

Contents

Teaching Statement.....	1
List of Course Taught.....	4
Pedagogy / Metapedagogy Service & Training	8
Teaching Observation (Daniel Dahlstrom)	11
Student / Advisee Letters of Recommendation.....	13
(Alexis Albert, Brandeis University, 2023).....	13
(Emanuel Glinsky, Brandeis University, 2023)	15
Selected Student Comments.....	17
Quantitative Evaluation Summary	21
Sample Syllabi.....	28
Money & Market Ethics	28
Technology Ethics.....	36
Virtual Reality: The Ethics of Future Technology.....	48
Introduction to Ethics	61
Through a Glass Darkly: Art, Existentialism, and Authenticity	68
Sample Assignments and Handouts	77

(NOTE--The "Full" version of this portfolio includes complete teaching evaluations)

Teaching Statement

Teaching philosophy is a privilege, joy, and challenge. Over the past several years, I have taught hundreds of students from four major universities around Boston. I have taught M.A., B.A., and professional students, long distance learners, non-traditional students, and students from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds on a range of topics from the philosophy and ethics of technology to biomedical ethics, existentialism, the philosophy of film, social/political philosophy, meritocracy, and market ethics. I would be thrilled to share these classes with your university, but I would also be excited to teach classes in the aesthetics, phenomenology, and 19th/20th century philosophy. In every class, I am struck by the transformational power of philosophy and the excitement of my students. I use real-world case studies, close collaborative reading, and rigorous conversation to help my students contextualize, analyze, and engage with pressing philosophical and ethical issues. My teaching style is highly conversational, and I emphasize dialectical thinking, problem solving, and erotetic class structure. I also encourage my students to think out loud and build personal connections with each other through group activities and projects. These strategies appeal to traditional philosophy students, computer science majors, engineers, and other sciences

and humanities students alike. Just today an economics major at Brandeis remarked on how much he appreciated the conversational and inquisitive nature of my classes!

I tend to structure classes around semi-collaborative student driven research projects (examples at www.techandethics.com). These projects empower students to develop their own expertise and helps them build confidence while developing essential research and communication skills. Several of my students have been so excited by their in-class research that they have later developed their projects into B.A. Honors Theses, and a handful have pursued graduate research on topics they began studying in my classes. These projects emphasize, even though they are still learning, my student's thoughts and work are situated within broader public and academic conversations. Their work matters. These projects are scaffolded by smaller assignments like annotated bibliographies, peer exchanges, and extended abstracts, and which helps students dramatically develop their writing skills.

I challenge my students early. I usually begin my Philosophy and Technology classes with Book II of Aristotle's *Physics*, focusing on the difficult nature/techne distinction and the question of the telos of human activity and technology. Students struggle with this text but through carefully developed reading guides and a seminar style discussion, we make significant headway quickly. I then assign Joachim Schummer's insightful article, "[Aristotle on Technology and Nature](#)", which first clarifies the nature/techne distinction, and then problematizes it by demonstrating that nature and techne substantiate each other in human reason. Schumer emphasizes this point by discussing the thorny issues of human genetic engineering and transhumanism, a conversation I then use in class to talk about the way technology forms a feedback loop in human ethical and social activity. New technologies change our possibilities of action, which in turn open the door for new technologies. With each iteration of the cycle, we invariably change both ourselves and our world. So, in the first week of class, students are already confronted with one of the most fundamental questions of modern life: what is our aim in continually shaping and reshaping our world through technology, and what does it mean that we have now turned those aims and strategies on ourselves?

In my technology classes, we also explore deep fakes and the epistemic and social justice questions raised by extended reality. I have had students create avatars in an online platform, and ask them then interact with each other in virtual environment. The goal was to illustrate the "proteus effect," or the tendency of users to internalize features and behaviors based on the appearance of their avatars, often along race or gender lines. The goal of that unit is to raise on three questions. First, what sorts of limits or constraints (if any) should we put on interfaces or media that mimic human persons? Second, how do apps like TikTok and Instagram, with their growing library of easy access and increasingly realistic visual filters and avatars, alter our perceptions of ourselves and others? Third, what are the social and ethical implications of living in a world that is filled with human-like machines or machines with human like appearances? We then read several short articles on the topic, including Kevin Corti's "[A Truly Human Interface](#)," Bill Whitaker's "[Synthetic Media](#)," and Erik Gerstner's "[Face/Off](#)," and discuss honesty, authenticity, transparency, psychological concerns about how human beings naturally respond to faces, and the social and political issues involved in living in a world where it is difficult to distinguish between fiction and reality, particularly when these technologies are developed by multinational corporate entities. This conversation also questions about the social normativity of the visual markers race, gender, class, and disability, and how they are manipulated and deployed by the technologies we develop. Finally, we read C. Thi Nguyen's "[Précis of Games](#)," which argues that part of what makes games interesting, digital and otherwise, is the way they restructure human agency, challenging the students to connect our conversation about social justice with Nguyen's observation about the malleability of our agency. All of my classes engage with these kinds of social and political issues—

rarely do I teach theory detached from the real-world social issues—something my students have responded well to.

The connections I build with my students are lasting and rewarding. I recently had the joy of being asked to write a PhD letter of recommendation for a student who I initially taught in a freshman philosophy and writing seminar, and I am happy to report that she will be entering a PhD program in Art History at the University of Chicago this year! I have also advised at least a half dozen students on both BA and MA theses. My mentoring approach is highly personal and involves carefully challenging my mentees to open new doors, while providing a steady sounding board for ideas and questions. The goal is to help them find the best way to articulate and clarify their ideas, and to help them situate their work in a broader context. I take writing and research very seriously and try to meet with my advisees at least biweekly once their projects ramp up. One of my students, Danya Tribuna (Brandeis, B.A. in Education) just finished a fantastic project on John Dewey and Civic Education and was recently hired by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care as a pedagogy development assistant—an amazing first career step. I am continually impressed with her development as a writer and thinker, and very proud to have helped her on her path. Another group of my students recently asked me to be their faculty advisor on the new Brandeis Undergraduate Philosophy Journal, *Simpliciter*, which is already accepting submissions. Providing what guidance I can to such talented and dedicated students has already been very rewarding.

Lewis Gordon once said that “it is absurd for a student to leave a learning environment, walking out exactly as they were entering it” (*Living Thought, Living Freedom: A Lecture in Black Existential Philosophy*). Good teaching aims at liberation. My goal is to enable my students to grow into wiser, deeper, and more capable versions of themselves by encouraging them to challenge their assumptions and think more carefully about their lives and their world. Philosophical thinking is uniquely situated to this aim of transformation in that it can expose students to new ways of seeing and thinking, problematize outmoded and unchallenged paradigms, and instill a life-long love for questioning and learning. In this way, teaching is both a personal and social mission—in equipping my students to think more carefully and deeply, I am also contributing to the social and political enrichment and growth of society. Every new question opens new pathways of exploration, and if I can share a taste of that spirit with my students, then I consider my teaching a success.

List of Course Taught

Below you will find a list of courses I have taught along with brief descriptions of the course material, class plan, and assignment structure. Bolded entries will be of special interest to your committee.

Courses with Full Responsibility

Technology Ethics—Brandeis University (2022-24, 3x), Harvard University (2024)

From TikTok to Meta, and from CRISPR to digital gamification, Extended Reality, and the struggle against climate change, dramatic advances in technology are shaping our world and our lives like never before. This course investigates the moral, social, and political implications of these and other new technologies. How should we understand privacy and surveillance in the age of metadata? Will emerging biotechnologies and life-tracking metrics allow us to re-engineer humanity? Should we edit our genes or those of our children to extend human lives and enhance human abilities? Can geoengineering resolve the climate crisis? How will AI and robotics change the work world? Can machines be “conscious” and what would it mean if they can? Will AI help us reduce bias and combat bigotry, or make things worse? What does the explosion of social media mean for human agency? How can we live an act in meaningful ways in a world increasingly dominated by technological and capital forces?

This course will explore how technology and our attitudes towards it are transforming who we are, what we do, how we make friends, care for our health, and conduct our social and political lives. In doing so, we will also investigate fundamental philosophical and ethical questions about agency, integrity, virtue, “the good,” and what it means to be human in an uncertain and shifting world. This class is cross listed with the Computer Science Department.

Money, Markets, & Morals—Brandeis University (2023)

What should be the role of money and markets in our society? Are there some things that money should not be able to buy? Should people be permitted to buy sex, votes, babies, citizenship, or college admission? What about buying and selling the right to pollute, procreate, immigrate, discriminate, or to hunt endangered species? Should we use markets to govern health care, education, privacy, or criminal law? How do economic incentives change our moral calculus on both personal and political levels?

The course will consider what moral limits, if any, the law should impose on market exchanges. It will also explore the moral nature of markets themselves while drawing attention to critical ethical assumptions at the intersection of money, race, gender, and technology. Drawing upon classical philosophical works and contemporary moral and political controversies, we will attempt to determine what goods and social practices should not be up for sale.

Biomedical Ethics—Brandeis University (2024)

An examination of ethical issues that arise in a biomedical context, such as the issues of abortion, euthanasia, eugenics, lying to patients, and the right to health care. The relevance of ethical theory to such issues will be considered. This course will also examine social and political issues that arise in a biomedical context, including

ableism, technology advancement such as genetic engineering and cyborg technologies, gender and medicine, and the capital issues surrounding the medical industry.

Introduction to Ethics—Boston University (2021/23, 3x), Brandeis University (2022-24, 3x)

Ethics is the study of one of the most fundamental questions of human experience: what *should* I do? This question confronts us almost continuously, not just in large decisions, political conversations, or in the rules and standards that govern our lives, but literally at every moment of every day. Should I get an egg with my wrap? Should I study for philosophy or for math? Should I date this person or that person? Should I honor my promises? or should I protect my own interests? These ‘shoulds’ signal the *normativity* of human life, or the sense that some choices, outcomes, dispositions, states of affairs, and behaviors, are somehow *better* or more worthy than others. However, the meaning and structure of these “should” is far from obvious, and they immediately generate their own series of questions: what could motivate a “should,” and where does their strength come from? Are there different kinds of “shoulds?” Do “shoulds” apply differently to different people? If so, why? Can we find a way to theorize about “shoulds” in general, or are they fundamentally varied and situational? Are “shoulds” merely a social construct, and, if so, what would that mean for human life and decisions more generally?

In this class, students will be introduced to the academic study of philosophical ethics, often understood as rigorous attempt to understand and characterize normativity. Students will be asked to engage with a variety of contemporary and historical texts on topics within the field of ethics, stretching from Plato and Aristotle up through modern thinkers like Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Nietzsche, and contemporary writers like Ruth Chang and Michael Sandel. We will discuss important historical movements in the field of ethics, engage with contemporary debates concerning politics, race, technology, and advancing medical science, and we will investigate some of the most enduring questions in human experience.

Virtual Reality: The Ethics of Future Technology –Tufts University ExCollege (2021)

This course was offered as part of Tufts University Experimental College. It was designed as a research-oriented philosophy of technology class, focused on ethical, epistemological, and metaphysical issues related to virtual reality, broadly construed. The class began with a crash course in some of the basic questions in the philosophy of technology and virtual reality, including questions about the relationship between virtualization and consciousness or intelligence, the ontological status of virtual objects, and the social and ethical implications of VR technologies. The students then divided themselves into several groups, each organized around a different theme, ranging from VR and AI, to simulation theory the ethics of avatars and embodiment. Over the course of the semester, each student developed a unique project based on original research in their chosen sub-field. The class was highly collaborative. Students would select weekly readings, present drafts of their work to each other, and work through difficult philosophical questions together. Ultimately, the students compiled their projects into a class journal that you can see here (www.techandethics.com under “Current Issue”). Students also built their own avatars and experimented in our own virtual environment. Originally, I had planned to coordinate with the Brookline

Interactive Group (<https://brooklineinteractive.org/>) to bring VR equipment to class so the students could have even more hands-on experience, but COVID made that impossible. In this course we read Thomas Metzinger, Aristotle, Maria Bittarello, David Chalmers, Nick Bostrom, Martin Heidegger, Ray Kurzweil, Robert Rosenberger, and Michael Heim. I would love to continue to develop this course into a high-level interdisciplinary seminar. Please see the attached syllabus and course reviews for more information.

Future, Futurism, & Technology—Boston University (2019/20, 2x)

This course was a Philosophy/Research Writing seminar hosted by the Writing Program at Boston University. It was the prototype for the course I later taught at Tufts. It was a thematic survey of major questions and problems in the philosophy of technology. The aim of the course was to help students develop a burgeoning expertise in a specific area of the philosophy of technology and then use that expertise to engage meaningfully with difficult research questions. The areas included AI, Computing, and Robotics; Information Tech, Privacy, and Entertainment; Transhumanism and Augmentation; Geo-Engineering and the Environment; Space Technology; and Materials Science, Energy, and Industry. The class was designed to help students develop research skills and the ability effectively employ multiple modes of communication, including digital and multimedia expressions. It was also intended to broaden their awareness of current and future ethical issues generated by the rapid development of modern technology.

Art, Existentialism, & Authenticity Boston University (2018/19, 2x)

This class was a Philosophy/Writing Seminar focused on the intersection between the philosophy of art and existentialism. We focused on questions selfhood, meaning, authenticity, religion, knowledge, and creativity. In addition to reading traditional existential thinkers like Søren Kierkegaard, Simone de Beauvoir, and Dostoyevsky, we also read the Dhammapada, and works by Maïa Stepenberg and Hermann Hesse. The class was also asked to watch films by Ingmar Bergman, Ron Fricke, and engage with the art of Marina Abramovich, Elaine de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, and others.

Great Philosophers—Boston University (2015)

This class was a historically oriented alternative to an Introduction to Philosophy course. Taking Kant's three philosophical questions ("What can I know?" "What must I do?" "What may I hope?") as a starting point, we explored a series of figures, ranging from Plato and Aristotle through Descartes, Kant, and Kierkegaard.

Courses with Teaching Fellow Responsibility

Meritocracy (Harvard)

Fall 2023, Prof. Michael Sandel

Deliberative Justice (Harvard/Harvard Extension)

Fall 2022, Prof. Sergio Imparato

Philosophy & Film (Boston University) (2x)

Fall / Spring 2021, Prof. Aaron Garrett

Money, Markets, and Morals (Harvard/Harvard Extension) (2x)

Spring 2021 / Spring 2022, Prof. Michael Sandel [*included teaching & grading graduate level students*]

Introduction to Ethics (Boston University) (3x)

Spring 2021, Prof. Tanner Hammond / Spring 2016, Prof Paul Katsafanas / Fall 2015, Prof. Daniel Star

Justice in an Age of Pandemic & Racial Reckoning (Harvard/Harvard Extension)

Fall 2020, Prof. Michael Sandel) [*included teaching & grading graduate level students*]

Introduction to Philosophy (Boston University—Online)

Summer 2020, Prof. Walter Hopp

Democracy and its Discontents (Harvard/Harvard Extension)

Spring, 2020, Prof. Michael Gray [*included teaching & grading graduate level students*]

Tech Ethics: AI, Biotech, and the Future of Human Nature (Harvard)

Fall 2019, Profs. Michael Sandel and Douglas Melton [*included teaching & grading graduate level students*]

Existentialism (Boston University)

Spring 2018, Prof. Walter Hopp

Politics and Philosophy (Boston University)

Fall 2017, Prof. Charles Griswold

Philosophy and the Arts (Boston University)

Spring 2015, Prof. Allen Speight

Medical Ethics (Boston University)

Fall 2014, Prof. Ben Sherman

Philosophy of Personality (Boston University)

Fall 2013, Prof. Victor Kestenbaum

Pedagogy / Metapedagogy Service & Training

In my time as an instructor, I have been fully responsible for about a dozen courses and been a Teaching Fellow for over a dozen more at four different universities (Boston University, Harvard, Brandeis, and Tufts). The classes I have taught have ranged in topic from the Ethics of Technology to Existentialism, Political Philosophy, Government, and History of Philosophy. I have taught students from many disciplines, including computer science students and engineers and at a variety of academic levels, ranging from first year students to graduating Masters and Law students.

In addition to my semesters as a university instructor, I have had the opportunity to participate in several highly productive pedagogical training environments, workshops, and teaching labs. As a Teaching Fellow for Michael Sandel's Tech Ethics class, I participated in weekly staff seminars to discuss teaching strategies, assignment structure, and helpful classroom practices. As one of the more experienced TFs, I was regularly asked to present aspects of my pedagogy and to help other TFs design their sections. I was also very excited to learn from my fellow TFs and from Professors Melton and Sandel, whose dialectical teaching strategy I find very inspiring.

As part of my [Graduate Writing Fellowship and Certificate Program](#) at Boston University, I underwent a year-long training course in writing pedagogy. The seminar was designed to provide a forum for young teachers to develop syllabi, class materials, and lesson plans for their upcoming classes, and to troubleshoot classroom issues. During weekly meetings, each member of the seminar prepared sample course materials and tested them with peers. This seminar helped me to appreciate the value of collaborative teaching and to develop conversational learning strategies and lesson plans that I continue to deploy in my classes. Since that training lab, I have attended regular departmental pedagogy colloquia, including multi-session seminars on digital humanities teaching and advising strategies. I was also selected to teach a class on VR and Ethics through Tuft's competitive [ExCollege Program](#), which involved further pedagogical training. I am also an active member of the American Association of Philosophy Teachers and have attended [workshops](#) hosted by that organization at MIT and the APA, and I have been a Student Mentor to several incoming graduate students, which I think help prepare me for a role in the Teaching Lab. I am participating in [BU's Inclusive Pedagogy Initiative](#) this Spring, as I think inclusivity is essential to good pedagogy.

I have also advised a number of both M.A. and Honors B.A. theses while at Brandeis. My advising strategy is generally very supportive and communicative. I am very proud of my student's work and look forward working on more projects in the future.

American Association of Philosophy Teachers Workshop Organizer (Narrative Teaching) (Jan. 2023, APA Eastern)

In 2023, I co-organized a section of the AAPT Teaching Hub at the Eastern APA, along with [Rebecca Leiby](#) (U. Baltimore). The session focuses on helping teachers in philosophy think more carefully about the way narratives are created and deployed in philosophy classrooms. The most obvious examples of these narratives are in syllabus and lecture construction, but the session is also focused on how students understand themselves within the narrative of the class and the growth of human understanding more directly. Of critical concern at this juncture is student experiences of disenfranchisement, alienation, and social/political inefficacy, and one aim of this section is to think about how to help students construct enabling and inclusive philosophical narratives. [Stacey Doore](#) (Colby College CS) and [Omowumi Ogunyemi](#) (Pan-Atlantic) will be presenting work on "Narrativity and

Autobiographical Thinking in Responsible Computing.” Jennifer Epp will be presenting on “Show and Tell Pedagogies”, and [Michael Starling](#) (U. Georgia) will present on “Rehabilitating the Narrative Character of Classrooms.”

