Topical Outline for Philosophy of Technology:

This course reviews the work of contemporary philosophers, and those of recent history, as they reflect on the effects of technology on our lives, and their recommendations for how technologies should be developed. As technologies advance, they have the potential to change our understanding of many spheres of our existence, including politics, ethics, daily life, and interpersonal interaction. Topics that can be addressed include the internet, communication technologies, food production, medical advancements, architecture, and transportation technologies.

Philosophy of Technology
PST 4803

Instructor: Robert Rosenberger
Time and Location: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1:35-2:55
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Course Description:

The philosophy of technology is a developing field of thought which analyzes the roles technologies play in our lives. Thinkers approach this topic from a wide variety of perspectives, address a number of topics, and consider technology's general character and its many particular cases.

The topics of this course are arranged into two sections. The first regards ethical and political issues. We begin this section with an analysis of Martin Heidegger's influential account of our technological situation. His grim and pessimistic view is a constant reference point of the field. We will next read Albert Borgmann's book *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life*, in which he explores possibilities for directing technology to conform to our ethics and our life goals, rather than allowing it to do the directing.

We will consider several accounts of the political aspects of technology, including the views of Donna Haraway, Andrew Feenberg, and Langdon Winner. Their works draw out a number of political issues, including the ways technologies contribute to discrimination, to the mechanisms of democracy, and to the ways we conceptualize ourselves and others. In addition, we will investigate feminist accounts which identify biases in the ways technologies are developed and taken up in our society, and consider the resulting social inequities. Examples studied in this first section of the course include the television, genetically engineered (and commercially patented) animals, and large-scale energy production plants.

In the second section of this course, we analyze human bodily relations to technology, technology's capacity to influence our actions, and how these issues bear on technology design. We will consider the work of writers such as Hubert Dreyfus, Bruno Latour, and Judy Wajcman, and will focus on Don Ihde's book *Postphenomenology and Technoscience*. Examples explored in this section include computer use and distance learning, the development of the electronic instrumentation, and our changing relationship to recycling.

In the cases of all texts we read, we will carefully consider the specific arguments made, and critically analyze the authors' claims both in class discussion and individual writing. This study of the philosophy of technology will also serve as an introduction to Western philosophy more generally, and we will learn about clear reasoning argumentation. Also, these studies will help us to focus our reading and writing skills.

Required Texts:

These two books are required reading for this course. They are available at both the campus bookstore and The Engineer's Bookstore.

Albert Borgmann (1984) *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Don Ihde (2009) *Postphenomenology and Technoscience: The Peking University Lectures*. SUNY Press.

We will also read a large number of articles that will be posted on t-square.

Assignments:

The final mark for this course will be determined by a combination grades from essays, written homework assignments, and class participation and attendance.

There will be two short essay papers (less than five pages each) in which students will summarize, in their own words, specific philosophical arguments from course texts, and to analyze specific quotes. Though short, these essays will require careful thinking and disciplined writing.

There will be several homework assignments involving short summaries of homework readings, and brief reactions to those readings (less than two pages each).

Participation will be evaluated based on the content and frequency of contributions to class discussion, and on attendance.
Attendance is mandatory. There will be a sign-in sheet passed around during most class sessions.
***Occasional short, unannounced, in-class writing activites will also contribute to the participation/attendance grade. The in-class writings will be easy, and should help stimulate discussion. They should also help assure that students keep up with the readings.

There are no exams in this course, no midterm, and no final exam. The two major essays you will write for this course function roughly as the midterm and final.

Grading:

The breakdown for the value of the assignments for this course goes as follows:

Essay #1 = 25%
Essay #2 = 25%
Written Homeworks = 45%
Participation/Attendance = 5%

The grading scale is standard:

100%-90% A
89%-80% B
79%-70% C
69%-60% D
59%-0% F

Grades are neither curved nor rounded up (For example, the grades of 80.1, 85.6, 88.9, and 89.9 are all examples of Bs).

Late papers will be penalized at a rate of one letter grade per day; for example, a paper that would have received a B if turned in on time will receive a B- if it is received the day after it is due, and a C+ if received two days later. Exceptions can be made in cases of documented emergencies.

This issue of plagiarism will not be taken lightly. Students should familiarize themselves with Georgia Tech's plagiarism policies at www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu
Work retrieved from books, articles, the internet, other students' writings, or any other source should not be passed off as one's own. I will not hesitate to refer plagiarizers to the Office of the Dean of Students.

Readings:

In addition to the two required books for this course, we will read a number of articles which will be posted on t-square throughout the semester. Below is a list of articles we will read. This list is subject to change—and in fact I expect to add a few more articles, and will change at least from the list below. But I hope this gives you some indication of the kinds of things we'll be reading, and the volume of reading.

Larry A. Hickman. (1988) "Four Effects of Technology." *Philosophy and Technology.* 3(4).

Martin Heidegger. (1962) "The Question Concerning Technology." In M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (trans. W. Lovitt, 1977), pp.3-35. New York: Harper & Ro.

Hubert Dreyfus. 1995. "Heidegger on Gaining a Free Relation to Technology." In A. Feenberg & A. Hanny (eds.), *The Politics of Knowledge*, pp. 97-107. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Tom Rockmore "Heidegger on Technology and Democracy."

Andrew Feenberg "From Essentialism to Constructivism."

Langdon Winner. (1980) "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" *Daudalus.* 109(1).

Andrew Feenberg. (1992) "Subversive Rationalization: Technology, Power, & Democracy." *Inquiry.* 35(3/4).

Judy Wajcman "Domestic Technology: Labour-saving or Enslaving?"

Donna Haraway. (1997) "Femaleman Meets Oncomouse." In *Modest_Witness@Second_Millenium.* New York: Routledge.

Trevor Pinch and Weibe Bijker "The Social Construction of Facts and Artifacts."

Bruno Latour. "Where are the Missing Masses? A Sociology of a Few Mundane Aftifacts."

Andrew Feenberg. (2004) "Distance Learning: Promise or Threat." *Crosstalk.* 12.

Hubert Dreyfus. "How Far is Distance Learning from Education?" *Bulletin of Science, Technology, and Society.* 21(3).

Peter-Paul Verbeek. (2005). "Artifacts in Design." Chapter 7, *What Things Do: Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, and Design.* University Park: Penn State University Press.