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Media Studies 255

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**Essay Question I.**

**New technologies have always produced unintended consequences. One result of this would be how UX designers and engineers face a number of new ethical challenges today with the rise of technology regarding our interaction with it and dependence on it.**

**What is the primary job of a UX designer? Discuss the principle ethical quandaries faced by UX designers. What is persuasive design? Discuss the ways you feel this positively and/or negatively affect user behavior.**

New technologies have indeed produced unintended consequences. No one could have believed the many advances, effects, challenges and results that new technology has established through the years of its existence. With the many consequences of technologies, it can be understood how UX designers and engineers may face new ethical challenges today due to our interaction and dependence with technology. This interplay of interaction with technology and dependence on it is a crucial aspect that needs to be comprehended in regard to how technology has impacted and affected our lives.

UX designers or “user experience design” is defined as a process of enhancing a user’s experience in terms of refining usability, accessibility and pleasure within the interplay of interaction with the technology between user and product in Week 9: UX Professionals and Beyond lecture. The role of a UX designer is to ensure all the enhancements that take place from the very beginning of a concept to the sharing of the finished product. UX designers are not alone in this process some designers include entire teams of development to ensure and oversee the product. Much goes into the development of the product as described further in Week 9 lecture. Some jobs of designers include many phases like the task analysis, design and conduct usability testing and beta-testing phases. Each plays a crucial role in the dynamic of the completed product. By laying out user scenarios, designing interactive flowcharts and analyzing the use of the product UX designers are able to gain a better understanding of their products. The different phases provide a confirmation or disapproval of their theory and knowledge of whether or not their product will be used upon its release when still gathering as much information about it.

While running such phases issues arise of the principle ethical quandaries and challenges faced by UX designers. These challenges have to be dealt with responsibly or there will be life changing consequences. There are five main ethical quandaries that UX designers face. Human costs and de-valuing work, a concept of ‘de-skilling’, influencing user behavior, the erosion of privacy and the dangers of distraction are very critical challenges that must be acknowledged by designers. As explained in great detail within Week 9 lecture, the challenge of human costs and de-valuing work is achieved by the optimization of system designs, augmenting human ability and a very interesting concept of automation. This automation seems to be a very influencing factor in diminishing value. The imperative nature of automation completely changes how work is de-humanized, growth is diminished, and value of rewarding work is stripped making it very telling of just how risky the UX designer challenges are. When technology plays a role in altering human experiences and life great caution should be taken and the negative consequences of the neglect of such caution can be illustrated with the case study of the Foxconn Suicides in Shenzhen, China 2010. This completely shocking case study yields great concern about just how far and close risk taking is in the world of UX designers and how powerful the loss of human lives is. It also provides a link between human dependence on technology an idea that should never loss its severity. The replacement of jobs by machines or technology yields further issues of job loss that in turn reflects how some technology can exceed human ability. Although some challenges raise negative ethical concerns others seem to have some positive aspects to them within the ethical quandaries and challenges faced by UX designers. De-skilling can be viewed as walking along a line between two sides that have opposing effects. On one side there is the positive benefits of certain technology in improving and enhancing the decrease of mistakes and increase of the safety of humans. To better understand this, examples of artificial intelligence can demonstrate how technology assisting humans can be used in a very beneficial manner that will change the function and methods of human activities. The opposite side of such a positive benefit is the negative reality of creating situations that will cause replacement of extremely skilled operators. In terms of aviation this removal of skilled individuals with less skilled ones causes for a disparity in the automation of technology.

One of the greatest ethical quandaries and challenges faced by UX designers in my opinion is the influencing of user behavior. As stated prior when technology interaction and dependence alters and motivates humans great caution needs to be taken. Once you have past the line of influencing and changing people with your product great responsibility must be taken to ensure that such influencing does not negatively impact users. With this UX designers and users must understand that that even though products are developed having the best interest for its users sometimes that may not be the ultimate case. With this influencing user behavior challenge the role of erosion of privacy becomes an added factor. With technology that offers for example parents the ability to observe and monitor their child’s some ethical questions can be brought up in regard to the invasion of a child’s or teenagers privacy. Aside from privacy is the idea that with such surveillance designers are altering behavior of its users. Coinciding with the changing behavior are the ways that UX designers define their responsibility in subconsciously influencing decisions and actions. Concepts like persuasive design which plays a role in the appeal of technology, behavioral psychology and demographics all play a role in the eliciting of desired actions. I find there to be definitely two sides to this issue in terms of how the influencing of behavior plays a role in the invasion of privacy. On one hand there is going to be a constant lack of trust regardless of how much parents want to be confident in their children’s safety as well as a presence of “performance” in terms of the children knowing they are being monitored and on the other hand such surveillance can elicit behaviors that will not harm those being monitored. The influence of behavior can produce good consequences or knowledge like knowing your child is safe driving back home not using their phone and having your parents or grandparent’s daily activities monitored but giving them more independence. User behavior will be constantly illustrating both positive and negative consequences. Of the many ethical quandaries this one of influencing users is really interesting and important. Its persuasive design nature allows for the integration of communication, monitoring and lack of privacy. As with all technology there is going to be pros and cons but as long as humans are not detrimentally altered some cons can be excused with further communication and understanding.