Mozilla Teaching Responsible Computing Playbook Contributor (2022/23)

I was recently invited by [Crystal Lee](#) (Mozilla Foundation/MIT) to contribute two articles to the Mozilla Foundation’s [Teaching Responsible Computing Playbook](#). The articles are titled “Best Practices & Strategies for Teaching Fellows & Assistants in Tech Classrooms” and “Programmatic and Student Oriented Teaching Variables and Approaches in Teaching Technology Ethics.”

Brandeis – Philosophy Writing Workshop Organizer (Fall 2023)

I recently organized a workshop for students new to philosophical writing. The goal was to help both philosophy and non-philosophy majors better grasp and deploy the essentials of argumentation and paper structure in the context of philosophical writing.

Graduate Certificate in Teaching Writing, Boston University (2021)

This certificate certifies that I completed a year-long pedagogy training course in teaching college writing, taught four college writing classes, two at an introductory level and two at an advanced research level, participated in two three-unit colloquia series, on in digital humanities pedagogy and one in advising. I was also asked to compose and submit a teaching portfolio. My two introductory courses were on Art and Existentialism and my two advanced courses, one of which involved a digital expression component, were on Ethics and Technology (see above for more detail). This was a highly competitive teaching program. You can learn more about the program here: <https://www.bu.edu/writingprogram/about/fellowships-and-employment/graduate-writing-fellowships/graduate-certificate/>

Tufts University ExCollege Training Program (2021)

This seminar series was designed to prepare new instructors for teaching in the ExCollege Program. The ExCollege is a competitive teaching program in which college instructors design and deliver experimental classes to interdisciplinary students at Tufts University. My class was titled “Virtual Reality: The Ethics of Future Technology.” You can learn more about the class in the sample syllabus below, and more about the ExCollege Program here: <https://excollege.tufts.edu/>

American Association of Philosophy Teachers Summer Seminar on Teaching and Learning Philosophy

From the AAPT website: “The seminar helps participants improve their skills as learning-centered teachers. Participants study how to identify and select challenging and transformative learning objectives. By understanding the principles of integrated course design, participants appreciate how to best guide students to the successful achievement of these goals. Further, participants develop educative assessment strategies that allow them to measure success, continue to innovate, and create even deeper learning. Prior to arriving for the four-day (3 hours/day) face-to-face meetings of the seminar, each participant reads and blogs about numerous assigned readings.” You can learn more about the AAPT here: <https://philosophyteachers.org/>

Boston University Philosophy Department Graduate Pedagogy Program

The graduate students of the Philosophy Department at BU organize regular seminars to coordinate with each other about teaching practices, share experiences, and invite talks on pedagogy. In addition to departmental oversight and required faculty observations, we have a designated Graduate Pedagogy Officer (a position I helped create while Department President) who helps to coordinate new TF training, section observations, and the above-mentioned seminars. I have been an active participant of this program.

Teaching Observation

(Daniel Dahlstrom, Feb 17, 2023)

To Whom It May Concern:

This morning I visited Dr. Jordan Kokot's Introduction to Ethics class in CAS 203. The class started right on time at 10:10 as a few stragglers made their way into a full classroom with few empty desks. Dr. Kokot began the class by announcing a reflection exercise that would be due on Friday, February 24. He also briefly noted that the exercise should begin with a central claim followed by an argument. He then pivoted to a combination of lecture and discussion, aided by slides projected on a screen at the front of the classroom.

The lecture began with review of Nietzsche's plea for approaching life aesthetically, giving style to one's life as a response to suffering (and to Schopenhauer's own view of suffering). Dr. Kokot stressed that Nietzsche's plea, while concerned with appearances, was not a form of escapism but a way of living through suffering. After noting the importance of the themes of meaning, health, and the death of god for this process, Dr. Kokot added that the aesthetic approach was intended as a response to the death of god and the loss of meaning previously accorded to god. In the wake of the death of god, Dr. Kokot pointed out, the meaning of suffering becomes an opportunity for greater growth and overcoming. Here and throughout the lecture, Dr. Kokot made good use of slides with passages that aptly fit the themes and discussion of them. He also effectively elicited questions and comments from the class. Some of the comments were quite excellent, revealing a thoughtfulness about the material.

This rich engagement was even more on display as Dr. Kokot pivoted to the matter of existential choice and what Ruth Chang deems "hard choices." Utilizing a Blackboard reading check in, Dr. Kokot prefaced discussion of these themes with précis of de Beauvoir, Chang, and the meaning of 'existentialism.' Certain pedestrian but telling instances of hard choices (what to have for breakfast) were discussed before a lengthier passage from Sartre, exhibiting a more dire instance, was posted on the screen. As a means of working through the meaning of 'hard choices,' Dr. Kokot then had the students break up into smaller groups to discuss its meaning in light not only of the hard choice presented by the passage from Sartre but also of the hardest choices that the students themselves have recently had to make. This exercise was clearly effective and, perhaps for that reason, it would have been useful to mine it a bit longer, making it possible for more students to respond.

This class was superb. The lecture was well organized, outlining the central points and considerations behind them. Dr. Kokot's delivery was clear and engaging, as he spoke freely without notes but with a sure connection to the readings and passages from them projected onto the screen. He has excellent command of the material and an inviting ease at elaborating it. Students responded in kind and with enthusiasm. If I have any criticism (and it is minor), I would like to have seen Dr. Kokot allow for a bit more input from students, following their discussion. This suggestion is fraught, to be sure, with the demands of covering material and the limited time of the class meeting. But allowing a few more for students to register their reactions would increase their stake in thinking through the material. One other suggestion: invite criticism of the topics and, if it is not forthcoming from the students, offer it as part of the lecture. But these are merely suggestions. Dr. Kokot's performance demonstrated that he is already an accomplished lecturer and teacher. We are lucky to have his services.

Sincerely,



Daniel O. Dahlstrom

The John R. Silber Professor of Philosophy

Student / Advisee Letters of Recommendation

(Alexis Albert, Brandeis University, 2023)

November 3, 2023

Alexis Albert alexisalbert@brandeis.edu

To Whom it May Concern,

It is my intention to convey in this letter the generosity and kindness that Professor Jordan Kokot has shown students at Brandeis University in the past year as Visiting Assistant Professor. I encourage the reader to recognize Professor Jordan Kokot as an incredibly valuable asset to a university philosophy department.

As a current senior at Brandeis, I have had the time to become integrated into the philosophy department. In my junior year I acted as an “Undergraduate Department Representative” (UDR) during my fall semester before studying abroad at the University of Amsterdam where I studied feminist philosophy. This year, I am again serving as a UDR. I facilitate the philosophy department’s Socrates Cafe events, as well as Senior Thesis Writing Cohort and Hegel’s Reading and Understanding Sessions as extracurriculars within the department. In addition to this, I have begun a senior thesis track under the advisorship of Eugene Sheppard where Marion Smiley is my second reader and Professor Jordan Kokot, the subject of this letter, is my third, official reader.

The past couple months, I’ve been auditing Professor Kokot’s Topics in Ethical Theory: Money, Markets and Morals class. In this course, Professor Kokot consistently demonstrates an acute ability to listen. With the course’s basis in oral communication, Professor Kokot summarizes and reformulates each student’s argument succinctly and asks brief follow-up questions to get clear on the student’s position. This ritual allows me an opportunity to reflect back upon my contribution and my argument. When I am off-topic and my argument does not hold this practice is equally if not more important for my argument reformulation. Professor Kokot’s practice of listening and responding is one he never deters from, and makes me, as well as my peers feel grounded and heard in our arguments.

Professor Kokot has a very unique ability to suspend judgment when students contribute and interpret course material. This creates a space where students feel empowered to contribute. Professor Kokot facilitates a space for debate where students feel comfortable contributing. His classroom is one that asks students to critically engage with the course material and one another. His classroom is a space where students can come to disagree, to confront one another intellectually, and do so while maintaining respect for one another. It is not often in the philosophy department that students are given the opportunity to enter passionate dialogue with one another on the topic of ethics, politics,

and culture. His classroom has become a very unique and valuable space for students to reflect their philosophical arguments onto the world outside the institution.

Professor Kokot is incredibly generous with students, especially those who are writing senior theses this year. Many of the students in the Senior Thesis Writing cohort that I organize report meeting with Professor Kokot and share that his engagement with them helped to provide them concrete actions which assisted them in meeting their goals. If he’s not a first or second reader for students

then he is a third reader, who has done the kindness of offering his time and his genuine engagement without the credit that first and second readers receive having their name attached to the thesis. I myself have experienced his kindness firsthand with respect to my project. After talking about my ideas, Professor Kokot volunteered his time to be a reader for my thesis project. He is now an official third reader on my project and continuously offers the space for me to speak about the content of my thesis and my future professional and academic plans following graduation.

Professor Kokot introduced me to Rebecca Leiby of Elon University who provides me the space to talk about feminist and continental philosophy. Professor Leiby is a fantastic resource for me to flesh out ideas about feminist philosophy. This space would not have been possible without Professor Kokot's network, sincere generosity and genuine interest in preparing students for academic success.

Professor Kokot's creation of meaningful spaces are credited to his personality and his framing of content. Professor Kokot's course material is contemporary and forces students to reckon with the compatibility of philosophy and the practical world. Oftentimes in philosophy classes, the material can feel antiquated and dated. Professor Kokot positions Kant's formula for humanity with the case of Walmart profiting from the life insurance policies it takes out on their laborers. This way of framing gives students a reason to connect with Kant critically and meaningfully. Professor Kokot proves the relevance of philosophy through different social and cultural contexts. It is clear to me that the reason he teaches Biomedical Ethics, Technology Ethics, and Money, Markets and Morals is because of his unique teaching style of positioning the theory with the contemporary moment. I am always eager to learn from his courses because of the double meaning I will walk away with. I know that in his class I will learn about Kant's unique cultural and political context at the time of his writing as well as that of my own at the time of my interpreting.

Professor Kokot exudes a passion for philosophy and an empathy for students in every space that he walks into. I can confidently say that he is a remarkable candidate for a tenured professorial position. Philosophy departments would only benefit from the expertise, passion and intellectual rigor that he brings to academic and professional spaces. He is always willing to give and lend his generosity without

the promise of a return. He is a candidate that deserves the stability and security that a professorship on the tenure track grants. It is without any reservation that I strongly recommend his application.

I find myself incredibly privileged to learn from Professor Kokot in class and during office hours. I trust that the generosity and kindness he has shown students and faculty in the past year of his visiting professorship at Brandeis will only continue.

Sincerely, Alexis Albert
B.A Candidate for the Brandeis Philosophy Department, Senior
Brandeis Philosophy Department Undergraduate Department Representative (UDR)

(Emanuel Glinsky, Brandeis University, 2023)

To whom it may concern,

It is my pleasure to write this letter in support of Professor Jordan Kokot. My connection with Professor Kokot is as his student in his course “The Ethics of Technology”, as a general interlocutor of philosophical content, and as his honors student in my undergraduate philosophy thesis work. Professor Kokot is a shining example of a professor and mentor who rigorously and enthusiastically engages his students.

Professor Kokot is an exceptional educator and I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to learn under his guidance. His unique ability to cultivate a dynamic and intellectually stimulating learning environment sets him apart from any other professor I have had the privilege of learning from. Professor Kokot's kind demeanor and his commanding presence in the classroom instantly earn him respect while also solidifying his reputation as an educator who genuinely prioritizes the growth and success of his students.

One of the remarkable qualities that sets Professor Kokot apart is his keen ability to understand his students' perspectives and connect with his students. He possesses a talent for recognizing the thoughts and ideas brewing within each student's mind and for creating the opportunity for his students to articulate their ideas. This deep insight into his students' thinking allows him to create a classroom atmosphere that encourages open dialogue and critical thinking.

In my class with Professor Kokot called “The Ethics of Technology”, I was enthralled by the manner in which he was able to guide a philosophical discussion. During the course, Professor Kokot would often present some terminology and background before posing a specific question related to the reading. One of the most captivating aspects of Professor Kokot's teaching style was his adept use of these thought-provoking questions. Following his insightful introductions, he would pose specific questions related to the readings of the class and the introductory material which were designed to elicit our intuitions and spark discussions. These questions skillfully elicited a wide array of perspectives and viewpoints from the students, resulting in lively, respectful, and at times heated debates. He excels at clarifying students' perspectives without imposing answers, nurturing an atmosphere where meaningful discussions flourish. He would generously connect the various philosophical viewpoints offered by students in a way that made them more accessible and comprehensible. His thoughtful preparation, insightful questions, and ability to bridge philosophical viewpoints created an intellectually stimulating learning environment. I found his teaching approach not only extremely engaging but also profoundly enlightening, as it enabled me to explore and appreciate the intricate ethical considerations surrounding technology in a more profound way.

Moreover, Professor Kokot stands out as one of the most generous and approachable educators I have encountered. His willingness to invest time and effort in his students is exemplary. I regularly attended his office hours when in his course and have continued to meet with him after “Ethics of Technology” ended to discuss personal projects, papers, and my undergraduate thesis. Whether during office hours or after class, he consistently makes himself available for discussions and support. We have discussed a wide range of my personal projects, including my paper exploring the ethical and legal aspects of genetic modification, my research on global governance in the context of artificial intelligence, my overarching interest in intellectual property law and the concept of ownership, as well as my undergraduate thesis on the subject of disagreement, among various other topics. In our discussions, Professor Kokot's passion for philosophical inquiry is infectious and

constantly stimulates my intellectual curiosity and propels me towards deeper understanding.. His unwavering support fosters a collaborative learning environment where we work in tandem, not adversaries, in our shared pursuit of philosophical enlightenment.

Professor Kokot's generosity and approachability extend beyond his willingness to meet with students. He is always eager to share his vast knowledge and insights, providing me with a wealth of resources to explore my interests and find new interests. He encourages me to think critically and challenge conventional wisdom. His genuine care for his students' intellectual development is evident in his unwavering support and guidance, making him an invaluable mentor and educator.

I am happy to recommend Professor Kokot to your department without reservation. He is an exceptional educator who inspires and engages his students with his passion for philosophy, his ability to foster stimulating discussions, and his unwavering support for their academic growth. He is a true mentor who goes above and beyond to guide his students towards deeper understanding and intellectual exploration. His dedication to his students and his commitment to creating a collaborative learning environment make him an invaluable asset to any academic institution.

Sincerely,

Emanuel (Manny) Glinsky

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4th Year Brandeis University Undergraduate

Neuroscience and Philosophy Double Major

Philosophy Honors Student

Legal Studies Minor

Selected Student Comments

Student response to my courses have been overwhelmingly positive, regardless of the institutional environment or the level of the students. I have taught students at four different universities (Tufts, Harvard, Brandeis, and Boston University), both in person and online, from a variety of disciplines (ranging from philosophy and communications students to engineering and computer science majors), from freshman through Masters and Law students. I have also been asked to write a number of recommendation letters for students, most of which have successfully enrolled in the programs for which I wrote recommendations. Below you will find a small selection of comments that I have received on my courses. I have included a full record of my course evaluations in the last section of this dossier.

Comments from Philosophy of Technology Students

Boston University Student: I really loved this course...I've always been interested in philosophy AND science, and this course really does well in combining those two disciplines. The instructor has been considerate and cared about his students a lot. His explanations of philosophical concepts are neat and helpful. I also liked that he always encourages students to express and discuss their own thoughts.

Boston University Student: I really enjoyed taking this class because our professor was very engaging and super optimistic starting from the transition to remote learning up until the last day of class. With regards to the in-person classes, the discussions were always good and he helped me to feel more comfortable voicing out my ideas. I felt that I learnt a lot from him and I think I also improved as a writer and multimedia creator...

Brandeis Student (in response to the question, "If you feel that the instructor Jordan Kokot should be considered for a teaching award, please explain why"): Absolutely. Prof. Kokot is a fantastic professor, really one of the best professors I've had at Brandeis. He is engaging, considerate, approachable, and seems to genuinely care about the well-being and learning of his students. He does a great job of presenting complex philosophical and ethical topics in a way that is easy to follow and understand. In class discussions, he engages directly with every student in a way that makes you feel like he's interested in what you have to say, and he always asks questions or makes points that help you see the topic in a way you hadn't considered. He respects all students' opinions.

Brandeis Student: The class was incredibly helpful in enabling me to access interests I did not know I concretely had. The course propelled me into fieldwork that I plan to continue pursuing for the rest of my life (this is not a hyperbole, the coursework is genuinely the basis for my applications to graduate schools, grants, and my own personal writings for conferences). Professor Kokot was also incredibly helpful in enabling us to pursue our interests in coursework. He encouraged us to let him know our particular interests, and then was willing to curate coursework towards our respective fields of interest. The course was flexible to our needs as students while simultaneously encouraging and challenging us with new information and novel concepts that will continue to be relevant for years to come.

Brandeis Student: I found the discussion-based structure of the class to be invaluable in understanding philosophical concepts and applying them to real-world issues. Prof. Kokot does a fantastic job of promoting respectful and productive discussion, engaging with students and encouraging them to think critically and consider new ideas, and posing interesting and complex ethical questions. I found all writing assignments to be very relevant to the course and improve my ethical analysis skills. For most of the semester, student groups led the discussion for part of class with the support of Prof. Kokot—I really enjoyed this, as it both gave us the opportunity to think deeply about the topics we were assigned to lead, as well as feel comfortable discussing ethical and moral topics with other students. Teaching a topic is a very productive way to learn the material yourself, and Prof. Kokot did a great job of further promoting discussion.

Harvard Student: Best section I've had at Harvard.

Harvard Student: Jordan was a great section TF who always provided me with incredibly useful feedback on my assignments to the point where he was giving me pointers for my next paper because he wanted me to do well and knew that I struggled with this type of writing as I hadn't done anything as theoretical as this in my lifetime. Jordan always ran a very active section and encouraged participation from everyone. He was very accepting of all viewpoints in an argument and always did his best to make everyone's comments useful to the discussion and always tried his best to push back on arguments in order to get the most out of section as possible. Jordan was also always incredibly responsive to emails and worked with my schedule to meet with me because I had a class which interfered with his office hours.

Harvard Student: Jordan is one of the most insightful and competent TFs I have been in section with. He lead the discussion incredibly effectively without dominating it, which is rare in a TF. His ability to understand the point that someone is trying to make and repeat it back to them ten times more eloquently was inspiring to see, and he never failed to extract value from a student's contribution, no matter how tangential or ill formed. I also appreciate how he made extra time for students outside of section despite the logistical difficulty of doing so.

