

PHIL 123 – Internet, Society, & Philosophy

Instructor

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Office Hours: Thurs. 2-4pm

Susan Campbell Hall 161

Course Meetings

Winter 2017

MTWR – 9-9:50AM

Course Description:

The internet mediates our everyday affairs in a variety of ways. Between our constant checking of updates, statuses, and messages on social media, email, or our preferred news sites, the use of the internet has become a habitual, nearly unavoidable practice in our lives. This course offers an opportunity to reflect, question, and understand the kinds of possibilities and limitations that come with the internet. What does the internet contribute to our social relations? How does the internet mediate our personal identities? What new social, political, and ethical problems are introduced by the internet?

This course provides a philosophical introduction to the social and ethical implications of the internet through a focus on three main categories of analysis: knowledge, power, and subjectivity. By zeroing in on the technical, political, and social aspects of the internet, we can come to a better comprehension of the kinds of problems and possibilities occasioned by the internet and its use. We will begin the course with a look at how the internet has transformed our ways of knowing. From here we will turn to the particular power relations and resistances that arrive with the internet. Finally, we will examine how our social media creates and forms our subjectivity and personal identity.

Course Objectives:

Because philosophy can be quite difficult and challenging, a few critical tools and intellectual virtues are needed to aid the thinker. Our critical toolkit will include questions that call for clarification, examples, counter-examples, reasons and justifications, and implications of what we are discussing. Intellectual virtues include generosity and openness, thoroughness and rigor, curiosity, courage, and responsive listening. It is hoped that by the end of this course, the student will incorporate these critical tools and virtues in addition to demonstrating:

- A knowledge of various theoretical approaches to understanding the internet as a form of new media.
- A critical engagement and analysis of ethical and social problems that come with our use of the internet.
- An ability to write philosophical papers that engage in analysis, critical reflection, connection to experience, and argumentation.

Course Materials:

All readings available on **Canvas** under “files” (Online)

Assignments:

A) Weekly Questions & Reflections– 25%

B) Attendance & Participation – 15%

C) 3 Papers Total – 60% total (20% each)

- A. Weekly Questions & Reflections:** Starting Week 1, every Thursday you will bring in two kinds of questions based on the readings for the week. The first question should be one that asks to clarify something that was difficult to understand from the text and should note the relevant page number from the text. The second question should be one that engages critically with the text either by drawing from your own experience or by applying a perspective from what you’ve read. There will also be periodic 1 page written assignments asking you to reflect on a theme or topic from the weekly readings.
- B. Attendance & Participation:** Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Each student is allowed up to two excused absences. Please come to class on time and prepared to discuss the material assigned. Every Thursday class will take a discussion style format –it is important that you actively participate by asking questions and engaging in dialogue with your fellow classmates.
- C. Papers:** You will write a total of three 4-5 pg. double-spaced papers due on Monday of weeks 4 and 7, and Wednesday of finals week. I will post the prompts for each essay assignment on Canvas a week prior to the due date. These papers will assess your comprehension of the main concepts and themes covered in the readings and will ask that you develop an argument in relation to an ethical issue. If you are having trouble with comprehension or writing, please visit me during my office hours so I can assist you.

Student Expectations:

1. Students are expected to attend all class meetings with the assigned reading having been done **before** class each day. Remember that the weekly quizzes will indicate to me whether you have actually done the readings and have attended lecture for the week.
2. If you have questions about the readings or our discussions, please feel free to raise them during class – this will spur further discussion and clarify difficulties that other students may also be facing.
3. Be respectful – please refrain from sleeping, chatting, talking, and texting during class time. This behavior is disruptive for both me, and your fellow classmates, and will **not** be tolerated.

4. Academic Dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) is strictly prohibited and may result in severe penalties. Typically, the penalty for plagiarism is failure in the course. Definitions, procedures, and penalties for such cases are spelled out on the UO website for academic dishonesty. See <http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>.

Writing Assistance:

The University of Oregon has a Writing Lab available for students. They offer drop-in tutoring services on weekdays from 9am-4pm in 72 PLC. You can also make appointments. See <http://tlc.uoregon.edu/subjects/writing/>.

Accommodations:

Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346- 1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

Discrimination and Sexual Harassment:

The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Please be aware that all UO employees are required reporters. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I may have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu.

NOTE: Syllabus, assignments, and readings subject to change.