**Essay Question II.**

**The rise of digital technology has had a massive impact in the international creative community. Small digital video cameras and editing software have made it easier than ever for aspiring filmmakers to make a movie. Inexpensive recording software has done the same for musicians. Digital photography now rivals the traditional chemical process for resolution, while image manipulation is simpler and more sophisticated than ever before. Ultimately, the Internet provides a worldwide platform for artists of all stripes to share his/her work.**

**What are some of the core characteristics of the digital world? Discuss how these have impacted the arts. What are some specific developments that have impacted artists? In what ways are they unrewarding and in what ways are they beneficial?**

Digital technology has indefinitely changed the way that creative communities craft, generate and construct. This technology has allowed for an increase in the amount of people that are able to create films, music, and visual arts like photography. With the availability of video cameras, editing software’s, recording software’s and image manipulation artists are given a platform within the internet to expand their sharing of work. This topic is of great interest and intrigue in understanding just how far we have come in technology.

Three core characteristics of the digital world are defined as electronic, networked and interconnected in the Week 10: Art and Technology lecture. With electronic there is no longer the need for a physical form or object. This allows for the existence of artwork in a more connected and widespread form. Without this aspect technology would give arts a disservice. The impact this has on art is that there is a discrepancy in the distinguishing between real and fabricated. Along with this is the idea that an original is equal to a copy. Skills, cost and value all very fundamental aspects of art whether film, music or visual have an uncertainty to them with the characteristic of electronic. The second core characteristic of the digital world networked, involves more the aspect of the widespread, worldwide networks available. This is an aspect that has a vital role in our society today. Having something instant, formattable, interactive and shared introduces an influential and very ‘seen’ form of art. With this, art has the ability to be everywhere, visible and this has impacted the arts in both positive and negative ways in terms of controversy. The final core characteristic of interconnected has many implications like public interaction, tracking visits and open to modification. The impact that the core characteristics have on the arts is that we are now able to be extremely connected and have everything available to us. Electronic, networked and interconnected allows for many arts to never truly fade away or disappear. Now that there is a digital world that gives many different art forms a platform we can never actually forget something that’s put out there. Once you create something and you do so in an electronic manner you are networking your work allowing for an interconnected realm of viewers and other artists. This is found in examples of films available online, music downloadable online and paintings or sculptures that are showcased online.

Overall three main ideas that very important with this topic are the development affecting costs, the role of social media and its importance for the art and the impact of artistic discipline or practice. In terms of costs through the years of advances and growths hardware a crucial element to technology has improved in a manner that gave us personal computers, smart phones and equipment for recording to name a few as well as improved the software of many applications that are key in art forms like graphic or image manipulation that changes the way traditional processes are completed and resolved. This change in how things are done shows the great impact technology has had on our development. Advances in networks a core characteristic also follows the path to the internet which is the main form of digital technology and sharing of arts. The second idea of social media has many implications of just how important it is for arts. Without social media there would be no greater community within technology and using technology. Not having social media would also limit the cultural works of other countries that ultimately would leave many people unaware of many important or well-known pieces. Social media mends barriers and alienation. It provides arts a place of interactive dialogue, promotes creations motivated by the viewing of other people creating, stimulates the user-generated content interchange in fact it encourages this and gives the core traits of collaboration and trading. Social media basically provides arts a platform like the internet that allows for an audience that will listen, learn and build upon its new-found knowledge of arts. The final idea of impact by artistic discipline or practices introduces a separation between the different arts and their relationship to technology. Without thinking of this one may not have known that some art forms existed because of technology while others were enhanced by it. Film, video and digital arts endure due to technology while distribution of music and e-books were enriched by that very technology. Regardless of such facts as noted in Week 10 digital transition gave artists of all fields the ability to replace the physical forms or objects of their work into electronic files. Following this is the distribution that over time allowed for a similar impact as the role of social media.

Apart from how social media, hardware, software applications and the internet has impacted artists are how digital technologies have impacted for example visual arts, film and TV as well as the music industry. For visual arts there are both unrewarding and beneficial impacts of developments. Some favorable developments involve the emergence of digital art, authenticity and longevity. An unrewarding impact has been the ill-equipped spaces and the artificial guides and collections. The concept of high art is not so clear to me of being more unrewarding or beneficial. For film and TV, I found there to be more beneficial developments than those that are unrewarding in the long and short term. Taking the big screen to small screen is a great development because now there is more viewing, access and possibly availability. With viewing, access and availability you have a new audience that will increase the longevity of your work because it will spread more. The main negative of all these developments are the falling equipment companies. This alters a system that has been around for a very long time. In the music industry there is the advantage of going live, producing connection, new fans and more demand of music. On the other hand, there is the record label exempt and the P2P scare. What can be understood from the digital technology impact on arts is that there are changes allowing for interconnected realm of viewers, artists and a more widespread creative community.