Tufts Student: The course just changed so many conceptions around technology and reality. many times I walked away from class with my mind blown.

Tufts Student: This course radically changed the way I think about technology, virtual reality, and ethics in general. Before taking this course, I had never had the chance to dive into the technology used in virtual reality and the idea of it being ethical or unethical.

Tufts Student: Jordan did an amazing job teaching the course. He is very good at leading discussion and getting students to participate, even on very difficult topics. He also clearly knows what he is talking about and is good at conveying information to students.

Tufts Student: I think the readings were extremely helpful and the class discussions when we discussed the readings were the most helpful aspects of the course. I learned so much from my peers and Jordan, and I really enjoyed participating in class and discussing the concepts from the readings.

Comments from Ethics and Politics Students

Boston University Student: You gave incredible feedback and were very helpful the entire semester; I really appreciated you pushing us to keep learning and excelling.

Boston University Student: Jordan is a great instructor and assigned readings that were straight up gold. He was dedicated, available, and gave great feedback. He had the ability to balance out the class with a great bit of discussion..."

Boston University Student: Great at making you interested in class. He encourages group discussions rather than solely addressing concepts covered in class. He is not biased when teaching certain concepts so that you get to form your own ideas of what is right and wrong. He will challenge your beliefs whether you think a certain way or another so that you are able to strengthen your arguments. He will make you question why you believe in a certain way. He is extremely helpful during office hours and will schedule time with you if you are not able to go to his weekly office hours.

Harvard Student: This was the second course I had taken with sections led by Jordan, and it was a pleasure. Jordan is masterful at preparing and executing thoughtful and intriguing discussions that further not only discussions of course topics but connection between classmates. Jordan adeptly rose to the challenge of

mediating speaking time and fostering discussion between all 25 students. Jordan made himself amply available, staying after class to provide extra discussion and thoughtful insights regarding the coursework and concepts covered. When unable to conduct a section meeting due to unexpected personal commitments, Jordan offered multiple different options to allow students to receive instruction and have their needs met, even going so far as to offer one-on-one meetings with each student to review course topics if necessary. Though the lectures in this class were undeniably intellectually rich and well-made, it was Jordan's continued excellence that made this class well worth taking.

Harvard Student: Jordan hands down made this course. Much like professor Sandel, Jordan is an academic rockstar! I greatly looked forward to section meetings not only for the material and to interact with my classmates, but also because of Jordan's effective teaching style. He allowed the section discussion to flow openly, let people voice their opinions, and guided the discussions flawlessly. Jordan is a treasure trove of knowledge and HES is beyond lucky to have him. Don't change a thing Jordan!

Harvard Student: Jordan was awesome! His feedback was always direct and helpful, and the section was very fun. He controlled the flow of discussion just enough to keep us on track, but often let us run wild and debate and discuss the material, which made it very fun. Doing debates and other activities in section was also always very fun.

Harvard Student: When it comes to morals and ethics, it's always scary to enter into a space not knowing whether or not it will be intellectually and psychologically safe. Jordan fostered an environment where all felt heard and able to contribute.

Harvard Student: Jordan Kokot was an excellent teacher and moderator of the weekly discussions. He had an incredible insight into Dr. Sandel's theories and did well to steer the conversations in the direction most productive to learning. After a while, I was so looking forward to the weekly debates, because they were so fun, that I would sometimes forget this was also educational. Jordan Kokot had a lot to do with that success.

Harvard Student: Jordan is incredible. I'm constantly impressed at how much he accomplishes, how well he articulates and leads our discussions, and how thoughtful he is with providing feedback. He took time to give thorough and helpful comments on all of our final paper outlines, was always there to help or answer our questions, and was just a really kind and effective leader in our group. Thank you for everything, Jordan!!

Comments from Philosophy of Art Students

Boston University Student: "Jordan was honestly one of the best teachers I have had, not just in college, but in schooling in general. He generates interest in topics that most would not be able to due to the difficult nature of the writings. He is thoughtful and careful about his material and his students. I found myself always excited about coming to class and was always interested in our discussion topics.

Boston University Student: Excellent lecture, genuinely made me interested in class about the topic, even at the end of the day when I'm exhausted and falling asleep. Jordan's conversations and lectures were always interesting and compelling, friendly professor, EXTREMELY understanding...

Boston University Student: Interesting, knowledgeable, effective at explaining and illuminating highly complex philosophical subjects. Pushed us as students and writers to explore topics more deeply than we have been expected to in the past.

Boston University Student: I've always tried to take courses that were interesting and avoided taking courses that were easy A's if I wasn't going to learn anything. Although I might not get an A (sob) I feel I genuinely learned from this course and walked out a better writer. Thank you for creating a genuinely interesting course that has definitely changed my life!

Boston University Student: Jordan was able to make difficult subjects more accessible to students. He facilitated very good discussions. He gave positive feedback to students when they spoke up and responded well by connecting them to other students' ideas and asking questions. He picked difficult readings and helped us work through them, and gave us good exercises that helped us improve our writing. His syllabus was also very clear and he updated it through the semester. Jordan adapted the course to what he thought we were most interested in as the semester progressed.

Boston University Student: Engaging, kind, dedicated.

Boston University Student: Very comfortable class environment, and it was one of the only classes that I genuinely looked forward to attending. Jordan was a great teacher, the content was fascinating, and I loved this class.

Boston University Student: This course offered difficult content, but Jordan does a great job at explaining topics and making them relevant to our lives. In addition, the feedback on assignments/presentations has been insanely helpful all semester.

Boston University Student: Nice humorous guy, very willing to offer help to students outside of class. Pushes students to elaborate when necessary.

Boston University Student: He really encourages learning and creates a really comfortable and fun environment for learning. I really enjoyed this class and I would recommend it to anyone.

Quantitative Evaluation Summary (Brandeis)

These summaries are derived from courses taught at Brandeis between 2022 and 2023.

Course Structure and Grading

General Structure

	#	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Median	Mean	SD
The course syllabus was comprehensive, clear, and accurate.	45	0	1	5	13	26	0	5	4.42	0.77
The learning goals were clearly stated in the syllabus.	45	0	0	2	8	35	0	5	4.73	0.53
Classes started and ended on time.	45	0	0	2	9	34	0	5	4.71	0.54

Grading

	#	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Median	Mean	SD
Content of tests and assignments was consistent with content of lectures and/or reading.	45	0	0	4	8	35	0	5	4.87	0.66
Assignments and/or exams were returned promptly.	45	1	3	7	15	19	0	5	4.07	1.02
The grading policies were clear and consistently followed.	45	0	1	3	14	26	2	5	4.38	0.73
The graded assignments allowed me to demonstrate what I learned in the course.	45	0	0	4	11	30	0	5	4.58	0.65

Content and Workload

	#	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Median	Mean	SD
The content covered in this course was challenging.	45	0	2	6	25	12	0	4	4.04	0.76
This course requires a lot of work.	44	0	6	10	21	7	0	4	3.66	0.90

Student Responsibilities

	#	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Median	Mean	SD
I completed the course readings.	45	2	3	6	22	12	0	5	3.87	1.02
I kept up with work as it was assigned.	45	0	0	6	18	21	0	5	4.33	0.70

Instructor Responsibilities and Skills

	#	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Median	Mean	SD
The instructor was effective as a lecturer and/or class leader.	45	0	0	1	6	38	0	5	4.82	0.44
The instructor's presentations were clear and organized.	45	0	1	2	9	32	0	5	4.53	0.69
The instructor stimulated interest in the subject.	45	0	0	1	5	39	0	5	4.84	0.42

Responsiveness of the Instructor

	#	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Median	Mean	SD
The instructor was available and helpful to students outside the class.	44	0	0	0	8	35	1	5	4.70	0.40
The instructor respected students' ideas.	45	0	0	0	4	41	0	5	4.91	0.28
The instructor was concerned about student learning and development.	45	0	0	0	4	41	0	5	4.91	0.28
I received feedback that helped me see ways in which I could improve my learning and understanding.	45	0	0	2	11	32	0	5	4.67	0.56

Overall Instructor Rating

Response Count	Count	Mean	Median
The instructor was effective as a lecturer and/or class leader.	45	4.82	5
The instructor's presentations were clear and organized.	45	4.64	5
The instructor stimulated interest in the subject.	45	4.84	5
The instructor was available and helpful to students outside the class.	44	4.82	5
The instructor respected students' ideas.	45	4.91	5
The instructor was concerned about student learning and development.	45	4.91	5
I received feedback that helped me see ways in which I could improve my learning and understanding.	45	4.67	5
Overall	--	4.80	5

Contribution to Learning

	#	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Median	Mean	SD
The stated learning goals for the course were met.	45	1	0	3	10	30	0	5	4.44	0.82
This course improved my writing ability.	45	0	0	5	18	22	0	5	4.38	0.68
This course improved my oral communication skills.	45	0	1	8	13	18	5	5	4.20	0.84
This course improved my quantitative skills.	45	0	3	7	4	8	23	5	3.77	1.08
This course helped me develop my creative abilities.	44	0	0	3	15	16	10	5	4.38	0.64
This course helped me to analyze, interpret and synthesize information.	44	0	0	2	18	24	0	5	4.50	0.58
This course helped me to reason better and to think more critically about its subject matter.	45	0	0	1	11	33	0	5	4.71	0.50
This course helped me to consider alternative perspectives on complex issues.	44	0	0	0	13	31	0	5	4.70	0.46

Overall Quality of the Course

	#	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Median	Mean	SD
The overall quality of this course was excellent.	45	0	0	1	12	32	0	5	4.69	0.51

Quantitative Evaluation Summary (Boston University, Tufts, Harvard)

These summaries are derived from courses taught between 2019 & 2022 at Boston University, Tufts, & Harvard. Because the surveys were different between institutions, some questions have more respondents than others. Please note that more recent teaching evaluations from Boston University are currently inaccessible because the university is migrating its evaluation service. Full evaluations are available on request within a few weeks.

How would you rate the success of the course in accomplishing its objectives?

	Total	Percent	Students
Excellent	7	0.64	11
Very Good	3	0.27	
Good	1	0.09	
Fair	0	0.00	
Poor	0	0.00	

Mean Value 4.55

How would you rate the instructor overall? / How would your rate your overall experience with the instructor?

	Total	Percent	Students
Excellent	106	0.75	141
Very Good	24	0.17	
Good	7	0.05	
Fair	3	0.02	
Poor	1	0.01	
Mean Value	4.64		

How would you rate the use of out-of-class activities (reading assignments, homework, papers, projects, studio art practice, etc.) to promote your learning?

	Total	Percent	Students
Excellent	78	0.66	118
Very Good	29	0.25	
Good	9	0.08	
Fair	2	0.02	
Poor	0	0.00	
Mean Value	4.55		

How would you rate the instructor's success in explaining concepts and ideas? / The instructor reinforced course concepts effectively?

	Total	Percent	Students
Excellent	93	0.89	104
Very Good	5	0.05	
Good	1	0.01	
Fair	4	0.04	
Poor	1	0.01	
Mean Value	4.78		
Standard Deviation	0.47		

How would you rate the usefulness/quality of the instructor's feedback on assignments, exams, and other work?

	Total	Percent	Students
Excellent	31	0.57	54
Very Good	16	0.30	
Good	5	0.09	
Fair	1	0.02	
Poor	1	0.02	
Mean Value	4.39		

How would you rate the instructor's success in creating and maintaining an inclusive class, respectful of all students?

	Total	Percent	Students
Excellent	8	0.73	11
Very Good	2	0.18	
Good	1	0.09	
Fair	0	0.00	
Poor	0	0.00	
Mean Value	4.64		

How would you rate the instructor's communication with you outside of class? / The instructor was responsive to inquiries? / Availability outside of class?

	Total	Percent	Students
Excellent	74	0.73	102
Very Good	17	0.17	
Good	8	0.08	
Fair	2	0.02	
Poor	1	0.01	
Mean Value	4.58		

Workload in course?

	Total	Percent	Students
Heavy	7	0.12	58
Moderately Heavy	31	0.53	
Neither	18	0.31	
Moderately Light	2	0.03	
Light	0	0.00	
Mean Value	3.74		

Ability to stimulate interest?

	Total	Percent	Students
Excellent	31	0.72	43
Very Good	9	0.21	

Good	1	0.02
Fair	1	0.02
Poor	1	0.02
Mean Value	4.58	

Difficulty of course?				
	Total	Percent	Students	
Difficult	4	0.07		59
Moderately Difficult	30	0.51		
Neither	24	0.41		
Moderately Easy	1	0.02		
Easy	0	0.00		
Mean Value	3.63			

Ability to stimulate interest?				
	Total	Percent	Students	
Excellent	31	0.72		43
Very Good	9	0.21		
Good	1	0.02		
Fair	1	0.02		
Poor	1	0.02		
Mean Value	4.58			

Encouragement of class participation?				
	Total	Percent	Students	
Excellent	31	0.72		43
Very Good	6	0.14		
Good	4	0.09		
Fair	2	0.05		
Poor	0	0.00		
Mean Value	4.53			

Fairness in grading				
	Total	Percent	Students	
Excellent	28	0.67		42
Very Good	8	0.19		

Good	5	0.12
Fair	1	0.02
Poor	0	0.00
Mean Value	4.50	

I am glad I took this course.				
	Total	Percent	Students	
Strongly Agree	19	0.79		24
Agree	4	0.17		
Neutral	1	0.04		
Disagree	0	0.00		
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00		
Mean Value	4.75			

Sample Syllabi

Money & Market Ethics (Brandeis, Fall 2023)

Course Description

What should be the role of money and markets in our society? Are there some things that money should not be able to buy? Should people be permitted to buy sex, votes, babies, citizenship, or college admission? What about buying and selling the right to pollute, procreate, immigrate, discriminate, or to hunt endangered species? Should we use markets to govern health care, education, privacy, or criminal law? How do economic incentives change our moral calculus on both personal and political levels?

The course will consider what moral limits, if any, the law should impose on market exchanges. It will also explore the moral nature of markets themselves while drawing attention to critical ethical assumptions at the intersection of money, race, gender, and technology. Drawing upon classical philosophical works and contemporary moral and political controversies, we will attempt to determine what goods and social practices should not be up for sale.



Writing Intensive Course Statement

This is a writing intensive course. As such, it incorporates multiple assignments designed to assist students with developing the necessary skills for writing effectively within the humanities, specifically, philosophy. Students will engage different forms of writing — short reflective responses, annotated bibliographies, extended abstracts, close readings, and research papers — and will have opportunities to workshop, revise, and receive feedback on their work throughout the semester. One of the aims of the course is to investigate writing as a mode of learning.

Course Outline

This course is designed to introduce you to the moral questions generated by the intersection of markets with public and social life. A core aim of this class is to problematize the often-tacit assumption that market logics and market morality [should] dominate both private and public decision making. Likewise, the class will draw attention to the hidden market-oriented assumptions in daily life, and the way that money subtly reconfigures many of our core values.

This course will focus on three core questions. In our first unit (**Market Logics & Market Morality**) we will attempt to articulate the specific “logics” involved in market-oriented normativity (morality) by exploring supply and demand, price gouging, ticket scalping, and other related practical questions. We will also introduce our first major moral framework: utilitarianism.

In our second unit (**Consent, Bodies, & Dignity**), we will wrestle with topics of consent, autonomy, and dignity, primarily through a discussion of our bodies and how they are monetized. In this unit, we will take on organ markets, “hard jobs” (e.g., military service, sex work, etc.),

commercial surrogacy, death pools, and clerk insurance. We will also introduce our second major moral framework, Kant's deontology.

In our third and final unit (**Economics, Politics, & the Social World**), we will broaden our conversation into the domain of the large scale social and political consequences of market oriented normativity. In addition to discussing Aristotle and Virtue, we will also discuss citizenship, employment discrimination, environmental protection/climate change, and how certain technosocial issues relate to the market logics of surveillance capitalism.

Along the way, we will work to develop standards of good argumentation and dialogue, practice careful reading, and try our hands at philosophical writing. Our goal is to develop a small community of curious and supportive minds who can help each other grow as learners, writers, and thinkers. In leaving this class, you should feel better prepared to engage with your peers about some of the most difficult questions, not just of our time, but of all times.

In addition to the assigned readings, your learning will be scaffolded by a series of short exercises and assignments designed to help you develop careful reading skills, ask powerful questions, and practice moral and philosophical reasoning. These exercises will be assigned on a roughly daily basis. You will also be asked to "take point" for one of our discussions this semester on a topic and article of your choosing. You will be responsible for leading your classmates through a guided discussion, which may involve some additional reading and preparation. Finally, your main assignment for the semester will be to develop a research project of your own on one of the topics of the class. Starting in unit two, you will be asked to submit a series of preparatory documents (including an annotated bibliography and a research proposal) in preparation to either write a mid-length (~10-12 page) paper. These projects may be collaborative, though the final product will be your responsibility.

This class is only an introduction. Every topic we touch on in this course is the subject of its own dedicated field of inquiry with an expansive existing literature! It is my hope that this class will be a doorway for further and deeper thinking for all of you.

Course Objectives

You will develop your abilities to:

- craft responsible, considered, and well-structured arguments
- express yourself orally and converse thoughtfully about complex ideas.
- gain competence in the landscape of academic ethics, broadly construed
- grow as a thinker, learner, reader, and communicator.

Instructional Format, Course Pedagogy, and Approach to Learning

This course is a seminar. Though there will be occasional lectures, there will also be regular class discussions. I firmly believe that learning about philosophy involves both a change in the way we think and a strong conversational component. We learn from each other, not in isolation.

Books and Other Course Materials

All course materials will be available through the class Perusall site. You should refer to the reading schedule, which will be updated periodically, for weekly readings and assignments.

All readings and videos will be made available on the class Perusall site. However, if you prefer physical copies, we will be significant portions of Michael Sandel's *What Money Can't Buy*, and *The Tyranny of Merit*, as well as Zoshana Zuboff's *Surveillance Capitalism* (available on Amazon).

Additional Resources: Finding reliable information about philosophy online can be tricky. I highly recommend the following sites:

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/>

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/>

Assignments and Grading Criteria

To make the most out of this class for you and your classmates, you will do a good deal of reading and writing, and you will engage in a variety of class activities. Specific course requirements are to:

- Regularly attend and participate in classroom discussions and activities
- “Take Point” for one discussion this semester with a peer on the topic of your choosing.
- Participate Reading Check-ins, Discussion Questions, Moral Dilemmas, and Perusall annotations (roughly 1-2 per week).
- Complete a final term paper, including a research proposal as a midterm. I am open to creative final proposals as well.

