

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2022-23

PHILOSOP 4310
Philosophy of Technology

Fall Term
M 1:30-3:30 / W 2:30-3:30
STVH 3166

Instructor: **Eric Desjardins**
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DESCRIPTION

Technology occupies such large a part of our existence that we often forget how much we rely on it. While most of us are appreciative of how various technological developments make our lives easier, we also understand that it can be used for good and bad purposes. As such, it is a common conception that technology is a tool that we create, wield, and optimize to enhance our limited physical and cognitive abilities. Is this commonly received view well supported? Is technology just a tool, or is it constitutive of who we are and how we understand the world? Is it a neutral object that acquires value only in context? How does it evolve? What is the relationship between technological progress and well-being? This course will be the occasion to reflect upon these questions (and many others!). Students will be encouraged to bring their own favorite examples of technology to address these philosophical issues.

TEXTS

Agar, Nicholas. *The Sceptical Optimist: Why technology isn't the answer to everything*. OUP Oxford, 2015.

Jasanoff, Sheila. *The ethics of invention: Technology and the human future*. WW Norton & Company, 2016.

OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to allow students to discover and question various philosophical perspectives on technology, but also to develop their own reflection on issues that they will find most engaging. The course is structured like a seminar and requires a lot of autonomy and engagement during class. It is also a great opportunity for students to develop advanced critical thinking and communicative skills, such as:

- Identifying, evaluating, and formulating philosophical issues related to technology (old and new).
- Writing balanced and well-supported argumentative essays

- Leading focused discussions on issues related to reading materials
- Presenting and challenging ideas in a respectful and constructive way



METHOD OF EVALUATION

« The final grade will be based upon the following scheme:

- **Essay 1** (25%) on an issue of your choice discussed during the first six weeks of the course
- **Essay 2** (35%) on an issue of your choice discussed during the second half of the semester
- **Short Reflective Pieces** (5 in total, 15%)
- **Leading a discussion** (15%)
- **Participation** (10%)



AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The Department of Philosophy policies that govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>.

It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested.

The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive an assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments

will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.