*, Walter Miller Jr.
5. *Cat's Cradle*, Kurt Vonnegut
6. *Children of Men*, PD James
7. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Philip K. Dick
8. *Ender's Game* + *Speaker for the Dead*, Orson Scott Card
9. *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury
10. *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley
11. *Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood
12. *Hunger Games Trilogy*, Suzanne Collins
13. *iRobot*, Isaac Asimov
14. *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding
15. *Lord of the Rings*, JRR Tolkien
16. *Neuromancer*, William Gibson
17. *Out of the Silent Planet* & *Perelandra*, CS Lewis
18. *Sirens of Titan*, Kurt Vonnegut
19. *Slaughterhouse Five*, Kurt Vonnegut
20. *Solaris*, Stanislaw Lem
21. *The Dispossessed*, Ursula McGinn
22. *The Man in the High Castle*, Philip K. Dick
23. *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, Robert Heinlein
24. *The Road*, Cormac McCarthy
25. *The Time Machine*, HG Wells
26. Or, see the instructor to gain approval for another book.



Morpheus:

After this, there is no turning back.

*You take the blue pill—the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe.
You take the red pill—you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.*

Remember: all I'm offering is the truth. Nothing more.