Grading and Evaluation

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Attendance and Participation	10%
Weekly Exercises/Assignments	30%
Midterm Research Proposal	20%
Final Project	40%

Participation and Attendance

Since this course involves a regular discussion component, your attendance and active participation are essential both to your own learning and to your classmates' learning. Whenever possible, absences should be discussed with me or your TF prior to class time and makeup work may be assigned. That said, you are allowed three absences, no questions asked. Unexcused absences beyond three will incur a 10% penalty on your participation grade.

In order to participate appropriately, you will be expected to prepare for class by reading all of the assigned texts and thinking critically about their content. There should never be a situation where don't have at least something important to say about a text in class.

Participation means regular verbal engagement with the course material, in lecture, section, or in office hours. For most of you, this will mean paying attention in class and contributing to the conversation on a semi-regular basis. I know that this can be a hurdle for some students, but it is important that you try to develop public speaking skills as well as you are able. You may supplement class participation with regular office visits. Bare attendance will earn you a D in this category. Attendance and participation are worth 15% of your grade.

Office Hours

Please refer to the top of this document for my office hours and location. Your TF will also be available for office hours. Also note that office hour participation counts towards your general participation grade and can be a great way to supplement your participation if you find speaking in class challenging.

Assignments and Exercises

Apart from reading check-ins, assignments will be submitted and returned through Latte. Unless otherwise noted, the assumed submission time is at the BEGINNING of the class period on the day that the assignment is due. There will roughly eight reflection assignments over the course of the semester, of which you will be able to skip one. Most assignments (apart from the exams) will be graded on a four-point scale (check, check plus, check minus, zero).

Reading check-ins will take place DURING CLASS and will be completed either on Perusall or on paper handed into your TF. These are graded on “good faith completion,” and are either pass fail.

Late and Missed Assignments

Unless you make other arrangements with me in advance, graded assignments will be penalized by one-third of a letter grade for each day they are late. Please note too that we will regularly work with our exercises and drafts in class. If you are habitually late with your assignments, you will be unable to participate fully in the class.

Technology Policy

Computers, tablets, and similar devices will be generally permitted in this class. There will be a “zero tolerance” policy for anyone who abuses this privilege. If you are caught misusing technology in this class (checking social media, for example), you will no longer be able to use your device at all in the classroom. For your own sake and for the sake of your classmates, please use your technology responsibly.

Academic Integrity

In this class, we will discuss conventions for using and citing sources in academic papers. Cases of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the disciplinary procedures described in the university’s Academic Conduct Code. All students are subject to the code, which can be read online:

<https://www.brandeis.edu/student-rights-community-standards/academic-integrity/index.html>

Chosen Name and Gender Pronouns

This course aims to be an inclusive learning community that supports students of all gender expressions and identities. While class rosters are provided to instructors with students’ legal names, please let me know if you would like to be addressed by a different name than the one listed on the university roster. You are also invited to tell me and your TF early in the semester which set of pronouns (she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/them/theirs, etc.) you feel best fits your identity. My pronouns are he/him/his. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Student Accessibility Support

I assume that all of us learn in different ways. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for accommodations that will satisfy both your learning needs and the requirements of the course. Whether or not you have a documented accessibility need, Brandeis provides many support services that are available to all students. Here is their website: <https://www.brandeis.edu/academic-services/accessibility/index.html>

The Accessibility Support Office is responsible for assisting all students. If you have a disability that changes your learning condition your learning (whether visible or invisible, physical, emotional, or mental), you are encouraged to register with this office. The Accessibility Support Office will work with you to determine

appropriate accommodations for your courses, such as additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, or note-taking assistance. This office will give you a letter outlining the accommodations you need that you can share with your teachers; specific information about your disability will remain private. If you have any questions about accommodation, or what constitutes a disability, I invite you to speak with me or to the Accessibility Support Office.

Student Mental and Emotional Health

I recognize that being a college student can be an extraordinarily difficult and transformational experience, even in the best of times. Unfortunately, even before the COVID crisis, many students around the world were suffering from increased mental and emotional stresses, a pronounced sense of isolation and loneliness, and increased levels of depression, anxiety, and other serious mental health concerns. This situation has only been made worse in the last several years by the pandemic.

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Course Schedule

This schedule is intended as a blueprint or roadmap and is subject to change based on the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and will be posted on Perusall.

Date	Learning goals	Readings due	Assignments due
<u>Unit 1: Market Logics & Market Morality</u>			
Supply & Demand			
Week 0 (Aug 31)	- Introduce course & define course goals. - Courseware (Perusall)	Required -None Recommended: 1. Mankiew, <i>Principles of Economics</i> , Ch. 4 2. Sandel, <i>What Money Can't Buy</i> , Introduction	
Week 1 (Sept. 4)	- What is "Ethics? What is "Philosophy" - Supply & Demand	Required: 1. This Syllabus / Course Handbook 2. Mankiew, <i>Principles of Economics</i> , Ch. 4 3. Sandel, <i>What Money Can't Buy</i> , Introduction	-Exercise 1: Getting to Know you
Week 2 (Sept. 11)	- Price Gouging	Required: 1. Bart Jansen, "DOT Investigates Airlines for Gouging after Amtrak Crash,"	

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Joseph B. Treaster, "With Storm Gone, Floridians are Hit with Price Gouging,". 3. Donald J. Boudreaux, "'Price Gouging' after a Disaster is Good for the Public," 4. Annie Lowrey, "Is Uber's Surge-Pricing an Example of High-Tech Gouging?" 5. Douglas MacMillan, "Uber CEO: Surge Pricing is Here to Stay," 6. Jeff Jacoby, "When Demand Soars, Prices Should Too," 7. James Surowiecki, "In Praise of Efficient Price Gouging," 8. Michael Sandel, Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do? (2009), pp. 3-10 (excerpt). 	
<p>Week 3 (Sept. 18)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ticket Scalping - Auctioning Public Goods - Market Efficiency 	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. David Pierson, "In China, Shift to Privatized Healthcare Brings Long Lines and Frustration," 2. Michael Sandel, What Money Can't Buy, ch. 1 ("Jumping the Queue"). 3. Robert McMillan, "An App that Lets You Sell Your Killer Free Parking Spot," 4. Kate Conger, "SF City Attorney Issues Cease-and-Desist to Mobile App Auctioning City Parking Spots," 5. Tim Hartford, "What Tech Jerks Can Teach Us" 	<p>- Moral Dilemma 1: Line-standing</p>
<p>Utilitarianism & Economic Reasoning</p>			
<p>Week 4 (Sept. 25)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Utilitarianism - I will be out of town this week! Special Guest/Zoom Lectures TBD - 	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jeremy Bentham, An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (1789), chapters I and IV. 2. John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism (1863). 	<p>Reflection Exercise Assigned</p>
<p>Unit 2: Consent, Bodies, & Dignity</p>			
<p>Consenting Adults</p>			
<p>Week 5 (Oct 2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organ Sales & Hard Jobs 	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Richard A. Epstein, "The Market Has a Heart," 2. N. Gregory Mankiw, "The Kidney Shortage," 3. Carl Elliott, "Guinea-Pigging," 4. Cari Romm, "The Life of a Professional Guinea Pig," 5. 3. Robert G. McGee, "If Dwarf- 	<p>-</p>

		Tossing is Outlawed, Only Outlaws Will Toss Dwarfs,”	
Week 6 (Oct 9) [No Class Monday]	-Surrogacy	Required: 1. Cheryl Miller, “Outsourcing Childbirth,” 2. Chhavi Sachdev, “Once the place to go for surrogacy, India tightens control over its baby industry,” 3. Elizabeth M. Landes and Richard A. Posner, The Economics of the Baby Shortage,” 4. Margaret Jane Radin, “What, if Anything, Is Wrong with Baby Selling?” 5. Elizabeth Anderson, “Is Women’s Labor a Commodity?” 6. Michael J. Sandel, “The Baby Bazaar,” 7. Matter of Baby M, 537 A.2d 1227 (N.J. 1988).	Moral Dilemma 2: Surrogacy
Kant & Dignity			
Week 7 (Oct 16)	-Kant’s critique of utilitarianism	Required: 1. Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals (1785). 2. Immanuel Kant, “Of Duties to the Body in Regard to Sexual Impulse,” Lectures on Ethics	
Week 8 (Oct 23)	-Death Pools & Clerk Insurance	Required: 1. Michael Sandel, What Money Can’t Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets, ch. 4. 2. Ellen E. Schultz and Theo Francis, “Valued Employees--Worker Dies, Firm Profits,” 3. Charles Duhigg, “Late in Life, Finding a Bonanza in Life Insurance,”	Reflection Assignment Due
Unit 3: Economics, Politics, & the Social World—Critical Approaches to Market Morality			
Week 9 (Oct 30)	-Citizenship	Required: 1. Timothy Eagan, “Hedging Bets on Democracy, Casinos Offer Cash to Voters,” 2. Pamela Karlan, “Not by Money but by Virtue Won? Vote Trafficking and the Voting Rights System,” 3. John Ferejohn, “It’s Not Just Talk,” 4. Rousseau, The Social Contract, Book III, ch. 15, and Book IV, ch. 1 5. Michael J. Sandel, “Votes for Sale,” 6. Greg Mankiw and Michael Sandel, “On Selling Votes,” 7. Gary Becker and Edward Lazear, “A	Moral Dilemma 3: Citizenship

		<p>Market Solution to Immigration Reform,”</p> <p>8. “The Price of Entry,”</p> <p>9. Teri Schultz, “‘Golden visas’: EU offers the rich bigger bang for the buck,”</p> <p>10. Ayelet Shachar, “Dangerous Liaisons: Money and Citizenship,”</p>	
<p>Week 10 (Nov 6)</p>	<p>- Employment Discrimination</p>	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Steven Greenhouse, “Going for the Look, but Risking Discrimination,” 2. Robert Barro, “So You Want to Hire the Beautiful. Well, Why Not?” 3. Diaz v. Pan American World Airways (1971). 4. Wilson v. Southwest Airlines (1981). 5. Robert Post, “Prejudicial Appearances: The Logic of American Discrimination Law,” 6. Kimberly A. Yuracko, “Private Nurses and Playboy Bunnies: Explaining Permissible Sex Discrimination, 	<p>Moral Dilemma 4: Lookism</p>
<p>Week 11 (Nov 13)</p>	<p>- Aristotle, Virtue, & the Good</p>	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aristotle, The Politics, Books I, III (ch. 1-13). 2. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Books II (ch. 1-3), X (ch. 1-3) <p>Recommended:</p> <p>-</p>	
<p>Week 12 (Nov 20) [No Class W/TH]</p>	<p>- Environmental Protection</p>	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Richard Conniff, “A Trophy Hunt That’s Good for Rhinos,” 2. C.J. Chivers, “A Big Game,” 3. Don J. Melnick, et al., “Make Forests Pay: A Carbon Offset Market for Trees,” 4. Dieter Helm, “Failing to put a value on nature condemns it,” 5. George Monbiot, “The UK government wants to put a price on nature, but that will destroy it,” 6. Richard Conniff, “What’s Wrong with Putting a Price on Nature?,” 7. Tim Smedley, “Is ‘Natural Capital’ the Next Generation of Corporate Social Responsibility 8. Pope Francis, ENCYCLICAL LETTER LAUDATO SI’: ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME, 2015. [Only paragraphs 10-11, 20-22, 102-118, 	<p>Moral Dilemma 5: Trophy Hunting</p>

		<p>139, 156-162, 170-172, 190-192, 203-215, 224-225.]</p> <p>9. Joseph Heath, "Pope Francis' Climate Error"</p> <p>10. Daniel M. Hausman and Michael S. McPherson, <i>Economic Analysis and Moral Philosophy</i>, pp. 9-16, 197-208, 215-219.</p>	
<p>Week 13 (Nov 27)</p>	<p>- Universal Basic Income</p>	<p>Required:</p> <p>1. TBD</p>	
<p>Week 14 (Dec 4) [Last Week of Class]</p>	<p>- Market Incentives & Moral norms - The Tyranny of Merit</p>	<p>Required:</p> <p>2. Michael Sandel, <i>What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets</i>, ch. 2, 3.</p> <p>3. Fred Hirsch, <i>The Social Limits to Growth</i>, ch. 6.</p> <p>4. Lior Jacob Strahilevitz, "How Changes in Property Regimes Influence Social Norms: Commodifying California's Carpool Lanes,"</p> <p>5. Uri Gneezy and Aldo Rustichini, "A Fine is a Price," pp. 1-17.</p> <p>6. "Bruno S. Frey and Felix Oberholzer-Gee, "The Cost of Price Incentives" An Empirical Analysis of Motivation Crowding-Out," pp. 746-755.</p> <p>7. Lawrence H. Summers, Morning Prayers address, Memorial Church, Harvard, September 15, 2003.</p>	

PH 114B: Topics in Ethics—Technology Ethics

Course Instructor: Jordan Kokot

Course Dates: Aug. 25 – Dec. 19, 2022

Contact Information: jordankokot@brandies.edu **Course Location:** Olin-Sang 116

Office Hours: Mon./Wed. 2:30 PM-3:30 PM (Rabb 311) **Course Time:** Mon./Wed. 4:05 PM – 5:25 PM

Course Description

From TikTok to Meta, and from CRISPR to digital gamification, Extended Reality, and the struggle against climate change, dramatic advances in technology are shaping our world and our lives like never before. This course investigates the moral, social, and political implications of these and other new technologies. How should we understand privacy and surveillance in the age of metadata? Will emerging biotechnologies and life-tracking metrics allow us to re-engineer humanity? Should we edit our genes or those of our children to extend human lives and enhance human abilities? Can geoengineering resolve the climate crisis? How will AI and robotics change the work world? Can machines be “conscious” and what would it mean if they can? Will AI help us reduce bias and combat bigotry, or make things worse? What does the explosion of social media mean for human agency? How can we live an act in meaningful ways in a world increasingly dominated by technological and capital forces?



This course will explore how technology and our attitudes towards it are transforming who we are, what we do, how we make friends, care for our health, and conduct our social and political lives. In doing so, we will also investigate fundamental philosophical and ethical questions about agency, integrity, virtue, “the good,” and what it means to be human in an uncertain and shifting world.

Course Outline

This course is designed to introduce you to the topic of Technology Ethics, or “Tech Ethics.” ‘Tech Ethics’ refers to both a dedicated field of academic philosophical research that encompasses a broad array of questions and dilemmas engendered by the development of modern technologies, and to the ethical elements of the even broader social and political conversation that has arisen around emerging technologies. Consequently, for the bulk of the semester, we will alternate between investigating contemporary ethical dilemmas through concrete real-world case studies and reading recent academic articles and papers to help clarify and the ethical and philosophical issues involved in those cases.

However, before we can directly engage with real-world technologies and dilemmas, we will first need to lay some groundwork in **Unit 1, “Philosophy, Ethics, and Technology”** by discussing a) the “ontology of technology,” (what *is* technology) b) some of the basic principles of ethical theory, and c) how we might conceptualize the “relationship between” technology and its human creators and users. The picture that will emerge over the course of the first unit (and the semester as whole) is that technology and humanity are and have always been so deeply interwoven that the two are both conceptually and experientially inextricable. Human “nature” is fundamentally technological, and technology is fundamentally human. Both constantly shape and modify each other.

After these preliminary investigations, we will dig deeper into two sets of techno-ethical questions and investigate series of contemporary issues. In **Unit 2 “Technology & the World,”** we will ask the question, “How does technology (re)shape our world and our relationship to it?” Topics will include Geo Engineering and Environmental Justice; VR/XR/AR and the Metaverse; Artificial Intelligence and Algorithmic Justice; Robots, Labor, and War; and Metrics, Data, and Gamification.

In **Unit 3, “Technology & Humanity,”** we will ask “How does technology (re)shape who we are and how we relate to ourselves and to others?” In this unit we will discuss both Digital and Biological “Transhumanism;” Social Media, Privacy, and Surveillance; Deep Fakes; Augmentation Technologies (both mechanical and biological); and the general state of our techno-social world.

Along the way, we will work to develop standards of good argumentation and dialogue, practice careful reading, and try our hands at philosophical writing. Our goal is to develop a small community of curious and supportive minds who can help each other grow as learners, writers, and thinkers. In leaving this class, you should feel better prepared to engage with your peers about some of the most difficult questions, not just of our time, but of all times.

In addition to the assigned readings, your learning will be scaffolded by a series of short exercises and assignments designed to help you develop careful reading skills, ask powerful questions, and practice moral and philosophical reasoning. These exercises will be assigned on a roughly weekly basis. Starting in unit two, you will also be asked at to “take point” for one of our discussions this semester, along with a peer. The two of you will be responsible for leading your classmates through a guided discussion on the topic of the week, which may involve some additional reading and preparation. Finally, your main assignment for the semester will be to develop a research project of your own on one of the topics of the class. Starting about a third of the way through the semester, you will be asked to submit a series of preparatory documents (including an annotated bibliography and a research proposal) in preparation to either write a term paper or give an in-class presentation. These projects may be collaborative, though the final product will be your responsibility. I am also open to more creative/experimental research projects, but please reach out to me early in the process if you would like to try something a bit different. Depending on time constraints, we may compile our work into an online class journal (you can see examples of journals from previous classes here: www.techandethics.com)

This class is only an introduction. Every topic we touch on in this course is the subject of its own dedicated field of inquiry with an expansive existing literature! It is my hope that this class will be a doorway for further and deeper thinking for all of you.

Course Objectives

You will develop your abilities to:

- Engage competently with difficult ethical questions prompted by emerging technologies
- Craft responsible, considered, and well-structured arguments
- Express yourself orally and converse thoughtfully about complex ideas

- Gain competency in the general landscape of academic tech ethics, broadly construed
- Grow as a thinker, learner, reader, and communicator
- Develop a research interest in one or more area of Tech Ethics

Schedule of Topics

Please note that this schedule is liable to change depending on student interest and time constraints.

Unit 1: Philosophy, Ethics, & Technology

Week 1: Greetings, Welcome, & Preliminary Investigations

Week 2: What *is* Technology?

Week 3: Technology & Ethics, Part I (Virtue, Duty, & Utility)

Week 4: Technology & Ethics, Part II (Justice, Mediation, & the “Technological Attitude”)

Unit 2: Technology & the World

Week 5: Environmental Ethics, Geoengineering & the “Vulnerable World Hypothesis”

Week 6: VR / XR /AR (Welcome to the Metaverse)

Week 7: Artificial Intelligence & Algorithmic Justice

Week 8: Robots, Labor, & War

Week 9: Metrics, Data, and Gamification

Unit 3: Technology & Humanity

Week 10: Social Media, Privacy, & Choice, Part I (Surveillance Capital & Behavior)

Week 11: Social Media, Privacy, & Choice, Part II (Deep Fakes)

Week 12: Augmentation, Part I (Mechanical Augmentation)

Week 13: Augmentation, Part II (CRISPR & Genetic Engineering)

Week 14: Transhumanism

Week 15: Virtue & Justice in a Changing World

Course Handbook

Instructional Format, Course Pedagogy, and Approach to Learning

This course will be offered in a mixed seminar/discussion format. While I will occasionally lecture, most of the content and value of the course will come from classroom roundtable discussions, group activities, and research projects. I firmly believe that learning, especially philosophical learning involves a strong dialectical component.