Course Schedule:

SECTION 1	KNOWLEDGE
Week 1 Monday (01/09)	Intro to Course

Tuesday (01/10)	Philosophy of Technology Langdon Winner – “Citizen Virtues in a Technological Order”
Wednesday (01/11)	James Moor – “Why We Need a Better Ethics for Emerging Technologies” Lawrence Lessig – “Latent Ambiguities” from <i>Code 2.0</i>
Thursday (01/12)	Jonathan Zittrain – “The Generative Internet” Reflections and Discussion
Week 2 Monday (01/16)	Holiday (MLK)
Tuesday (01/17)	History of the Internet Jane Abbate – <i>Inventing the Internet</i> (Intro, Ch. 6) Cerf et. al. – “Brief History of the Internet”
Wednesday (01/18)	History of Computing Alan Turing – “Computing Machinery and Intelligence”
Thursday (01/19)	History of Information John Durham Peters – “Information: Notes Toward a Critical History” Questions and Discussion
Week 3 Monday (01/23)	Algorithmic Knowledge Tarleton Gillespie – “The Relevance of Algorithms”
Tuesday (01/24)	Paul Dourish – “Algorithms and their Others: Algorithmic Culture in Context”
Wednesday (01/25)	Andrew Goffey – “Algorithm” Frank Pasquale – “Assessing Algorithmic Authority”
Thursday (01/26)	Kevin Slavin - “How Algorithms Shape Our World” Reflections and Discussion
SECTION 2	POWER
Week 4 Monday (01/30)	The Politics of the Internet John Perry Barlow – “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace” Tim Wu – <i>The Master Switch</i> PAPER 1 DUE!!
Tuesday (01/31)	Evgeny Morozov – “Internet...: Empowering or Censoring?” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uk8x3V-sUgU

Wednesday (02/01)	Alexander Galloway – “Networks”
Thursday (02/02)	Colin Koopman – “The Age of Infopolitics” (<i>The New York Times</i> editorial) Questions and Discussion
Week 5 Monday (02/06)	The Public Sphere and the Net Zizi Papcharissi – “The Virtual Public Sphere: The Internet as a Public Sphere”
Tuesday (02/07)	Jodi Dean – “Why the Net is not a Public Sphere”
Wednesday (02/08)	Sebastian Benthall – “Designing Networked Publics for Communicative Action”
Thursday (02/09)	Cass Sunstein – “Democracy and the Internet” Questions and Discussion
Week 6 Monday (02/13)	#Social Movements Manuel Castells – <i>Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age</i> (Intro)
Tuesday (02/14)	Stefania Milan – “When Algorithms Shape Collective Action: Social Media and the Dynamics of Cloud Protesting”
Wednesday (02/15)	Yarimar Bonilla & Jonathan Rosa – “#Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States”
Thursday (02/16)	Alicia Garza – “A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement” Reflections and Discussion
SECTION 3	SUBJECTIVITY
Week 7 Monday (02/20)	Holiday (President’s Day)
Tuesday (02/21)	What is a Self? William James – “Consciousness of Self” from <i>The Principles of Psychology</i> Ian Hacking – “Making Up People” PAPER 2 DUE!!
Wednesday (02/22)	Ian Hacking – “The Looping Effects of Human Kinds” Ian Hacking – “Rewriting the Soul”

Thursday (02/23)	Louise Amoore – “Governing by Identity” Questions and Discussion
Week 8 Monday (02/27)	Selfhood & Social Media Sherry Turkle – <i>Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet</i>
Tuesday (02/28)	Robert Gehl – “Why I Left Facebook”
Wednesday (03/01)	Geert Lovink – “A World Beyond Facebook: Introduction to the <i>Unlike Us</i> Reader”
Thursday (03/02)	Stephen Marche – “Is Facebook Making us Lonely?” Reflections and Discussion
Week 9 Monday (03/06)	Cyborg Subjectivity Donna Haraway – “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism”
Tuesday (03/07)	N. Katherine Hayles – <i>My Mother Was a Computer</i>
Wednesday (03/08)	Lisa Nakamura – <i>Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet</i> (Ch.1)
Thursday (03/09)	Frank Pasquale – “The Algorithmic Self” Questions and Discussion
Week 10 Monday (03/13)	Mediated Identity Luciano Floridi – “The Construction of Personal Identities Online”
Tuesday (03/14)	J. Sage Elwell – “The transmediated self: Life between the digital and the analog”
Wednesday (03/15)	Film – Werner Herzog’s <i>Lo & Behold, Reveries of the Connected World</i> Questions and Discussion
Thursday (03/16)	Course Summary

FINAL PAPERS DUE Wednesday of Finals Week!!