

PHIL 4303 : Ethics and Technology: Spring '26

Dr. Abigail Bruxvoort

A study of ethical theory as it relates to issues in the development and use of technology.

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You must contact me through Canvas inbox or your school email. I cannot respond to students contacting me from non-school emails for privacy reasons, since I cannot verify that outside emails belong to my students.

Class Location: Online

Textbook: Your textbook is *This is Technology Ethics*, by Sven Nyholm, published by Wiley Blackwell. You will need to purchase a copy. A used copy is totally fine. You are permitted to use an e-book, however, this will create additional work for you when it comes to my citation requirements (see below under Academic Honesty).

Grade Breakdown

Practice Assignments (quizzes & workshops) 10%

Discussions/ Reflections 25%

Essays (2 major) 25%

Exams (3 major written exams) 40%

Final Grades will be assigned as:.

- 90 – 100 = A
- 80 – 89 = B
- 70 – 79 = C
- 60 – 69 = D
- Below 60 = F

A grade of I (Incomplete) may be given, with the Dean's approval, in emergency situations only and must be completed within 30 days of the next regular term. Otherwise, the grade reverts to an F. I generally do not approve requests for incompletes unless the student has completed all but a few assignments and faces some kind of emergency at the end of the course. Students with substantial missing and/or late work will not be approved for an incomplete.

Technology Requirements

Students must have reliable wifi access or a cell signal strong enough to serve in the place of wifi. Students will need to use a word processing program for all written assignments and upload their written assignments to Canvas. Students must also have a student email account, and access to a cell phone or computer with a webcam and microphone (for Zoom meetings).

Schedule

The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule, but appropriate advance warning will be given for any changes, and all changes will be noted in Canvas and students will be sent a message summarizing any changes via Canvas inbox. In addition to the listed assigned readings, the lecture notes corresponding to the topics below are always required reading.

Topic	Reading	Assignments Due
Module 1		
	Canvas Pages	Week 1 Wednesday • Start Here Quiz • Course Contract Quiz
Module 2		
What is technology? What is its purpose?	Wendell Berry Ch 1	Week 1 Friday • Reading Quiz • Discussion
Module 3		
Ethics: Utilitarianism	Ch 2	Week 2 Wednesday • Reading Quiz
Module 4		

Ethics: Kantian Moral Philosophy	Ch 2	Week 2 Friday • Reading Quiz • Discussion
Module 5		
Ethics: Aristotle; Care Ethics	Ch 2	Week 3 Wednesday • Reading Quiz
Module 6		
Self Driving Cars: A Case Study	Ch 3	Week 3 Friday • Exam 1
Module 7		
Artificial Intelligence, Value Alignment & the Control Problem	Ch 4	Week 4 Wednesday • Reading Quiz
Module 8		
Behavior Change Technologies: Autonomy & Control	Ch 5	Week 4 Friday • Reading Quiz • Essay 1
Module 9		
Responsibility & Technology	Ch 6	Week 5 Wednesday • Reading Quiz
Module 10		

AI & Warfare	“Inside the messy ethics of making war with machines”	Week 5 Friday • Reading Quiz • Discussion
Module 11		
AI Relationships	“Love in Time of Replika”	Week 6 Wednesday • Reading Quiz • Exam 2
Module 12		
Merging with the Machine	Ch 10	Week 6 Friday • Reading Quiz • Discussion • <i>Final date for late work and revisions!</i>
Module 13		
Ethics of Design	Sara Hendren (Sketch Model) Canvas Pages	Week 7 Wednesday • Reading Quiz • Final Essay
Module 14		
Final Exam		Week 7 Friday • Final Exam

Course Policies

Late Work

Every student has 1 late work token, which you use to submit an assignment late (up to 1 week) for no penalty. **You can use your late work token for any reason.** Please refer to the course schedule for the final date that I will accept late work tokens (normally within 1 week of the end of the semester).

- The late work token is no questions asked and can be used for any reason
- To use your late work token, just leave a comment on the late assignment or send me a message that I should apply your token to a particular late assignment
- You must submit the late assignment within 1 week of the original deadline
- If you have already used your late work token, I will waive the late penalty only in cases of documented emergency. So e.g. you can use a late work token in week 1 "just because" (I really don't recommend this, however!) and then if you are hospitalized in week 3, that would count as a documented emergency and you could receive an excused extension.
- Please note that college-sponsored activities are not considered a reason for an excused extension. If you will be busy with a school related event or trip, I expect you to either a) work ahead and submit your work early or b) you could choose to use your late work token.
- Your late work token cannot be used on the final exam

For all other assignments, non-excused late work will automatically receive a 5% deduction for each hour the assignment is late, with the max late deduction being 60%. This means that if your assignment is more than 12 hours late, the highest possible grade available to you is a 40%. For example, if you have used your late work token and you submit a quiz that is due at 11:59 pm at 3:20 am, your quiz would receive a 20% deduction.