Consequently, there will be a strong emphasis on communitarian approaches to thinking and learning, significant outside reading requirements, and the (well founded) assumption that we all have something important and interesting to bring to the conversation. We learn from each other, not in isolation, and so we will together endeavor to cultivate a classroom ethic of respect and community.

Books and Other Course Materials

All course materials will be available through the class Latte and/or Perusall sites. I encourage you to take active notes on your readings either by printing them or using an e-reader with annotation functions. We will occasionally use Perusall to share comments.

You should refer to the syllabus, which will be updated periodically, for the schedule of readings.

Additional Resources: Finding reliable information about philosophy online can be tricky. I highly recommend the following sites:

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/>

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/>

Courseware

Our class has a Blackboard site that contains the syllabus, assignments, and other course-related materials. You can log in to our Blackboard page at: <http://learn.bu.edu/> All additional coursework will be posted on blackboard.

Assignments and Grading Criteria

To make the most out of this class for you and your classmates, you will do a good deal of reading and writing, and you will engage in a variety of class activities. Specific course requirements are to:

- Regularly attend and participate in classroom discussions and activities
- “Take Point” for one discussion this semester with a peer on the topic of your choosing.
- Participate Reading Check-ins, Discussion Questions, Moral Dilemmas, and Perusall annotations (roughly 1-2 per week).
- Complete a final project (either a term paper or presentation), including a research proposal as a midterm. I am open to creative final proposals as well.

Grading and Evaluation

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Attendance and Participation	10%
Weekly Exercises/Assignments	30%
Midterm Research Proposal	25%
Final Project	40%

Participation and Attendance

Since this course is highly discussion based, your regular attendance and active participation are essential both to your own learning and to that of your classmates. You will be allowed excused three absences, no questions asked, however, apart from emergencies, you must inform me of your intended absence BEFORE you miss class. If you don't notify me in advance, your absence will count as unexcused, and will incur a penalty in your participation grade.

In order to participate appropriately, you will be expected to prepare for class by reading all of the assigned texts and thinking critically about their content. Participation means regular verbal engagement with the course material. For most of you, this will mean paying attention in class and contributing to the conversation on a regular basis.

I know speaking in class can be a hurdle for some students, and I want everyone to be comfortable in their learning, but it is important that you try to develop public speaking skills as well as you are able. You may supplement class participation with office visits. Attendance and participation are worth 10% of your grade.

Office Hours

I will be available in my office at the times listed at the top of this syllabus. Please reach out to me if you would like to schedule a meeting outside of my normal office hours, or would like to meet by zoom

Submitting Assignments and Exercises

Assignments will be submitted and returned via Latte unless otherwise noted. The submission time is at the BEGINNING of the class period on the day that the assignment is due.

Late and Missed Assignments

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Course Reading & Assignment Schedule

This schedule is intended as a blueprint and is subject to change based on the needs of the class. Please note that this schedule is subject to change! Changes will be announced in class and will be posted online

Date	Topic/Goals/Content	Readings	Assignments
<p><u>Introduction: Philosophy & Technology</u></p> <p>In the first weeks of the class, we will get to know each other a bit, introduce the topic of the course, and engage with some of the basics of philosophy, ethics, and technology. We will ask some basic questions about what technology is, how we relate to it, and why it is important, and begin to lay the groundwork for a more careful exploration of the ethical implications of technology. To do so, we will look at three of the most important theoretical ethical frameworks of the last several centuries—Utilitarianism, Deontology, and Virtue Ethics. Finally, we will round out the first unit by returning to the question of how we relate to technology and look more carefully at “Technological Mediation Theory” (or “postphenomenology”) and what Heidegger calls the “Technological Attitude.”</p>			
Week 1: Greetings, Welcome, & Preliminary Investigations			
Mon., Aug. 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define course goals - Syllabus - Introduce class - Discussion: <i>The Machine Stops</i> 	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forster, <i>The Machine Stops</i> (1909), sections 1 & 2 	
Wed., Aug. 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion: <i>The Machine Stops</i> & <i>The Nature of Technology</i> 	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forster, E.M.: <i>The Machine Stops</i> (1909), 1, 2, & 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercise 1: “Getting to Know You” (due)

	- Course Outline / Assignment Structure	- Arthur, W.B.: <i>The Nature of Technology</i> (2009), Ch. 1 - Syllabus & Course Handbook Suggested: - Aristotle: <i>Physics</i> , Book II (c. 350 BCE), (excerpts) - Fassio, "How to Read Philosophy" - <i>Philosophy of Technology</i> (SEP)	- Come with questions about the syllabus and course
Week 2: What Is Technology			
Wed., Sept. 7 (no class Monday)	- Aristotle on Nature and Technology - Introduce Technology and Society Conference	Required: - Aristotle: <i>Physics</i> , Book II (c. 350 BCE), (excerpts) - Schummer, "Aristotle on Technology and Nature" - Max, "How Humans are Shaping our Own Evolution" (2017)	- Exercise 2: Reading Notes (due)
Week 3: Technology & Ethics, Part I (Virtue, Duty, & Utility)			
Mon., Sept. 12	- Introduce three major ethical lenses/theories through the ethics of enhancement	Required: - "Wanting Babies" (Sanghavi, 2006) - "Sex Selection" (Savulescu, 1999) - "The Ethics of Enhancement" (Sandel, 2007) - <i>Utilitarianism</i> (Mill, 1863), Ch. 1 & 2	- Exercise 3: Moral Dilemma 1 (assigned)
Wed., Sept 14	- Expand and clarify Monday's discussion	Required: - <i>The Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (Kant, 1785), (pgs. 1-40) - <i>Technology and the Virtues</i> (Vallor, 2016), Ch. 1 Suggested: - <i>Technology and the Virtues</i> (Vallor, 2016), Introduction & Ch 2 - Justice: What's The Right Thing To Do? Episode 06: "Mind Your Motive" (Sandel, 2009) (https://youtu.be/8rv-4aUbZxQ)	
Week 4: Technology & Ethics, Part II (Justice, Mediation, & the "Technological Attitude")			
Mon, Sept. 19		Required: - Heidegger, <i>The Question Concerning Technology</i> (1954) - Braver, Commentary on QCT	- Exercise 3: Moral Dilemma 1 (Due)

		Suggested: - Kurzweil, <i>The Singularity is Near</i> , Ch. 1 (2005)	
Wed., Sept 21		Required: - “A Postphenomenological Field Guide” (Rosenberger & Verbeek, 2015)	- Exercise 4: Mediation Relations (Assigned)

Date	Topic/Goals	Readings	Assignments
<u>Unit 2: Technology & the World</u>			
Week 5: Environmental Ethics, Geoengineering & the “Vulnerable World Hypothesis”			
Wed., Sept. 28 (no Monday class)		Required: - “Can Selfishness Save the Environment?” (Low, 1993) - “Think Twice about Working for a Climate Villain (Meyer, 2022) - “The Vulnerable World Hypothesis” (Bostrom, 2019) - “The Oxford Principles” of Geoengineering (Rayner, et al, 2012) Suggested: - Vallor, Ch 6 - Verbeek on Mediation Theory (https://ppverbeek.org/mediation-theory) - “How Engineering the Human Body Could Combat Climate Change (Ross, 2012) - “The Pope’s Moral Case for Taking On Climate Change” (Green 2015)	-
Week 6: VR / XR /AR (Welcome to the Metaverse)			
Mon., Oct. 3 (no Wednesday class)	-	Required: - The Experience Machine (Nozick) - ‘Ethics of Representation in VR’ (Brey, 1999) - How We Should Build a Virtual Society (Chalmers, 2022) - What is the Metaverse? (Ravenscraft, 2022)	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Environmental Justice in Virtual Worlds” (Werkheiser, forthcoming) - Meta Founders Letter (Zuckerberg, 2021) <p>Suggested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Social Ontology of Virtual Environments” (Brey, 2003) - Physical and Social Reality of Virtual Worlds (Brey, 2014) - Heath-Zuckerberg interview on Oculus Pro - “What is the Metaverse” (Lovich, 2022) - “What is the Metaverse” (Robertson, 2021) - Metaverse Explained (Needle, 2022) - Metaverse Speech (Zuckerberg, 2021) - “On Multiple Realities” (Schutz, 1945) 	
Week 7: Artificial Intelligence & Algorithmic Justice			
Wed., Oct. 9 (no Monday class)	-	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Mapping City Crime” (Wallace, 2009) - “Machine Bias” (Larson, Mattu, Kirchner, and Angwin, ProPublica, 2016) <p>Suggested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “How We Analyzed the COMPAS Recidivism Algorithm (Larson, Mattu, Kirchner, and Angwin, 2016) 	-
Thurs., Oct. 13 (replacement class)	-	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Surveillant Assemblage” (Hagarty, 2000) - “Tech of Crime Prediction” (Brayne & Christin, 2020) <p>Suggested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Big Data Surveillance: The Case of Policing” 	-
Week 8: Robots, Labor, & War			
Tues., Oct. 16 (no Monday class)		<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Digidog” (Cramer, 2021) - “Hasbro, Joy for all” (Larson, 2016) 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Human Interruption" (Machemer, 2020) - "Zora" (Satariano, 2018) - "Hello Barbie" (Walker, 2001) - Alienation & AI" (Biondi) 	
Wed., Oct. 19	-		
Week 9: Metrics, Data, and Gamification			
Mon., Oct 24	-	Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Precs of Games (Nguyen) - How Twitter Gamifies Communication (Nguyen) - Games & Value Capture (Nguyen) 	- Exercise 7: Project Proposals (assigned)
Wed., Oct 26	-		-

Virtual Reality: The Ethics of Future Technology



Course Description

Humanity has expressed a remarkable capacity to invent and manipulate new realities. From dreams and ancient storytelling to modern 3d superhero movies and VR video games, we are all captivated by the process of losing ourselves in different worlds and different possibilities. Nowhere is this drive more pronounced than in the rapid rise of modern “alternate reality” technologies.

In this course, we will begin to explore some of the philosophical and ethical implications of the development of virtual reality in light of the meteoric rise of modern technology and the tremendous impact it has had on the human experience. In addition to investigating the history and technology of VR, MR (mixed reality), and AR (Augmented Reality), we will seek answers to difficult questions concerning the phenomenology, metaphysics, and social and ethical implications of VR technologies. What does it mean for something to be “virtual?” What is “real” about virtual reality? Are we all in a giant simulation? Would it matter if we were? Can we model consciousness and even develop robust artificial intelligences using lessons learned from VR technologies? Are we destined for a virtual future and what would it mean if we could change our appearance as easily as we can change a VR avatar? Can VR technology allow us a special window into the embodied experience of others? How will VR change the way we communicate, work, and learn?

In addition to classic texts in the philosophy of virtuality and technology by thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Rene Descartes, and Martin Heidegger, we will also read seminal texts in the history of the technological development of VR by thinkers like Ivan Southerland and Michael Heim and cutting edge philosophical research by David Chalmers, Nick Bostrom, and Thomas Metzinger. Over the course of this semester, students will select and pursue their own semester-

long research project on a subject in the philosophy of virtual reality. This project will be developed in several steps and with several different expressions, culminating in a class conference and an online class journal (you can find an example from a past semester at www.techandethics.com ([Links to an external site.](#))). During the second half of the semester and as student projects develop, a portion of our readings for each week will be selected by students from their independent research projects. This format invites collaboration between students on their research projects and provides important opportunities for students to discuss their findings. Public health situation permitting, we will also get some hands-on experience with VR equipment through the [Brookline Interactive Group](#) ([Links to an external site.](#)).

Course Objectives

You will develop your abilities to:

- develop advanced knowledge of a specific question within the philosophy and ethics of virtual reality
- strategically search for and select both scholarly and non-scholarly sources and read them with understanding, appreciation, and critical judgment
- craft responsible, considered, and well-structured written arguments;
- express yourself orally and converse thoughtfully about complex ideas
- engage a range of sources in order to address research questions and to communicate findings in the form of responsible, considered, and well-structured written arguments
- produce clear, coherent prose in a range of genres and styles, using different media and modes of expression as appropriate
- plan, draft, and revise efficiently and effectively, and help your peers do the same by responding productively to their work
- reflect on how research, reading, writing, and editing practices differ for varied audiences, genres, and purposes

Books and Other Course Materials

Braver, Lee. *Heidegger's Later Writings*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009.

Grimshaw, Mark. *The Oxford Handbook of Virtuality*. Oxford, Oxford UP, 2014.

World of Tomorrow. Dir. John Hertzfeldt. (film available for rent or purchase here: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/worldoftomorrow/155036442>)

Note: All books are available through Amazon and will be made available through the bookstore shortly. The only expense required for this class is the *World of Tomorrow* film by Hertzfeldt available on Vimeo for rent or purchase. Relevant sections from these texts will also be made available on Canvas. This means that you only need to buy these texts if you enjoy using physical books.

Additional Resources: Finding reliable information about philosophy online can be tricky. I highly recommend the following sites:

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/>

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/>

Courseware

Our class has a Blackboard site that contains the syllabus, assignments, and other course-related materials.

Assignments and Grading Criteria

In order to make the most out of this course for you and your classmates, you will do a good deal of reading and writing, and you will engage in a variety of class activities. Specific course requirements are to:

- Develop a sustained research inquiry in which you explore a range of information sources and modes of research to help formulate and engage with research questions
- Communicate about your research in two or more genres to two or more distinct audiences
- Prepare reading, drafts, and exercises as assigned so that you are ready to participate in class
- Attend at least one conference with your instructor
- Reflect on your learning throughout the term in a portfolio, including a self-assessment at the beginning of the term and a reassessment at the end of the term

Grading and Evaluation

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Four major assignments:	75%
- Research proposal and annotated bibliography	15%
- Research Paper	25%
- Conference Presentation/Poster	15%
- Class Journal/Public Media Assignment	20%
Exercises and Handouts	10%
Attendance and Participation	15%

General Outline

During this class, you will embark on a semester long research project involving multiple modes of investigation, domains of inquiry, and genera of expression. This project will be oriented on developing and exploring a research question targeted at a specific VR related technology or technological trend. It will require extensive research which will be guided by a series of exercises and it will require you to produce multiple written and visual artifacts for different audiences. It will also require you to present your work to the class in a mock academic conference. More details on each stage of this project are provide below. You will also receive handouts explaining each step in even more detail.

Research Proposal & Annotated Bibliography

The preliminary stage of your work will require a research proposal and an annotated bibliography. These are two separate assignments (each worth 5% of your grade). The former will require you to outline both a research question and a general trajectory for your research. The second, which will be due later in the semester, will involve you compiling a list of your most important sources and giving a brief description of each source and why it is relevant for your project. Note that your research need not

be finalized at this stage—you will likely continue to add to your project as you go through the subsequent stages.

Research Paper

The “core” of your research project is a traditional academic research paper, styled to be submitted to a journal or collection for publication. We will discuss the formal features of this paper as the semester progresses. You will also be required to produce an abstract of your project at this stage. This stage of the project will be worth 25% of your grade.

Conference Presentation/Poster

At this stage in the project, we will mimic a traditional academic conference. In our case, the conference will be modeled after the upcoming Society for Philosophy and Technology’s “Technology and Society” conference to be held in Lille, France next Summer (<https://lillethics.com/spt-2021/>). Each student will either produce a short presentation or a poster explaining their research project. I will try to accommodate student preference in this matter. Over the course of several class periods, students will present their papers or their posters to the class. This stage is worth 15% of your grade.

Class Journal

The final stage of your research project will be converting your research into a piece of media designed for our online class philosophy journal, the “Online Journal of Technology and Ethics” (<https://www.techandethics.com/>). This media can take many different forms, ranging from a public facing essay to a TED style video essay. We will mimic the professional peer review process at this stage by providing each other with detailed comments, and then engage in an online discussion of each other’s work. This stage will be worth 20% of your grade.

Exercises and Handouts

Over the course of the semester, you will be given several handouts and shorter exercises. These will be due as marked on the syllabus and on the exercise sheets themselves. These will be graded on a complete/incomplete basis. So long as they are completed in good faith and submitted on time, you will receive full credit. I will not accept late exercises. Though I may occasionally provide comments, I will not regularly do so. If you would like comments on an exercise, please let me know in advance and I will do my best to accommodate your request. These exercise will be worth 10% of your grade.

Participation and Attendance

Since this course is a seminar, your regular attendance and active participation are essential both to your own learning and to your classmates’ learning. Under ordinary circumstances, missing more than one week of class (that is, missing three days of class) will lower your final grade by 1/3. Missing more than two weeks (five or more class periods) may lead to failing grade the course. If you have a special obligation that will require you to miss several classes (e.g., religious observances, varsity athletics), please talk with me at the beginning of the semester. Missed conference appointments will be counted as absences. In order to participate appropriately, you will be expected to prepare for class by reading all of the assigned texts and thinking critically about their content. There should never be a situation where don’t have at least something important to say about a text in class.

Participation means regular verbal engagement with the course material. For most of you, this will mean paying attention in class and contributing to the conversation on a regular basis. When we enter the research phase of our class, it will mean regular participation in research check-ins and in article selection (more on this below). Seminars work best when every voice is engaged in their own unique way. I know that this can be a hurdle for some students but it is important that you try to develop public speaking skills as well as you are able. You may supplement class participation with regular office visits. Bare attendance will earn you a D in this category. Attendance and participation are worth 10% of your grade.

Research Distribution and Participation

As we enter into the research phase of this course, each student will select a domain of inquiry (i.e., a technical capacity of a VR technology or a philosophical issue related to VR) that will delimit their research project. At present, I have identified seven genre or domains though we will have a conversation about whether these categories are adequate. I recognize that there is a good deal of overlap between these categories so some projects may not fall neatly into just one category. Additionally, if you have an idea for a project that doesn't fit into *any* of these categories, please let me know so we can work something out.

Each category will have at least two students. Each week, from week 5-12, we will discuss one of the domains. The students whose projects fall within the topic of each week will be collectively select a short reading or bit of media on their topic relevant to their research for the class as a whole to read or watch. These readings must be distributed by the students to the class by class time on the Wednesday of their week. We will discuss the reading as group that Friday. During this discussion, the students who selected the reading will be responsible for directing the conversation.

