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Media Studies 255

Read all the instructions in the final exam instructions carefully before beginning! You’re required to write into this document, and adding the necessary pages. Re-save this file as your own, and submit it to me on December 11, 2018.

**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.**

UX designers, or user experience designers, are responsible for enhancing the user experience and satisfaction of a product. Because technology has become such a daily part of our routine, many of us cannot function without it, which begs the question: did UX designers purposely create the technology we have to be so addicting that we can’t live without it? UX designers know how to create a technology which will cause the brain to be addicted. Therefore, nothing these designers create is really in the user’s best interest, which contradicts their job description of improving the user experience. UX designers have tremendous skill and power and they can affect people’s lives for the better if they so choose to follow that path (Gribbons).

An ethical dilemma that faces UX designers is privacy and data security. User privacy has gone out the window in the twenty first century, with the United States government providing very few restrictions on what corporations can do with user data. UX designers are forced to gather information from users in order to determine how to best improve their experience. Once again, the dilemma for UX designers is what they will do with the knowledge and power that they have, because they yield tremendous influence over the technology industry (Gribbons).

Another challenge that faces UX designers is the role that they play in “de-skilling’ industries. Over the past decade, there have been unprecedented advances in technology and artificial intelligence. There are positive aspects to this, such as the fact that AI can have the power to reduce accidents and increase user safety. At the same time, this automation comes with a cost. Humans have become over reliant on technology. For example, the Boeing Dreamliner is a commercial plane that is so complicated to fly that pilots rely heavily on artificial intelligence in order to successfully fly the plane. But if for some reason this technology would falter, would the pilots be able to safely land without the help of a virtual assistant (DeFelice)?

Persuasive design is an area of design that focuses on influencing behavior through a product’s features (“Persuasive Design”). In the twenty first century, technology is getting smarter. It is able to adapt to user behavior and needs, increasing the presence and necessity of technology in our daily lives.

I think that the idea of persuasive design and UX designers really negatively influences user behavior. Because their job is to make technology addicting for the purpose of increasing profits, they have a clear ulterior motive. They are no longer required to truly look out for the best interests of the customers, rather they are searching for ways to keep the customer coming back and buying more technology.

**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?**

There are three core characteristics of the digital world: electronic, networked and interconnected.

In the digital age, everything is electronic and things do not have to take shape in a physical form. Everything can be accessed now at your fingertips. Books, paintings, artwork and music are all things that used to have to be acquired. Nowadays, you can just log onto your laptop and do a quick internet search for anything you want to view. Things are transformed into the digital world through numerous means. One option is recording or photographing the object in the physical world. This means that at least one physical copy must exist in order to make digital copies. Another option is manipulating an electronic version in order to get a new version. The problem with electronic versions is that it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between the real version and the copy, ultimately devaluing original and creative artwork as a whole (“255\_WEEK10\_Art & Technology”).

Networked means that electronic material can be transferred throughout electronic networks, spreading it and making it available to everyone. Some features of the networked aspect are that it is instant and available, meaning that anyone can download and access it at any time anywhere. Another aspect is that it is able to be formatted, the content is interactive and it is seen, shared and changed.

Interconnected means the information can be moved around and accessed by many people. This impacts the art world because it means that art is open to modification and public interaction.

The development of digital technology has had a massive impact on how artists are able to produce artwork. The development of the internet has perhaps been the greatest obstacle facing artists in this generation. The internet has made people cheap, always expecting to be able to access whatever content they wish for free. The internet has also lent itself to becoming a portal for pirated software and copyright infringement. However, for an artist to truly be recognized, they must put their art online, otherwise no one will ever see it. This leaves them with the dilemma of them not being compensated fully for their art which is illegally downloaded or risk not uploading their content and less people appreciating their work.

Social media has also been an important tool for artists that has both positive and negative aspects to it. Social media is a fairly democratic tool because everyone has an equal opportunity to be a part of a conversation. Social media has expanded since its conception to be a vital part to living in the twenty first century. It enables artist to connect with niche audiences, providing them with an outlet to engage with their fans, which did not really exist beforehand. The downside to social media is that artists are now expected to be performing all the time because everyone is always watching. Additionally, art is devalued because it can be shared over social media or turned into a meme and the reverence that the public once held for art seems to be gone.

**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?**

Humans have learned to use technology in order to overcome the limitations that our bodies have. This has existed since the beginning of time with doctors inventing vaccines in order to prevent diseases and illnesses. Vaccines and shots are a form of using technology in order to cheat the limitations of our bodies. Nanotechnology is the science of inventing extremely small things that can be used across the science field, including in medicine, science, physics and chemistry (“Nanotechnology in Medicine”).

In recent years, scientific advances have significantly increased. Smart dust is a recent invention that is a system of electromechanical sensors that can detect light, temperature, vibration, magnetism or chemicals. This dust is operated on a computer and distributed through the air in order to perform certain tasks. The benefits of this technology are that there no longer needs to be a physical modem to connect and receive this information (“255\_WEEK13\_Creative & Future Thinkers”).

Additionally, nanotechnology is very important for making breakthroughs in the medical field. Nanotechnology in medicine involves applications of nanoparticles, something that is currently under development, and the use of nano-robots in order to make repairs at the cellular level. Nanoparticles will be able to deliver drugs, heat or light to specific cells and medical professionals are hopeful that this can lead to breakthroughs in cancer treatment. If they invent a way to only target cancer cells through the use of nanotechnology, it will change how cancer patients are treated and will hopefully significantly reduce the side effects that they may have due to other methods of treatment (“Nanotechnology in Medicine”).

Researchers are also hopeful that nanotechnology will allow more specific vaccines to be invented that targets a portion of the virus that is present in all influenza strains. This vaccine will then be able to be used and make the flu a virus that is no longer present in our society (“Nanotechnology in Medicine”).

I think that as everything becomes more technological and complicated, we have to embrace the technology surrounding us. Technology has made our society stronger, healthier and more educated and that is a big fact that we cannot ignore. Although there are some downsides to the prevalence of technology in our lives, the good it has done definitely does not outweigh the bad. These advancements have made us over reliant on technology, almost to the point where humans are playing god. Moral questions and doubts may come into play, especially in the medical field. However, this is the field where technology is needed the most and has the capabilities to do so much good in the world. We need advancements in treatment options that will significantly lower the mortality rate for the deadliest diseases that live within our generation. Hopefully, with the advancement of nanotechnology, cancer will be like the previous generation’s polio, a horrible disease that caused so much pain, yet through technology, doctors and scientists were able to remove it from plaguing future generations.

Works Cited

Gribbons, Bill. “The Ethics of User Experience.” 28 November 2016. Web. Accessed 4 December 2018.

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