**Essay Question III.**

**Human enhancement technology converges nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology and cognitive science to improve human performance, attempting to temporarily or permanently overcome the current limitations of the human body through natural or artificial means.**

**Discuss some specific developments in human enhancement technology. Do you have trouble with the idea of these technologies making us stronger, faster, better? Do these advancements come at any cost? Such as privacy issues or a question of morals? What technological innovation do you think we need most and why?**

Of all the topics covered throughout the semester this one in particular was very enlightening and by far my favorite. Technology that converges many other forms is shown to be ones that are attempting to improve in some cases human performance. There is always going to be developments that are intended to advance or change the function of human abilities. By overcoming limitations and obstacles technology that involves nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology and cognitive science all try to in some way alter the human body by human enhancements. This idea through natural or artificial means is a topic of great lure and curiosity. Advances have already been made within the realm of creative and future thinkers in terms of 3D printing that has impacted various areas like healthcare, architecture and entertainment. Yet the greatest impact of these creative and future thinkers is by far the contributions that human enhancement technology has had on our developing society.

Some developments of human enhancement technology include organ transplants, powered exoskeletons and electronically augmented senses as described in the Week 12: Creative and Future Thinkers Part I lecture. Each improvement allows for the treatment of disability, illness or even the progress of human capacities. Just these alone creative a very luring factor in how far technology has gone in ways that try to help humans and not take away from them. An example of how this technology has helped humans can be found in Michael Chorost, who considers himself a cyborg, who experienced an almost life altering event but led him to believe that the future is about ways to give our bodies entirely new things. The idea of telempathy is brought up with how technology could *do* something that we can’t possible do. This ability to communicate without words would be beneficial for other areas like medical and the military. All this information can be bottled up into a concept of technology that is valuable and necessary. Aside from the value of this technology there are other issues that come up with just how far we will let the developments go. Some nanotechnology has been shown to help humans in terms of supplying clean water, preserving the environment and offering renewable clean energy as stated in Week 13: Creative and Future Thinkers Part II lecture. Nanotechnology might change our economy, jobs, abilities, and relations but the greatest changes can come with the ideas of Michu Kaku in “Future of the Computer: Mind over Matter”. It was with this article that an understanding of there being a fine line between good and bad was demonstrated. The many advances and future technologies introduced showed how quickly and easily technology could change or effect in a negative manner human-life. From having driverless cars, universal translators, telekinesis, mind reading or even virtual worlds there are many ways that humanity could become reliant on the technology that could in turn deplete jobs or how the technology could better our understanding, communication or education.

The developments of nanotechnology have provided more insight into technology at a nanoscale, produced more understanding of the environment or health risks and has expanded the ability to control atoms and molecules. The nanotechnologists are bringing smart things into development for human enhancement technology. Specific elements like nanomaterial is proven to be impactful for areas like medicine, sensors, catalysis and electro-chemicals. All of this is very crucial in improving the areas of research that are trying to advance technology. More specific nanomaterial like halochromic materials, shape memory alloys and thermos-responsive materials have actual impacts and applications like mentioned before in medicine specifically healthcare, implants and also in security and defense with smart materials in the Week 13 lecture. All the developments mentioned along with Kaku’s show how concerning it should be that these technologies are us making stronger, faster and better. I do believe that all this development comes at a cost the biggest one being a human cost. Sure, some will provide us with more education and knowledge possible bringing us to places that were never believed to be achieved but a great risk comes into play with such powerful and influential developments. Also, at what point will it all stop? How far can we continue to progress before we reach the end and can no longer be stronger, faster and better? The cost of reaching the end or even being where we already are also include issues of privacy and questioning of morals. Especially with Kaku’s work some technologies mentioned can seem to hint at issues with morality and privacy. Nanomaterials like smart dust or motes also put into question privacy and morality. I believe that the technology we need the most should be ones that will better or protect our environment and health. To make sure humanity can continue the way it is there needs to be effort in protecting our environment. I also think that as many advances as possible in implants, prosthetics, healthcare and energy conservation are truly necessary. I draw the line when it comes to possible invading privacy or extreme security and defense materials. Whenever there is risk involved that can really have negative impacts on humans, animals or the environment great caution needs to be taken along with great evaluation of the obstacles. We shouldn’t want to alter humanity so much that it can be forgotten the role of humans.

**Citations**

**Essay Question I.**

DeFelice, A. “255\_WEEK09\_UXD”. Kiely Room 315, Queens College, NY. 30 Oct 2018.

Powerpoint/Lecture.

**Essay Question II.**

DeFelice, A. “255\_WEEK10\_ART & TECHNOLOGY”. Kiely Room 315, Queens College, NY. 06 Nov 2018. Powerpoint/Lecture.

**Essay Question III.**

DeFelice, A. “255\_WEEK12\_CREATVE AND FUTURE THINKERS (PART 1)”. Kiely Room 315, Queens College, NY. 20 Nov 2018. Powerpoint/Lecture.

DeFelice, A. “255\_WEEK13\_CREATVE AND FUTURE THINKERS (PART 2)”. Kiely Room 315, Queens College, NY. 27 Nov 2018. Powerpoint/Lecture.

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