Office Hours, Instructor Conferences, and Librarian Meetings

I will maintain regular office hours as described above. If you would like to meet with me but have a **hard conflict** with the above times, please let me know and we will work something out. Hard conflicts include other classes and necessary employment. If you do not have a hard conflict, I cannot promise that I will be able to meet with you. I am, however, often in my office at other times, so feel free to email me to see if I am available to help.

You will have several required and scheduled meetings with me over the course of the semester to discuss your research and your writing. Missing one of these scheduled meetings without notifying me of extenuating circumstances will count as an absence from class.

You are also required to meet at least once this semester with either our class research librarian (JD Kotula) or another similar librarian. Failure to do so will incur a one letter penalty on your attendance and participation grade. Meeting with a librarian is in your best interest! Doing so will almost certainly help you to develop a quality project. You are encouraged to schedule as many meetings as are helpful.

Submitting Assignments and Exercises

All assignments and exercises should be submitted to your personal Google Doc folder (provided the first day of class). Unless otherwise noted, the assumed submission time is at the BEGINNING of the class period on the day that the assignment is due. Assignments submitted even one minute after the deadline will be considered late unless other arrangements have been made.

Late and Missed Assignments

Unless you make other arrangements with me in advance, graded assignments will be penalized by one-third of a letter grade for each day they are late. Please note too that we will regularly work with our exercises and drafts in class. If you are habitually late with your assignments, you will be unable to participate fully in the class.

I am committed to providing you with timely written or verbal feedback on one draft of each major paper and written feedback and a grade on the final version of each major paper. You can generally expect my responses to your drafts within five or six days of your punctual submission of them; graded final versions will be returned to you within a week and a half.

Technology Policy

I recognize the inevitable irony of creating a “technology policy” for a class about technology. Computers, tablets, and similar devices will be generally permitted in this class. There will be a “zero tolerance” policy for anyone who abuses this privilege. If you are caught misusing technology in this class (checking social media, for example), you will no longer be able to use your device at all in the classroom. If three people are penalized in this way, then the entire class will lose technology privileges. For your own sake and for the sake of your classmates, please use your technology responsibly.

Academic Integrity

In this class, we will discuss conventions for using and citing sources in academic papers. Cases of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the disciplinary procedures described in Tufts University's Academic Conduct Code. All students are subject to the Tufts code, which can be read online: <https://students.tufts.edu/student-affairs/student-code-conduct/iv-policies-regarding-student-behavior#B>

Chosen Name and Gender Pronouns

This course aims to be an inclusive learning community that supports students of all gender expressions and identities. While class rosters are provided to instructors with students' legal names, please let me know if you would like to be addressed by a different name than that listed in the StudentLink. You are also invited to tell me early in the semester which set of pronouns (she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/their/theirs, etc.) you feel best fits your identity. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Office of Disability Services

I assume that all of us learn in different ways. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for accommodations that will satisfy both your learning needs and the requirements of the course. Whether or not you have a documented disability, Tufts provides many support services that are available to all students.

Disability Services is the office responsible for assisting students with disabilities. If you have a disability that interferes with your learning (whether visible or invisible, physical or mental), you are encouraged to register with this office. Disability Services will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations for your courses, such as additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, or note-taking assistance. This office will give you a letter outlining the accommodations you need that you can share with your teachers; specific information about your disability will remain private. If you have any

questions about accommodation, or what constitutes a disability, I invite you to speak with me or to Disability Services.

Course Schedule

This schedule is intended as a blueprint and is subject to change based on the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and will be posted on Blackboard.

Date	Learning goals	Readings due	Assignments due
<p style="text-align: center;">Unit 1, Course Foundations: Technology, the Future, and Virtual Reality</p> <p>In this unit, we will lay the theoretical and philosophical groundwork for the course, beginning with a general discussion of the “ontology” of technology (i.e., what <i>is</i> technology) and moving into a conversation about the role technology has played in human culture and in individual human lives, setting the stage for our more targeted conversation about alternate reality technologies. We will then begin to think more carefully about the sorts of trends and patterns exhibited by technological development in recent decades, and about what those trends might mean for the future.</p> <p>On a practical level, we will begin discussing the basics of a research project, including how form a good research question, how to delimit a domain of inquiry, how to think about sources, and how to think about your audience.</p>			
Week 1: What is Technology?			
<p style="text-align: center;">Jan. 20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define course goals - Discuss/Review Syllabus - Introduce topic - Discussion: What is research? What is Technology? What is “future?” Why should philosophers care about VR? - Exercise 1 handed out 	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arthur, <i>The Nature of Technology</i>, Ch. 1 (BB) - Southerland, Ivan E. “The Ultimate Display” - This syllabus <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Physics</i>, Book II - Fassio, “How to Read Philosophy” (BB) - Philosophy of Technology (SEP) 	<p style="text-align: center;">Come with questions about the syllabus and the course and thoughts about technology.</p>
Week 2: What is Technology (cont.)? What is “future?”			
<p style="text-align: center;">Jan. 27</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aristotle on Nature and Technology - Exercise 2 handed out - Introduce Technology and Society Conference - What is research and how does it work? - What <i>is</i> the future? 	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aristotle, <i>Physics</i>, Book II (excerpts) - Schummer, “Aristotle on Technology and Nature” - Hertzfeldt, <i>World of Tomorrow</i> (on Viemo) <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Max, “How Humans are Shaping our Own Evolution” 	<p style="text-align: center;">- Exercise 1: Initial self-assessment (due)</p>

		- Review Phil. of Tech. Conference CFA (www.spt.org) and the Online Journal of Technology and Ethics (techandethics.com)	
Week 3: Futurism, Phenomenology, and Postphenomenology			
Feb. 3	- The Singularity and Transhumanism - Technology as a mode of access - Library Orientation - Research Questions - Exercise 3 handed out	Required: - Kurzweil, 1-21 - Braver, 82-97 (<i>Question Concerning Technology</i>) - Rosenberger and Verbeek, <i>A Postphenomenological Field Guide</i> Recommended: - Braver, 70-82 (<i>Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics</i>) - Heidegger, <i>Question Concerning Technology</i>	- Exercise 2: Note Taking/Reading Log
Week 4: What’s “virtual” about VR? What makes something “real?”			
Feb. 10	- Planning research and best practices o Theory as a lens o Finding and documenting sources o Finding a Research Niche o Thinking about arguments and Argumentation - Exercise 4 handed out - Assignment Roadmap	Required: - Noë, Alva “Is the visual world a grand illusion?” (<i>J. Conscious. Stud.</i> , 2002) - Heim, Michael R. “The Paradox of Virtuality” (<i>The Oxford Handbook of Virtuality</i> , 2014) Recommended: - Metzinger, Thomas K. “Why is Virtual Reality Interesting for Philosophers?” (<i>Front. In Robotics</i> , 2018)	- Exercise 3: Beginning Research— finding and evaluating claims
Unit 2: Research as Exploration			
<p>In this unit, you will conduct open-ended research to develop and shape a research question that will drive your project. You will design and propose an executable research project. In this unit we will also begin doing weekly check-ins on research progress. We will also be conducting a very broad survey of several relevant questions in the philosophy of virtual reality, including metaphysics, simulation theory, ethics, phenomenology, and aesthetics. We will also begin weekly research and writing check-ins.</p>			
Week 5: Caves, Dreams, and Demons—A brief history of virtual thinking			
Feb. 17	- Finish discussing Heidegger - Start discussing Rosenberger, et al. - Review Exercise 4 - Discuss Biondi and	Required - Plato’s Cave (<i>The Republic</i>) - Descartes’ Dream Argument (<i>Meditations</i>) - Nozick, Robert “The Experience Machine”	- Exercise 4: Draft Initial Research Plan and Question (to be exchanged with a peer for comments) - Start instructor/student conferences - Exercise 4b: Return comments to peer

	<p>Schnider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Talk about Theory 	<p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bittarello, Maria, "Mythologies of Virtuality" (<i>The Oxford Handbook of Virtuality</i>, 2014) - Penny, Simon, "Virtual Reality as the End of the Enlightenment Project" (<i>Culture on the Brink</i>, 1998) 	
Week 6: Virtual Realities and The Technology of VR (VR, AR, MR, XR)			
Feb. 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research Clinic (with Librarian) - Research, Bibliographies, and Citation - Exercise 5: Annotated Bibliography, handed out 	<p>Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LaValle, Steven M. <i>Virtual Reality</i>, 2018 (excerpts) - Nevelsteen, Kim, "Virtual world, defined from a technological perspective" - Bruce Damer, "The Virtuality and Reality of Avatar Cyberspace" (<i>The Oxford Handbook of Virtuality</i>, 2014) <p>Student Selected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hoppe, Matthias, "A Human Touch" Download "A Human Touch"(CHI 2020) - Youtube: HaptX Gloves Launch Video <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Travinor, Grant, "Towards an Analysis of Virtual Realism" (DiGRA, 2019) - LaValle, Steven M. <i>Virtual Reality</i> (full text) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schedule one-on-one meeting with librarian by this date
Simulation Theory—Is all reality virtual reality? Does it matter? (VR and Metaphysics)			
March 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss Bibliographies - Anatomy of a Research Paper - Evaluating arguments and planning your own - Research Paper Assignment Sheet handed out - Exercise 6: Planning and Drafting handed out 	<p>Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chalmers, David, "The Virtual and the Real" (<i>Disputatio</i>, 2017) - Bostrom, Nick "Are you Living in a Computer Simulation" (<i>Philosophical Quarterly</i>, 2003) <p>Student Selected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anathaswamy, Anil, "Do We Live In a Simulation?" (Links to an external site.) (<i>Scientific America</i>, 2020) - McDonald, Glenn, "We are Not Living in a Simulation. Probably," (Links 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercise 5: Annotated Bibliography (Draft—final to be included with final draft of Research Paper)

		<p>to an external site. (<i>FastCompany</i>, 2018) ("do the math" section - end)</p> <p>-- deGrasse Tyson, Neil & Chuck Nice, "The Simulation Hypothesis" (Links to an external site.) (StarTalk, 2020) (Optional)</p> <p>Recommended:</p> <p>- Chalmers, David, "The Matrix as Metaphysics" (<i>Philosophers Explore the Matrix</i>, 2005)</p> <p>- Heim, M. <i>Virtual Realism</i> (excerpts)</p> <p>- Travinor, Grant, "On Virtual Transparency (2019)</p> <p>- Bekenstein, Jacob "Information in the Holographic Universe" (2007)</p>	
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<p>Unit 3: Writing for an Academic Audience</p> <p>In this unit, you will apply the best practices of writing and research—planning, drafting, integrating feedback, and revising—to communicate your research to an academic audience with authority and precision. We will also continue discussing various domains of technology and maintain our weekly check-in schedule.</p>			
<p>Week 8: VR, Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Immersion</p>			
<p>March 10</p>	<p>- What makes a good thesis?</p> <p>- Arguments and Argumentation</p>	<p>Required</p> <p>- Yee, Nick "The Proteus Effect" (<i>Human Communication Research</i>, 2007)</p> <p>-- Calleja, Gordon "Immersion in Virtual Worlds" (<i>Oxford Handbook on Virtuality</i>, 2014)</p> <p>Student Selected</p> <p>- Banos, RM, et. al, "Immersion and Emotion" (<i>CyberPsychology & Behavior</i>, 2004)</p> <p>Recommended:</p> <p>- Gualeni, S. "Augmented</p>	

		<p>Ontologies” (Philos. Technol., 2014)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gibson, J.J., <i>An Ecological Approach to Visual Perception</i> (1979) -Riva, Giuseppe, “Being Present in a Virtual World” (<i>The Oxford Handbook of Virtuality</i>, 2014) 	
Week 9: Virtual Reality, Consciousness, and Artificial Intelligence			
March 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercise 6 Handed out - Workshop on Planning Documents - Structuring papers 	<p>Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Metzinger, Thomas K. “Why is Virtual Reality Interesting to Philosophers” (<i>Front. In Robotics and AI</i>, 2018) <p>Student Selected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bostrom, Nick. "The Superintelligent Will" (<i>Minds and Machines</i>, 2012) - The Unfinished Fable of the Sparrows (Links to an external site.) (Parkerharper, 2015) <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cogburn, Jon, “Against Brain-in-a-Vatism,” (<i>Philos. Technol.</i>, 2014) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercise 6a: Central Claim (discuss in class) - Exercise 6b: Planning and Drafting (bring to class)
Week 10: Virtual Reality and Communication			
March 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introductions and Conclusions - Incorporating Sources - Writing/Research check-in - Exercise 7: Abstracts handed out - Counterarguments 	<p>Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biocca, Frank, <i>Communication in the Age of Virtual Reality</i> (selections) <p>Student Selected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TBD <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ohl, S. “Tele-Immersion concepts” (<i>IEEE Trans. Visual. Comp. Graph.</i>, 2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final version of research paper due at midnight, Sunday, (option to resubmit for 1/3 letter improvement by the last day of class)

Unit 4: Academic Conferences and Class Journal Project

In this unit, you will transition first to a new genre, and then to a new audience, highlighting how new contexts call for different kinds of argument, research, and prose style. You will first convert your research paper into either a conference presentation or poster. We will then have our own mini-conference modeled on the Society for Philosophy and Technology conference on Technology and Society (<https://www.spt.org/cfa-technology-and-society-leuven-september-2019/>). You will then transition into preparing a version of your research for a public media version of your research (a TedTalk, a video essay, an op-ed, a magazine article, etc) which will be posted as part of our class journal, *The Online Journal of Technology and Ethics* (found here: techandethics.com)

Week 11: Virtual Reality, Art, and Entertainment			
April 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public Writing Assignment Sheet handed out - Abstracts and Conferences - Metacognitive Work 1 handed out in class 	<p>Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lindley, C.A. "Trans-reality gaming" - Travinor, Grant, <i>The Art of Videogames</i>, 2009 (excerpts) - Benjamin, Walter, <i>The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction</i> (excerpts) <p>Student Selected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procter, Lesley, "I Am/We Are: Exploring the Online Self-Avatar Relationship," (<i>Journal of Communication Inquiry</i>, 2020), (45-49, 59-62) - Haeney, David, "Instrument Studio VR Is A Complete Virtual Music Recording Studio," (Links to an external site.) (<i>Upload</i>, 2020) (read article/watch video) <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Searles, Rebecca "Virtual reality can leave you with an existential hangover" (<i>The Atlantic</i>) - Sibilla, Federica "I am (not) my avatar" (<i>Journal of Psychosocial Research</i>, 2018) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercise 7: Long Abstracts, draft due.
Week 12: Social Implications and the Ethics of VR			
April 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Posters and Presentations - Public writing, genre, and audience - Exercise 8: Who is my audience? Handed out 	<p>Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brey, Philip, "The ethics of representation and action in virtual reality" (<i>Ethics and Information Technology</i>, 1999) - Gooskens, Geert, "The Ethical Status of Virtual Actions" (<i>Ethical Perspectives</i> 2010) - Beanotherlab.org (The Machine to Be Another) <p>Student Selected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TBD <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "The Social Ontology of Virtual Environments" (Brey, Philip, <i>The American Journal of Economics and Sociology</i>, 2003) - Mandary, Michael, "Real 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long Abstract (final) Due

		Virtuality" (<i>Front. In Robotics, 2016</i>)	
Week 13: Class Conference/Journal Exhibition			
April 28	-Class Conference		-Final Presentations and Journal Submissions due

Introduction to Ethics

Course Instructor: Jordan Kokot
Contact Information: jdkokot@bu.edu
Office:
Office Hours:

Course Dates:
Course Location:
Course Time:

Course Description

The study of ethics is the study of one of the most fundamental questions of human experience: what *should* I do? This question confronts us almost continuously, not just in large decisions, political conversations, or in attempts to develop standards of actions, but literally at every moment of every day. Should I get an egg with my wrap? Should I study for philosophy or for math? Should I date this person or that person? Should I honor my promises or should I protect my own interests? These ‘shoulds’ signal the *normativity* of human life, or the sense that some choices, outcomes, dispositions, behaviors, etc., are somehow *better* or more worthy than others. However, the structure of these “shoulds” is far from obvious, and it immediately generates its own series of questions: what could motivate a “should,” and where does their strength come from? Are there different kinds of “shoulds?” Do “shoulds” apply differently to different people? If so, why? Can we find a way to theorize about “shoulds” in general, are they hopelessly varied and situational? Are “shoulds” merely a social construct, and, if so, what would that mean for human life and decisions more generally?

In this class, students will be introduced to the academic study of philosophical ethics, often understood as rigorous attempt to understand and characterize normativity. Students will be asked to engage with a variety of contemporary and historical texts on topics within the field of ethics, stretching from Plato and Aristotle up through modern thinkers like Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Nietzsche, and contemporary writers like Ruth Chang and Michael Sandel. We will discuss important historical movements in the field of ethics, engage with contemporary debates concerning politics, race, technology, and advancing medical science, and we will investigate some of the most enduring questions in human experience.

Course Objectives

You will develop your abilities to:

- craft responsible, considered, and well-structured arguments
- express yourself orally and converse thoughtfully about complex ideas
- gain some competency in the general landscape of academic ethics, broadly construed
- grow as a thinker, learner, reader, and communicator

Instructional Format, Course Pedagogy, and Approach to Learning

This course will employ a mixed format. Though there will be regular interactive lectures, a large portion of the class will be seminar style discussion and activity based. I firmly believe that learning about philosophy involves both a change in the way we think and a strong dialectical component. We learn from each other, not in isolation.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is offered in the “learn from anywhere” format, meaning that while you are strongly encouraged to attend the class in person on campus, you will have the opportunity to attend by zoom. This course is primarily designed to be synchronous. Please contact me directly if

synchronous attendance will be an issue for you this semester. As an accelerated course, there will be a good bit of difficult reading. It is your responsibility to keep up with the weekly readings and come prepared to discuss your findings.

Books and Other Course Materials

All course materials will be available through the class Perusal site (perusal.com, code KOKOT-MXNVL) or on blackboard. You should refer to the syllabus, which will be updated periodically, for the schedule of readings.

Additional Resources: Finding reliable information about philosophy online can be tricky. I highly recommend the following sites:

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/>

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/>

Courseware

Our class has a Blackboard site that contains the syllabus, assignments, and other course-related materials. You can log in to our Blackboard page at: <http://learn.bu.edu/> All additional coursework will be posted on blackboard.