Outside of the one late work token, I do offer extensions on a case-by-case basis, most often for illness although there are other valid reasons for an extension or excused late work. However, in order to submit excused late work (penalty waived, no late work token required) and/or to get an extension, you must submit appropriate documentation within a reasonable timeframe (generally, submit documentation as soon as possible, although I realize that for emergencies you will be unable to submit documentation while in the midst of an emergency!).

Revision Token

In addition to the late work token, every student has 1 revision token, which you can use to revise and resubmit an assignment that was turned in on time but on which you received a poor grade.

- You cannot use your revision token on an assignment that fails for academic dishonesty
- Revisions must be submitted within 1 week of me grading your assignment
- If you wish to revise an exam, please contact me for instructions

Your revision token can only be used on assignments you have made a good-faith effort to complete according to the instructions. I reserve the right to refuse to allow the use of a revision token if I judge you are trying to game the system.

Important: no late work or revisions will be accepted after the deadline of the final essay unless you have a documented emergency.

Submitting Assignments

Online students will submit all assignments online via Canvas.

For assignments that require you to upload a file, you must upload a DOC, DOCX, or PDF file. (In some cases JPEG images may also be permitted.) Do not submit a Google doc. It is a good idea to work in Google Docs, since the Canvas text box doesn't automatically save and you risk losing your work if the browser crashes, but you will need to download your work in Google Docs as a doc or pdf and then upload it to Canvas.

Important: if you submit a corrupted file that I cannot read, or submit the wrong file, I will treat your assignment as late.

You are responsible for double-checking to be sure that your assignment has been uploaded and is in a form that I can view, and that you selected the correct file. I recommend that you ALWAYS double-check your submissions to be sure they have been uploaded correctly. It is also a wise idea to take a screenshot of your completed assignment with a time stamp (or a screenshot of your Canvas submission) so that in the rare case of a glitch you have proof that your assignment was fully completed on time. If you want me to check and confirm that your file is uploaded, please send me an email and I am happy to confirm (although I do need plenty of advance warning and am not available for confirmation at say 11:57 pm).

Even if you have technical problems, you are still responsible for submitting assignments by the due date. If you are ever unable to get Canvas to accept your assignment, please email me a copy of your finished assignment prior to the due date and I will accept that as proof of it being completed on time.

Essays Drafts

Students often want me to look at a draft of their essay and give them feedback. Because this is very time-consuming for me, my policy is to only answer specific questions about drafts. I will not read a draft in full and provide general feedback of the sort I provide on your essays, but I can answer specific questions you have about your draft (e.g. "Are the citations correct?" "Do I summarize the philosophy accurately?" etc.)

Academic Honesty

I take academic honesty very seriously. I expect each student to do work that is their own in the fullest sense. Your work should represent your effort and understanding. If you submit academically dishonest work, you will receive a 0 on the work in question. Keep in mind that work that fails for academic dishonesty is not eligible for the revision token and cannot be revised and resubmitted.

What counts as academic dishonesty? The following list is not exhaustive, but any of the

following will result in you receiving a 0:

- Word-for-word plagiarism: a source is copied word-for-word but does not properly use quotation marks and/or lacks correct citation.
- Paraphrased plagiarism: a source is used but selected words and phrases are changed to make the writing appear original. If you draw on another source by paraphrasing it, the source **must** be correctly cited.
- Use of AI (chatbots, text spinners) to generate all or part of an assignment. See below.
- Falsified citation: citing sources or parts of sources that do not exist (including quotations and citations that do not exist). You are responsible for making sure that any quotations are in “quotation marks” and furthermore are correctly and accurately quoted as well as cited. Please double check that all quotations are in quotations marks, that the content of your quotations is accurate, and that you are accurately citing quotes, in particular making sure to have the correct page # (when applicable). You may receive an outright 0 on an assignment if you fail to correctly quote and cite.
 - On this note, make sure you are familiar with my citation requirements (see below). If you are citing a source that is not available to me, you are required to provide proof (photo or PDF) or the portion of the source that you have used.
- Unauthorized collaboration with another person. If you have questions about what kind of collaboration might be permitted (whether with friends, family members, or other students), please ask your instructor well in advance of the assignment deadline.
- Recycling your own essays. If you are repeating a class, you must confirm with your instructor **in advance** of the essay assignment whether you are permitted to resubmit essays from previous attempts at the class.