Assignments and Grading Criteria

In order to make the most out of PH 150 for you and your classmates, you will do a good deal of reading and writing, and you will engage in a variety of class activities. Specific course requirements are to:

- Regularly attend and participate in classroom discussions
- Complete regular reading check-ins and discussion prompts (on an ad-hoc basis)
- Complete four (out of five) weekly reflection assignments
- Complete two exams—a midterm and a final

Grading and Evaluation

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Attendance and Participation	10%
Reading Check-ins/Discussion Questions	20%
Weekly Reflection Assignment	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%

General Outline

This course is designed to introduce students to several of the fundamental questions, arguments, and positions in the academic field of philosophical ethics. It is also designed to give students the opportunity and resources to reflect more deeply on their own position as ethical agents. To facilitate these goals, the semester is divided into three parts, roughly equating to three different “levels” of inquiry. The first takes

on the broadest view possible in that it introduces philosophy, the study of ethics, and standards of good argumentation, all while challenging students to engage with one of the most fundamental questions of the human experience: what, if anything, constitutes a (the?) good life. During this unit we will also begin to engage with several “metaethical” questions, or question about whether or not or in what way ethics is possible in the first place.

The second unit will narrow our scope somewhat. Instead of asking what makes for a good life, in general, we will begin to ask what makes for a good action or decision. In this unit we will discuss two of the most influential ethical theories in modern history: utilitarianism and deontology.

The third unit will directly address several of the most pressing practical questions of contemporary life, many of which have been raised by the explosion of modern technology and the political and social situation of our modern world. We will discuss contemporary political issues, questions about artificial intelligence and medical technology (especially genetic manipulation), and wrestle with issues of race and gender.

Along the way, we will work to develop standards of good argumentation and dialogue, practice careful reading, and try our hands at philosophical writing. Our goal is to develop a small community of curious and supportive minds that are able to help each other grow as students, writers, and thinkers. In leaving this class, you should feel better prepared to engage with your peers about some of the most difficult questions, not just of our time, but of all times.

This class is only an introduction. Every subject we touch on in this course is the subject of its own dedicated field of inquiry. It is my hope that this class will be a doorway for further and deeper thinking for all of you.

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Course Schedule

This schedule is intended as a blueprint and is subject to change based on the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and will be posted on Blackboard.

Date	Learning goals	Readings due	Assignments due
<p>Unit 1: The Good Life</p> <p>The first takes on the broadest view possible. In that it introduces philosophy, the study of ethics, and standards of good argumentation, all while challenging students to engage with one of the most fundamental questions of the human experience: what, if anything, constitutes a (the?) good life. During this unit we will also begin to engage with several “metaethical” questions, or question about whether or not or in what way ethics is possible in the first place.</p>			
<p>Week 1: Introduction/Meta Ethics/Problems of Meaning</p>			
Tues, 7/6	- Introduce course & define course goals	<p>Required -This Syllabus</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is "Ethics? What is "Philosophy" - Cultural Relativism/Question in Metaethics - Courseware (Blackboard, Perusall, & Google Drive) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fassio, "How to Read Philosophy" - Midgley, "Trying out One's Sword" (in class) Recommended: - Plato, <i>The Euthyphro</i> 	
Thurs, 7/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Problem of Meaning - Challenges: The Absurd/Nihilism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Required: - Nagel, "The Absurd" - Schopenhauer, "On the Vanity of Existence" Recommended: Schopenhauer, "On the Sufferings of the World" 	- Reading Check-In
Fri, 7/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sources of Normativity & Meaning - Divine Command Theory - The Euthyphro Problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Required: - Plato, <i>The Euthyphro</i> Recommended: - 	- Discussion Question
Week 2: The Good Life--Problems and Solutions			
Mon, 7/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aristotle, Virtue, and the Function Argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Required: - Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Books I & II Recommended: - Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Books VI and X 	- Discussion Question
Tues, 7/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nietzsche & the Affirmation of Life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schopenhauer, "On the Sufferings of the World" (pgs 1-2) - Nietzsche, <i>Gay Science</i> (Preface, Sections 1-13, 19, 21, 23, 26, 29, 42-44, 56-58, 76, 98, 107-134, 143-168, 276-290, 341) Recommended: - Nietzsche, <i>Gay Science</i>, all of 	

		books I-III	
Thurs, 7/15	- Ruth Chang, Simone de Beauvoir, and Existential Ethics	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - de Beauvoir, <i>Ethics of Ambiguity</i>, Ch 1 (1-9, 13-20) - Chang, "Hard Choices" (1-3, 10-20) - Chang, "Hard Choices (TedTalk) <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chang, "Hard Choices" (Full Text) - de Beauvoir, <i>Ethics of Ambiguity</i>, Ch 1 (Full Text) 	- Weekly Reflection Assignment (Due Friday)
Week 3 (part 1): Narrative Ethics			
Mon, 7/19	- Narrative Ethics - Death	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Velleman, "Well-Being and Time" <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 	
Unit 2: Doing the "Right Thing"			
<p>One answer to the question from unit one concerning the good life is that a good life is one that is filled with good choices. But what makes a choice a good one? How are we to decide what counts as a good choice? In this unit we will explore two of the most influential answers to that question—one from the utilitarian tradition of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, and one from Immanuel Kant</p>			
Week 3 (Part 2)--Utilitarianism and Consequentialism			
Tues, 7/20	-Hedonism & Utilitarianism	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Epicurus, "Letter to Menoecus" - Bentham, <i>Principles</i>, Ch I & IV 	
Thurs, 7/22	-Utilitarianism, Pt 2	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The Queen vs. Dudley & Stephens</i> - Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sandel, "Utilitarianism" 	
Week 4: Objections to Utilitarianism/Kant and Kantianism			

Mon, 7/26	- Singer - Nozick	Required: - Singer, "The Solution to World Poverty" - Nozick, "The Experience Machine"	
Tues, 7/27	- Kant	Required: - Le Guinn, <i>The Ones who Walk Away from Omelas</i> - Kant, <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Ch 1 Recommended: - Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> , Preface	
Thurs, 7/29	- Kant	Required: - Kant, <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Ch 2	-Midterm
Week 5: Kant and Kantianism			
Mon, 8/2	- Reason and Sentiment	Required: - Korsgaard, read "Skepticism about Practical Reason" Recommended:	
Unit 3: Problems in Practical and Political Ethics			
<p>Though we have discussed real world cases throughout the semester, in this final unit, we will engage with practical ethics even more directly. We will survey a small collection of current and pressing social and political issues, and apply the skills we've gained over the past several weeks to try to find better ways of answering them.</p>			
Week 5 (Part 2): Topics in Political Philosophy			
Tues, 8/3	- Rawls/Justice	Required: - Sandel on Rawls - Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (pgs 1-30) Recommended: - Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> , Ch 1-6 & 11-13	
Thurs, 8/5	- Rawls/Justice	Required: - No new	-

		readings. Re-read Rawls on Justice	
Week 6: Topics in Practical Ethics			
Mon, 8/9	- Colonialism & Race	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gordon, "Living Thought, Living Freedom" (Public Lecture) - Gordon, "Race and Racism" - Fanon on Violence & the Person <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fanon, Concerning Violence - Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (Ch 6) 	
Tues, 8/10	- Feminism, Gender, and Queerness	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - De Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i> (Introduction) - "What is Gender" (Philosophy Tube) - Butler, "Performative Acts" 	
Thurs, 8/12	- Technology & Genetic Engineering	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arthur, <i>The Nature of Technology</i> (Ch. 1) - Sandel, "The Case Against Perfection" 	

Through a Glass Darkly: Art, Existentialism, and Authenticity

Instructor Name: Jordan Kokot

Office Location: Mugar 446

Office Hours: M/F 2-3

Contact Information: jdkokot@bu.edu

Course Dates: Sept 4-Dec 20 (Fall 2019)

Course Location: CAS 223

Course Time: MWF 3:35-4:25

Credits: 4 credits + 1 BU Hub Unit (Writing)

Course Description

The Seminar will help you cultivate skills and habits of mind essential to your academic success and to your future personal, professional, and civic life. Writing is a way not only to express what you have to say but also to discover and evaluate it. You will write a great deal at BU and beyond, and each occasion will present you with a range of questions: Who is my audience, and what kind of writing does the occasion call for? How should I structure my writing to engage, inform, persuade, and perhaps even entertain my audience? How can I judge sources wisely and use them effectively and responsibly? How can I clearly express my ideas? In this class we will review general principles about how to address such questions, and we will put those principles into practice as we read, talk, and write about our topic: *Through a Glass Darkly: Art, Existentialism, and Authenticity*

In this class, we will take a journey the history of Western Existential thought by focusing on one of its driving questions: what does it mean to be *me*? What is authenticity? Is it possible to be an “authentic self,” or are demands for authenticity hopelessly confused? In what ways do the experiences involved in creating and encountering works of art reflect or require authenticity? If art can be “authentic,” what would that authenticity entail?

Over the course of the semester, we will explore these questions and others like them through close engagements with literature, film, and other works of art that are themselves responses to the existential questions of freedom and authenticity. In addition to reading central existential figures, such as Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Simone de Beauvoir, we will analyze films such as Ingmar Bergman’s *Through a Glass Darkly* and Ron Fricke’s *Samsara*; novels like Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha* and Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*; performance art like *The Artist is Present* by Marina Abramovic, and the paintings of Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, and Caravaggio. We will also consider how conversations are able to cross genres, media, and generations and how the practices of writing and producing art are themselves existential projects.

Course Objectives

You will develop your abilities to:

- read a range of genres with understanding, appreciation, and critical judgment;
- express yourself orally and converse thoughtfully about complex ideas;
- craft responsible, considered, and well-structured written arguments;
- produce clear, coherent prose in a range of genres and styles, using different media and modes of expression as appropriate;
- plan, draft, and revise efficiently and effectively, and help your peers do the same by responding productively to their work;
- reflect on your own reading, writing, and editing practices.

Instructional Format, Course Pedagogy, and Approach to Learning

Although they differ in their subject content, all WR seminars share common goals and lead you through a sequence of assignments that emphasize planning, drafting, and revising informed by feedback from your classmates and instructor. You will work on the college-level writing process, from understanding and analyzing sources to organizing your ideas, responding effectively and responsibly to the ideas of others, and revising your prose for clarity and impact. This seminar will also give you opportunities to engage in focused scholarly inquiry and conversation, and to participate in workshops and other activities designed to help you make informed rhetorical choices. Reflecting on your approach to the writing process will help you adapt it for future occasions.

Books and Other Course Materials

Turabian, Kate L., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010. (Required in all Writing Program classes; available for sale at the BU Bookstore.)

Note: Some of these texts are available online. You are welcome to use an online source rather than buying texts but you **MUST** clear the online text with me first. There are multiple translations of these works and some are better than others.

Note: Other course texts will be available on Blackboard. On Blackboard, texts in **black** are required. Texts in **blue** are recommended.

Courseware

Our class has a Blackboard site that contains the syllabus, assignments, and other course-related materials. You can log in to our Blackboard page at: <http://learn.bu.edu/> All additional coursework will be posted on blackboard.

Assignments and Grading Criteria

You will be given a range of assignments in this course, including a self-assessment, various reading and writing exercises, three major assignments, and a final portfolio. Much of this work will not be graded, but that does not mean it is unimportant. Students who prepare diligently for class, participate actively, and take the homework exercises and drafts seriously learn more and produce better work than those who do not. Assignments will be submitted and returned via Google Drive.

Exercises: These are low-stakes assignments and activities that are designed to help you make progress on assignments that will be graded. You will do some of these exercises in class; others will be given as homework. You may or may not receive direct feedback on these exercises. They will not receive explicit grades, but you will receive credit for completing them on time.

All exercises should be submitted to google drive using the following naming convention: "Exercise # (Last Name)"

For instance, if your last name is Martinez, and you are trying to submit Exercise 3, the name of the document should be "Exercise 3 (Martinez)"

If you are submitting an assignment, replace 'Exercise' with 'Assignment,' if you are submitting metacognitive work, replace 'Exercise' with 'Metacognitive,' etc.

Major Assignments: You will complete three major assignments: two academic essays and a piece in a different genre (the "Alternative Genre" assignment). You will write at least one draft of each major assignment. These drafts will receive comments from me and your classmates. They will not receive explicit grades, but you will receive credit for completing them on time. Your course grade will be determined primarily by the quality of the final versions of these assignments. The Alternative Genre Assignment will be a written piece in a genre of your choice, to be planned and discussed with the professor early in the third unit.

Oral Presentation: As the semester advances, you will be asked to speak about your work with the class. You will receive feedback from your instructor and classmates, which you will apply to your alternative genre assignment.

Metacognition: You will have opportunities throughout the semester to reflect on your reading and writing practices. The self-assessment you write at the beginning of the semester will take stock of your writing skills and establish personal goals you wish to pursue over the course of the semester. You will also reflect on your experiences and assess your progress as you complete each major writing assignment, ultimately leading to a final reflective essay in your portfolio.

Portfolio: At the end of the semester, you will submit a portfolio containing your self-assessment, major assignments (drafts and final versions), other supporting artifacts, and an introductory essay. The portfolio provides you with an opportunity to document and reflect on your development as a reader and writer over the course of the semester. Your portfolio will contain work that has already been graded. This work will not be re-graded in the portfolio. Rather, your grade for the portfolio will be based on those things that make the portfolio itself a coherent work: the introduction and additional framing (annotations, captions, etc.), the selection of and reflection on artifacts, and overall organization.

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Three major assignments:	70%
- Academic essay 1	15%
- Alternative genre assignment	25%
- Academic essay 2	30%
Exercises and Handouts	10%
Attendance and Participation	5%
Presentation	5%
Portfolio	10%

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Course Schedule. This schedule is intended as a blueprint and is subject to change based on the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and will be posted on Blackboard.

This unit will focus on characterizing the central existential question of “faith,” how it relates to madness and the loss of god and connects to the looming specter of nihilism. We will begin with a brief reading of the biblical story of the *Akedah* (also called the “Binding of Isaac”) and excerpts of Søren Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*, accompanied by Caravaggio’s interpretation of the scene in his *The Sacrifice of Isaac*. We will then examine excerpts of Dostoyevsky’s *The Brother’s Karamazov* and begin comparing Dostoyevsky’s understanding loss to Nietzsche’s “death of god,” first announced in *Gay Science*. An important subtheme of this unit is how topics and themes develop across genre, generations, and locations. In this unit, you will be asked to compose a short interpretive and analytic paper on a passage of your choosing.

Central Works:

The Akedah (or, *The Binding of Isaac*, Gen. 22: 1-19)

Fear and Trembling (Søren Kierkegaard, 1843)

The Sacrifice of Isaac (Caravaggio, c. 1598-1603)

Through a Glass Darkly (Ingmar Bergman, 1961)

The Madman (Friedrich Nietzsche, 1882/86 excerpted from *Gay Science*)

Notes from the Underground (Fyodor Dostoevsky)

Date	Learning goals	Readings/viewings Due	Assignments Due
Wednesday, 9/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define course goals - Introduce topic and approach - Discussion: what is writing and why do we do it? 	<p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fassio, “How to Read Philosophy” - This syllabus 	
Friday, 9/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review syllabus - Existentialism and the question of God - What is <i>academic</i> writing? What is academic reading? 	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fassio, “How to Read Philosophy” - <i>The Akedah</i> (Gen. 12: 1-9, 15, 22: 1-19) - Turabian 1.1-1.3 (pgs. 12-22). - This syllabus <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Erich Auerbach, <i>Odysseus’ Scar</i> - Gen. 12-25 (all) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercise 1: Getting to Know You/Self-Analysis (due) - Come with questions about the syllabus and the course - Essay 1 assignment sheet will be handed out - Schedule mini conference to discuss paper
Monday, 9/9 (last day to add a WR class)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is an (academic) argument and how does it work? How do we ask and answer questions? - The question of (moral) freedom 	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i>, Preface, Prelude, and “A Panegyric Upon Abraham” (pgs. 1-10) <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Introduction to Fear and Trembling</i> (found in the Penguin Classics edition) 	- Exercise 2: Reading Log
Wednesday, 9/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summarization and Critical Reading - Existential themes in renaissance art (Caravaggio and the <i>Sacrifice of Isaac</i>) - The issue of cross 	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bergman, <i>Through a Glass Darkly</i> (watch film) <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turabian 5.2-5.7, 9 - Bergman Packet - Michael Fried, “Thoughts on 	

	media conversations	Caravaggio” -J. M Bernstein “Remembering Isaac”	
Friday, 9/13	-Planning your paper and crafting your argument -Existential dread	Required: -Turabian 5.1, 6.1-6.6 Recommended: -Turabian 3, 8.1-8.5	-
Monday, 9/16	-	Required: -Nietzsche, <i>The Gay Science</i> (excerpts) § 1, 4, 26, 44, 57, 58, 76, 108, 121, 124-127, 151 -Maïa Stepenberg, <i>Against Nihilism</i> , pgs. 26-34 Recommended: -Maïa Stepenberg, <i>Against Nihilism</i> , Introduction	-Exercise 3: Critical Summary
Wednesday, 9/18		Required: - Dostoevsky, <i>Notes from the Underground</i> (2-10, 18-20, 27-41, 54-56) -Maïa Stepenberg, <i>Against Nihilism</i> , pgs. 34-46	
Friday, 9/20	- Contributing to a conversation - In class Peer review	Required: -None	- Exercise 4: Mini Prospectus - Schedule conference to review paper (optional)

Unit 2: Nihilism, Suffering, and Response: Rejection, Withdraw, and Affirmation

In this unit, we will continue to discuss the “Death of God” and its consequences for human psychology and action by engaging with alternative views of the self/world dynamic, suffering, joy, meaning, and the existential weight of convalescence. After reading two chapters from Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, we will examine the similarities and differences between three responses to nihilism and the problem of suffering: Buddhistic rejection of worldly desire, the withdrawal evident in Herman Hesse’s *Siddhartha*, and Nietzsche’s aesthetic “Affirmation of Life.” We will pick up the concepts Amor Fati (love of fate) and the “free spirit” from Nietzsche’s *Gay Science* and we will discuss more directly the issue of cross-media and cross-cultural conversation. In this unit, you will be asked to take many of the lesson’s you learned in the first paper and apply them to a more open world of questions. You will be asked (with the help of the instructor) to select your own topic and construct your own position in defense of a claim or a set of claims.

Central Works:

The Brothers Karamazov (Fyodor Dostoevsky, 1879-1880)
The Dhammapada (or, *The Sayings of Buddha*)
Siddhartha (Hermann Hesse, 1922)
On the Vanity of Existence (Arthur Schopenhauer, 1850)
Samsara (Ron Fricke, 2012)
The Gay Science (Friedrich Nietzsche, 1882)

Date	Learning goals	Readings/viewings Due	Assignments Due
Monday, 9/23	- Wrap up Unit 1 - Introduce Unit 2	Required: Recommended: - Schopenhauer, <i>On the Sufferings of the World</i> - Schopenhauer, <i>On the Vanity of Existence</i> - Dostoevsky, <i>Rebellion</i>	- Final Draft of first paper due at midnight (submitted electronically) - Metacognitive work/revised papers due 6 days after paper review conference
Wednesday, 9/25	- Background and perspective: Identifying background assumptions and differentiating perspectives - Argumentation part II	Required: - Schopenhauer, <i>On the Vanity of Existence</i> - Dostoevsky, <i>Rebellion</i> Recommended: - Schopenhauer, <i>On the Sufferings of the World</i>	
Friday, 9/27	- Sentence and Argument Flow	Required: - Dostoevsky, <i>The Grand Inquisitor</i> Recommended: - <i>The Dhammapada</i> Preface and Introduction by <i>Bhikku Bodi</i>	- Essay 2 Assignment Sheet posted on BB. We will discuss Monday
Monday, 9/30	- Introduce Portfolios - Paper review discussion	Required: - <i>The Dhammapada</i> , (§1-15, 21-24, 33-41, 33-41, 46, 75, 80-99, 103-105, 109-114, 129-135, 138-141, 145-225)	- Mini exercise: Aphorisms and the Dhammapada
Wednesday, 10/2	- Challenging authority and expanding conversations: finding problems and growth points in arguments - Finding a thesis.	Required: - <i>The Dhammapada</i> , (§235-252, 267-289, 294, 302, 339, 360-362, 421) - Fricke, <i>Samsara</i> (watch film) Recommended: - Fricke, <i>Baraka</i> (film) - Bowen, "The Transient Experience with Art"	- Exercise 5: Samsara Reflection
Friday, 10/4	- Art and Transience (Mandalas and Film)	Required: - Cairns, "The Philosophy and Psychology of the Oriental Mandala" - Liddell, "Transience of Art in Life" Recommended: Turabian ch. 6-8	
Monday, 10/7		Required: - Academic Argumentation Handout (on blackboard) - Hesse, <i>Siddhartha</i> (Ch 1 & 2)	
Wednesday, 10/9 (no class)		Required: - Hesse, <i>Siddhartha</i> (Ch 3-6) Recommended: - Turabian ch. 6-8	
Friday, 10/11 (no class)		Required: - Hesse, <i>Siddhartha</i> (Ch 7-10)	

class)			
Tuesday, 10/15 (Substitute Monday)	- In class thesis workshop	Required: - Hesse, <i>Siddhartha</i> (Ch 11 & 12)	- Exercise 6: topic paragraph and rough draft of thesis due - Exercise 7 (Essay Planning 2) handed out
Wednesday 10/16	- Planning and drafting more complex papers	Required: - Turabian ch. 6-8	
Friday, 10/18	- Wrap up Siddhartha	Required: - None	
Monday, 10/21	- Introductions - Conclusions	Required: Recommended: - Beatrice Han-Pile, "Nietzsche and Amor Fati" - <i>Gay Science</i> "Joke, Cunning, and Revenge," and Book 1 (all)	- Exercise 7: Essay Planning 2 - Schedule optional conference by this date or earlier
Wednesday, 10/23	- Sentence Flow - Amor Fati	Required: Recommended: - Bernard Reginster, "Perspectivism, Criticism, and Freedom of Spirit" - <i>Gay Science</i> Books 2 and 3 (all)	- Exercise 8: Introductions & Conclusions
Friday, 10/25		Required: Recommended: - Bernard Reginster, <i>The Affirmation of Life</i> (Ch 1) - Turabian, ch. 14 <i>Gay Science</i> , Books 3 and 4 (all) and Appendix	- Rough draft due for paper exchange. Exercise 9: Peer Exchange (due Saturday, 10/26 at Midnight)
Monday, 10/28	- Sentence Flow - The Free Spirit	Required: - Nietzsche, <i>GS</i> Preface, 7, 8, 11, 19, 26, 56.	

Unit 3: Art, Criminality, and Authenticity

In this unit, we will more directly discuss the relationship between art, authenticity, and audience. We will begin with a brief exploration of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* and the tension between the criminal "Dionysian" and the more orderly "Apollonian" aspects of experience and art, and then relate our findings to the nature of choices, decision making, and "being" via Ruth Chang, Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Martin Heidegger. We will close by looking at a few specific artists and artists' reflections on what they are doing as *artists*.

Likewise, our project for this unit will engage directly with the issue of writing to a specific audience and with certain genre constraints in mind. Students will have the option of either writing a philosophical "dialogue" between two of the authors or artists we have studied, an existentially oriented art exhibit or film review, or a longer academic essay.

Central Works and Figures:*The Birth of Tragedy* (Friedrich Nietzsche, 1872)*The Ethics of Ambiguity* (Simone de Beauvoir, 1945)*Origin of the Work of Art* (Martin Heidegger, 1935-1960)*Works from Abstract Expressionists* (incl. Robert Motherwell & Mark Rothko)*Marina Abramovich: The Artist is Present* (Matthew Akers)

Date	Learning goals	Readings/viewings Due	Assignments Due
Wednesday, 10/30	- Recap Unit 2/Introduce Unit 3	Required: - Nietzsche, <i>GS</i> , 76, 78, 93, 107, 116, 261, 276, 285, 290, 310, 319, 340, 341 Recommended: - Turabian ch. 15 - Maïa Stepenberg, <i>Against Nihilism</i> , pgs. 147-156	- Second Essay Due. Metacognitive work due 6 days after paper has been returned. - Bring laptops to class
Friday, 11/1	-	Required: - <i>Birth of Tragedy</i> , excerpts (sections 1-5) - Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , excerpts (pgs. 24-26, 36-37)	
Monday, 11/4		- Maïa Stepenberg, <i>Against Nihilism</i> , pgs. 1-24	
Wednesday, 11/6	- Audience and Genre	Required: - Ruth Chang, "How to Make Hard Choices" (TED Talk) Recommended - Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism"	
Friday, 11/8		Required: - Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism" - Ruth Chang, "How to Make Hard Choices" (TED Talk)	Project 3 assignment handed out
Monday, 11/11		Required: - Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"	
Wednesday, 11/13		Required: - Heidegger, on Authenticity (<i>Being and Time</i> , section 53 [pgs 304-311]) - SEP on Heidegger and Authenticity	- Exercise 10: Heidegger on Authenticity
Friday, 11/15		Required: - Heidegger, <i>Origin of the Work of Art</i> (selections on blackboard) Recommended: - Lee Braver, Commentary on <i>Origin of the Work of Art</i> - <i>Origin of the Work of Art</i> (full text)	- Exercise 10: Heidegger on Authenticity

		- David Campbell, "Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Meaning" - William Bossart, "Heidegger's Theory of Art"	
Monday, 11/18		Required: - Marina Abramovich, <i>The Artist is Present</i>	
Wednesday 11/20		Required: - Heidegger, <i>Origin of the Work of Art</i> (selections on blackboard)	
Friday, 11/22	- Portfolio Preparation	Required: - de Beauvoir, <i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , (excerpts, TBD)	- Exercise 11: Statement outlining your final project due - Preliminary Work for Assignment 3 due Schedule meeting by this date
Monday, 11/25		Required: - de Beauvoir, <i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , (excerpts, TBD)	
Wednesday, 11/27— Friday 11/29 (Fall Break)	Fall Break	Recommended: -	
Monday, 12/2	- Presentations/Workshop		- Rough Draft of Project due
Wednesday, 12/4	- Presentations/Workshop		
Friday, 12/6	- Presentations/Workshop		
Monday, 12/9	- Presentations/Workshop		
Wednesday, 12/11 (last day of class)	- Wrapping up and looking ahead	Required: - TBD	- In class writing reflection - Final Project Due Wed. at Midnight Final Portfolio Due Wed. at Midnight

Sample Assignments and Handouts

Below you will find examples of the types of assignments I use to structure my classes. I structure most of my classes around a central research assignment that is then scaffolded by a series of smaller assignments. The purpose of this format is threefold. First, an ongoing project establishes a deep continuity to the semester and gives students the opportunity to develop a specific expertise. Second, these large projects allow for many opportunities for students to interact with each other and support each other's learning and thinking, which helps create a sense of solidarity in my classrooms. Third, these assignments give students a clearer understanding of how academic work is actually done, and allows them to experience, if in a limited way, the complexities, challenges, and joys of an in-depth research project. More available on request.

Future, Futurism, & Technology: Core Assignment Roadmap

In this document you will find a roadmap for the central assignment for this course. The assignment will proceed in four stages and will be executed over the course of the entire semester. I encourage you to refer to this document frequently to help keep track of where we are in the process.

Overview and Purpose

One of the central purposes of this course is to give you the opportunity to conceive and develop an extended research project that is expressed in multiple formats, including a multimedia expression. This project will be developed over the course of the semester. In order to ensure steady progress and to allow me to effectively help you along the way, this project divided into 11 steps over four stages. Note that many of these steps correlate to an exercise. More specific instructions be provided when I hand out those exercises. Note also that any dates on this sheet are tentative.

In this research project, you will become a kind of futurist. You will identify a certain technology or set of technologies and write a paper about this technology or technologies and the roll it or they may play in the coming years and decades. In other words, using the research skills that we will be developing, you will endeavor to devise and then answer important social, political, ethical, and philosophical questions about how that technology will fit into the future of the human species. You may choose to advocate for your technology, condemn it, remain neutral, or take a more nuanced position. After your primary research phase, you will write a long (10-20 page) research paper detailing your findings, which you then convert into an academic presentation designed to be presented at a conference (either as a poster or a multimedia presentation) accompanied by a more public facing component (either an extended abstract to accompany a recording of your presentation or a multimedia essay drawing from your poster).

Phase 1: Initial Research and Exploration

In this phase you will conduct the preliminary research for your project. Think of this phase as an open exploration, a funnel that starts large and then narrows into a specific question and a specific thesis. Note that you will not *finish* your research in this phase, but you build the foundation for the rest of your project. Note that you will also be meeting with our research librarian (JD Kotula) during this stage.

Step 1: Identify and investigate a domain of inquiry

After our initial foray into the various discussions surrounding technology in the first few weeks of class, identify a particular up and coming technology, sector of technology, or technology oriented movement that you find especially interesting, problematic, or important. We will discuss these domains in class on Wednesday, February 12, after which I will update this document with our agreed upon list. This domain will help you delimit your research efforts

Step 2: Develop research question and initial research plan (Exercise 4, Initially due Tuesday, 2/18)

After selecting a domain of inquiry, begin looking for books and articles within that domain using the research tools we've been over in class. Start to skim through these documents and reading abstracts, and develop a list of five or

six different questions that you think would be worth investigating further. As you continue through the research phase of the course, let these questions guide your inquiry.

Step 3: Produce annotated bibliography (Exercise 5, Due Friday, 3/6)

This step is partially concurrent with step 2. As you research, keep a detailed list of every article, book, or other source you stumble across that might be relevant to your project. As we reach the end of the primary research phase, go back through this list and pick out those articles that you think are most important. You will then write an annotated bibliography—essentially listing the sources and their relevant bibliographical information in the format you have selected for this project (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc), and then providing short summaries of the information they contain that is most relevant to your project.

Phase 2: Research Paper

In this phase, you will write a traditional academic research paper. Note that you will likely want to continue your research as you write. Note also that you will be meeting with me to discuss your project at some point during this stage.

Step 4: Develop your central claim (Exercise 6 A, due Wednesday, 3/18)

Look back through your initial research questions, and figure out which one you want to try to answer, given the research that you've done and the research you think you can manage over the course of the rest of the semester. Then, convert that question into a central claim or thesis. Use this thesis to guide the rest of your research and to help you start to plan your paper.

Step 5: Plan your research paper (Exercise 6 B, due Friday, 3/20)

Go through your usual paper planning procedure. This can take the form of an outline, a storyboard, concept mapping, or whatever you usually do to prepare to write your paper. Pay special attention to gaps in your argumentation that will need to be filled by more research. There are several different ways to structure a research paper, some of which we will go over in class, but most research papers are divided into four basic parts: 1) Introduction with an articulation of your central claim and how you plan to defend it, 2) an overview of relevant historical and theoretical background information, 3) a defense of your central claim, 4) a conclusion explaining both why the claim is important and how your research has opened up new avenues of inquiry.

Step 6: Draft your research paper (due Sunday, 3/29 at midnight)

Go through your usual drafting procedure. Note that, depending on your topic, you will likely have to provide a good bit of historical background information on your chosen technology. There will be some class workshopping and/or peer exchange at this stage.

Phase 3: Conference Presentation/Online Multimedia Journal

In this phase, you will convert your research paper into a format amenable to an academic conference—either a poster or a conference presentation, and then provide framing work to present your findings in an online format. Depending on time and interest, there may be an option for extra credit by electing to also provide comments for a classmate's presentation.

Step 7: Decide whether to create a poster or presentation

These slots will be determined by a preference lottery.

Step 8: Write a conference abstract (Exercise 7, draft due Wednesday, 4/3)

Write a short conference abstract as though you are trying to submit your paper to the Society for Philosophy and Technology Conference (Call for Abstracts here: <https://www.spt.org/cfa-technology-and-society-leuven-september-2019/>). Think carefully about your audience.

Step 9: Draft second iteration of the project (academic/conference presentation, Wednesday, 4/13-Monday, 4/17)

Create either a conference poster or short multimedia presentation presenting your research.

Phase 4: Digital Journal

In this phase, you will produce a framing mechanism to help you present your work in an online digital format. If you presented a multimedia presentation, this framing mechanism will take the form of a long (roughly 750 word) abstract. If you created a poster, this will take the form of a longer multimedia essay pitched at a public audience and drawing on your poster. You can see a past example of the class journal at www.techandethics.com

Step 10: Plan and write your final document (initial draft due Wednesday, 4/22, final due Wednesday, 4/29)
Finally, you will produce a version of your research for a public audience.

Weekly Sources Exercise

Each week during the research phase of our class, we will be engaging with two sources on a particular topic within the philosophy of technology. One of those sources will be selected by the instructor, and one will be selected by the students who are conducting research within that particular topic. For instance, for the first week, we will be discussing AI, Computing, and Robotics. The students who are researching AI, Computing, and Robotics will choose a source, which we will all read/watch/listen to by Friday. The students who selected the source(s) will be responsible for leading the discussion Friday. **Students are required to submit their source to me no later than the Monday class time of the week for which they are responsible.**

Part 1: Select a source

1. I recommend that you start by meeting (in-person) with your group members to discuss the present state of your research and the sort of source (topic/genre) you would like to engage with.
2. You may be able to decide on a source in your first meeting, but, if not, do a bit of research and collect a handful of sources that you would like to read. I would suggest sending these to the other people in your group, and then have another discussion about which source would be the most helpful.
3. Try to keep your selection reasonably short. We will only be able to discuss the source for one, or, at most one and a half class periods. Try to keep your selection under 15 pages. If you find a valuable source that is too long, you may choose selections from the source amounting to around 15 pages. Obviously, video and audio sources don't have page counts, but, again, try to keep the length reasonable.
4. I will leave it to you to decide in your group which source(s) to share with the class, but please try to be as fair as possible. Ideally, you will select an article that everyone in the group wants to read.

Part 2: Prepare for Class

5. Your group will be responsible for leading the discussion on the Friday of your week. I recommend that you do your usual note taking/free writing/close reading that you always do when engaging with a source that you plan to use for your research, and then carefully reviewing your notes before class. Feel free to do more prep if you have the time and inclination.
6. I also recommend that you meet as a group once more before the meeting to discuss how you would like the conversation in class to go, who is responsible for what aspects of the source, etc.

Part 3: In Class

7. Your group is in charge of leading the discussion, which, on most days, will take up the entire class period.
8. I recommend that you come prepared with:
 - a. relevant background information (who wrote created the source, what were their motivations, how does the source fit within existing conversations, what sort of technical knowledge do we need to understand the source, etc.)
 - b. some thoughts about why you selected the source (how it fits into your current research projects)

- c. a general outline of the content of the source, including
 - i. key concepts
 - ii. a good sense of the argument (if there is one) and how it works
 - iii. a good sense of what you take to be the author's "point"
 - iv. some sense of the strong and weak points of the source. Remember, there are essentially two angles from which you can challenge a source, from within (look for internal inconsistencies) and from outside (i.e., ways the source conflicts with something else which we take to be true)
- d. **most importantly, a set of questions to discuss with the class!** These should be both genuine questions (i.e., things you are still trying to answer) and leading questions (questions that you might know how to answer but will help the class to think through the article more carefully)

Part 4: Reflection

- 9. After class, write a brief (1/2-1 page) reflection on how the conversation went. What went especially well? What went less well? What have you learned? What still needs clarification? How do you plan on moving forward in your research? **Submit this to me the Monday after the class period you and your group leads.**

Exercise 3: Beginning Research

In this exercise you will begin to practice forming questions and researching potential answers. **Please upload a copy of this exercise to your google drive by the beginning of class on Wednesday, February 12th. We will be going over this exercise in class that day, so please bring it with you.**

Part 1: Find a claim

1. Find a claim made in one of our readings. This should be a relatively simple claim (i.e., *not* the author's thesis) but one which you can't fully evaluate given the information in the text itself. For instance, one of Kurzweil's claims about Moore's law, or one of Schummer's claims about how scholars in the past interpreted Aristotle would be good places to start. Another option would be one of Staley's claims about how a given culture understood time. There are many such claims in the texts we've covered. Pick one you find interesting and/or troubling. Write out this claim, including page reference information.
2. Briefly describe why the author is making this claim. Where does it fit in their argument? Why is it important to them?
3. What do you think of the claim? Are you skeptical or supportive? Does it seem valid? (see here for a good way to understand validity: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/val-snd/>). Why or why not? Is it problematic? If so, in what way?
4. How would you go about evaluating the claim? What sort of information would you need to tell whether or not it is true or false (note that some claims can also be partly true)?

Part 2: Establish a Research Plan

5. What resources could you use to gather information to evaluate this claim? Where should you look for articles, books, data sets, etc., that would help you to determine the claims validity?
6. Gather 3-5 such information sources (journal articles, books, webpages, encyclopedia entries, etc). You don't have to read them all the way through, but please read the abstract (if there is one) and the first paragraph or so. Write down the relevant bibliographical information (minimally, title, author, source [journal, book, etc.], publisher, and date published). This is a good time to practice using a particular bibliographical style (more info here: <https://pitt.libguides.com/citationhelp> Note, you do not need to use a particular style for this assignment, but I strongly encourage you to do so. It is good to get in the practice of properly citing sources early!). Also, please indicate how you found the source.
7. Does this source seem useful for evaluating the claim you've selected? Why or why not? Can you trust this source? Why or why not?

Part 3: Reflection

8. How did this preliminary research change the way you thought about the claim?