AI Tools

The following are considered **acceptable** ways to use AI tools for this class:

- Use of services like Grammarly to help identify and correct grammar & spelling errors in your essay
- Use of chatbots to identify sources you could possibly use in e.g. an essay – but then you must go review the sources for yourself
- Use of chatbots like a tutor to help explain concepts that you are having difficulty understanding
- Use of chatbots in the very early brainstorming stage for an essay, to help you formulate your ideas or work out a structure

The following are considered **unacceptable** ways to use AI tools in this class, and may result in a failing grade:

- Use of chatbots to write an essay, whether a full essay or a section of an essay. This also includes using chatbots to generate a full or partial draft of an essay and then tinkering with the initial draft to add sources, tweak wording, etc.
- Using chatbots to answer an essay prompt (or other question) and then mimicking/following that wording -- you must do your own writing and thinking and should please strive to write in your own voice
- Use of chatbots to avoid reading or engaging with sources for yourself
- Asking chatbots to fully rewrite your own essay (grammar/spell checks are fine; minor suggestions about how to reword a few sentences are fine; comprehensive rewrites of sections or the full essay are not acceptable)
- Use of chatbots to generate any other assessments in full or part, e.g. exam answers, reflection exercises or journals

One of the great joys of studying philosophy is that philosophy gives us the chance to think for ourselves and work out our own ideas. This is an immense privilege and is practically beneficial in terms of the critical thinking skills it develops, but it is also difficult. If you export the difficulty of thinking and writing for yourself to a chatbot, you make a sham of my own efforts as a teacher (I don't want to give feedback to AI, I want to give feedback to you, a human being) as well as cheating yourself of the opportunity to learn and grow.

If you choose to use an AI tool to perform one of the tasks outlined on the “acceptable list above” - including, but not limited to tools like Grammarly, Quillbot, ChatbotGPT - you must retain a transcript of your use and provide it if requested by your teacher.

Provisional Fails & Appeals:

If I suspect a student has violated my academic honesty policy but do not have clear-cut proof (most often this occurs when I have reason to think a student is inappropriately using AI), the student will receive a provisional grade of 0. If the student wishes to appeal this provisional grade, they must complete an oral exam over Zoom within a reasonable timeframe specified by the professor (normally within a few business days). Students will be notified via Canvas submission comment and/or Canvas inbox about the provisional failing grade and the option to appeal. If the student fails to speak with the professor within a few days and/or fails to demonstrate competence with the material via oral exam, the assignment will be considered academically dishonest and a failing grade will become permanent. On the other hand, if the student demonstrates competence with the assignment and material during the oral exam, the professor will regrade the assignment as normal and there will be no ongoing penalty. If the student fails to check their Canvas submission comments and/or inbox and misses the notification, the grade will remain failing unless there was an excused reason (e.g. hospitalization). Students are responsible for checking their grade in Canvas and all Canvas communications regularly.

Citation Requirements

In order to allow me to double-check the accuracy of quotations and citations, the following is required for all essays and exams for this course.

FAILING TO MEET THESE REQUIREMENTS MAY LEAD YOU TO GET A 0 ON YOUR ASSIGNMENT. Please take these instructions seriously and follow them carefully.

For each source cited or used, you must upload along with your essay:

- a photo of the passage from which you quoted
- a photo of the passage(s)/page(s) you used (but didn't directly quote from)
- Or, you can simply upload a PDF of the entire source

You can provide evidence by uploading multiple files when submitting your essay, OR, you can attach photos / PDFs to your essay via submission comment. Evidence of your sources is due prior to the deadline of the essay.

EXCEPTIONS TO THIS RULE:

- If your source is posted publicly online and is accessible to me via a URL, all you need to do is to include the URL as part of your works cited entry -- nothing else is required
- If you use a **hard copy** of the textbook (*This is Technology Ethics*), you do **not** need to provide photos/PDF
 - If you use an e-textbook, then photos or PDF are required per above for any quotes/other use of the textbook
- If you are citing my lecture notes, you do **not** need to provide a photo or PDF
- If you are citing a reading assigned for this class other than the textbook, you do **not** need to provide a photo or a PDF

FOR EXAMS:

I require students to provide a quote + citation in support of each short answer question on the exam. The only citations allowed for essays are the lecture notes and textbook.

- Per above, if you are citing the lecture notes, no additional proof is needed -- citing the title of the lecture notes is all that's required.
- If citing the textbook on an exam, a page number is required for citation. If you are using a hard copy, no additional proof is needed.
- If you use an e-textbook, then photos or PDF are required for the quotes cited in your exam. You can upload photos as proof in a submission comment on the exam (preferred), attach them to your exam answer, or email them directly to me.

Disability Services & Accommodations:

This course is designed to be welcoming to, accessible to, and usable by everyone, including participants who have a variety of learning styles, have disabilities, or are new to online learning. Be sure to let me know immediately if you encounter a required element or resource in the course that is not accessible to you. Also, please let me know if you notice any changes I can make to the course so that it is more welcoming to, accessible to, or usable by participants who take this course in the future. If you have a disability that qualifies under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and requires accommodations, you should contact the ADA Student Coordinator for information on appropriate policies and procedures. Disabilities covered by ADA may include learning, psychiatric, or physical disabilities or chronic health disorders.

Privacy:

Course materials should not be shared with persons not enrolled in the class. Do not share lectures, assignments, or your own course work from this class with any person outside of the class, including posting it to the internet, without getting explicit permission from me in advance.