

CT 1053 – Ethics & Technology

Spring Semester 2020, AC02 TR 002, Mondays and Wednesdays 10:10 AM to 11:40 AM

Professor: Danny Weltman | danny.weltman@ashoka.edu.in | Office Hours: Tuesdays 10-12 in AC02 320

About This Course: Topic and Goals

In this course, we will learn about philosophical issues involving the intersection of ethics and technology, and we will also learn about how to approach writing tasks, especially expository and analytic writing tasks.

Below are the **goals** for this course. The course is designed to help you accomplish the following:

- Learn about some topics in ethics and technology and hear what people have to say about them
- Improve your skills at accurately and concisely summarizing complicated ideas
- Improve your skills at articulating your viewpoint about complicated ideas
- Learn how to reflect on your writing goals and your writing process with an eye towards improvement

Course Content

Aside from the readings for the first three weeks, the course topics will be chosen via vote. All readings are available on the course web site at <https://canvas.instructure.com/courses/1511980>. **Please bring the readings to class each day**, either printed out or in *easily accessible* electronic form.

Assignments and Grading

There are four kinds of assignments in this class: **weekly reading quizzes**, **writing assignments**, **writing assignment revisions**, and a **writing meta-cognition assignment**. Late quizzes will not be accepted. Late writing assignments will lose 1 point for each day late, except in case of emergency. (Computer issues are not an emergency.)

Weekly Reading Quizzes (10% of your grade) are to help you focus on the important parts of the reading and to get instant feedback on whether you have understood the reading. Quizzes are due 11:59 PM Sunday night. There is 1 quiz per week for a total of 13. Your lowest 3 quiz scores will be ignored.

Weekly Writing Assignments (40% of your grade) are the main way you will practice writing. There are 8 due. Your lowest 3 writing assignment scores will be ignored.

Writing Assignment Revisions (35% of your grade) are for you to get practice incorporating feedback and revising your writing. There are 5 due.

The **Writing Meta-Cognition Assignment** (5% of your grade) is an opportunity to reflect on your writing process and evaluate what works, why it works, what doesn't work, and why it doesn't work.

Class Participation (10% of your grade) is required. This includes attendance, listening respectfully to me and to your fellow students, and offering thoughtful questions and contributions to the discussion. Using mobile phones or computers for non-academic purposes, browsing the Internet, coming in late, not showing up, or otherwise ignoring people is not respectful and will reduce your participation grade.

Grade Breakdown:

- 10% - Weekly Reading Quizzes (13, lowest 3 ignored)
- 40% - Writing Assignments (8, lowest 3 ignored)
- 35% - Writing Assignment Revisions (5)
- 5% - Writing Meta-Cognition Assignment
- 10% - Class Participation

Class Grade Rubric:

- 100-97% = A+
- <97-94% = A
- <94-90% = A-
- <90-87% = B+
- <87-84% = B
- <84-80% = B-

- <80-77% = C+
- <77-74% = C
- <74-70% = C-
- <70-67% = D+
- <67-64% = D
- <64-61% = D-
- <61-0% = F

Resources

The resources section of my website (danielweltman.com/resources.html) has resources on reading, writing, and researching philosophy. These resources include a glossary for unfamiliar words and phrases.

Disabilities

If you have disabilities which require some form of accommodation, please contact me ahead of time so that I can make the necessary arrangements.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Any time you use **words, phrases, ideas, or anything else** in your writing that you did not think up on your own, you must **cite** your source the best of your ability. Words and phrases from others must be enclosed in quotation marks to show that you did not write them yourself. Failure to cite a source is **plagiarism** and it's not okay. Plagiarism may result in a zero on the assignment or in other point reductions. You should not need to use (or cite) outside sources for this class, but if you do use them, you must cite them. It is perfectly okay to use points made by your classmates in class or on the discussion boards, *as long as you cite them to the best of your ability*. The one exception is that you do not need to cite me for your writing assignments in this class.

Reading and Assignments Schedule

All reading assignments should be read prior to the class meeting for that reading. Reading quizzes are due each week on Sunday night at 11:59 PM and are about the reading for Monday. Writing assignments are due 11:59 PM Monday night after the week we finish a topic and are about the readings for the topic we have just finished, except for the last one, which is due slightly earlier so that you have time to revise it before the end of the semester.

In the first three weeks of the course we will cover two topics I have already picked: computer use and pet cloning. Then we will look at a third topic, which is the relationship between technology and society, which will help give us a framework for thinking about the rest of the topics in class. In addition to the usual analytic writing assignment option, you will have the option to write a letter to the editor and a personal persuasive correspondence letter.

January 20 – Class introduction and discussing Berry's article

Reading: Wendell Berry, "Why I Am Not Going to Buy a Computer"

Quiz Due the night before (January 19) at 11:59 PM

January 22 – Discussing replies to Berry, letters to the editor, and writing in general

Reading: Letters in reply to Berry, and Berry's response

Writing Assignment Due next Monday, January 27 at 11:59 PM. You can write an analytic assignment or a letter to the editor.

January 27 – Discussing the ethics of pet cloning

Reading: Autumn Fiester, “Creating Fido’s Twin: Can Pet Cloning Be Ethically Justified?”

Quiz Due the night before (January 26) at 11:59 PM

January 29 – The ethics of pet cloning part 2, and philosophical writing

Reading: Jennifer Parks, “Lassie, Come Home! Ethical Concerns about Companion Animal Cloning”

Writing Assignment Due next Monday, February 3 at 11:59 PM. You must write an analytic assignment.

February 3 – The role of technology in society

Reading: Philip Brey, “The Strategic Role of Technology in a Good Society”

Quiz Due the night before (February 2) at 11:59 PM

February 5 – The role of technology in society continued, its role in India, and personal letter writing

Reading: Selections from Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj*, letter from Gandhi to Nehru, and response from Nehru

Writing Assignment Due next Monday, February 10 at 11:59 PM. You can write an analytic assignment or a personal persuasive correspondence letter.

Potential Topics

The remainder of the readings will be chosen via vote. Writing assignments will depend on the topics we choose. Here are the potential topics:

Giving ADHD medicine to children

Rights for artificial intelligences (AI)

Ethical issues in algorithms

Ethical issues in biometric identification schemes

Deaf children, genetic engineering, and cochlear implants

Can technology itself be inherently good or bad?

Fake news and echo chambers

Pills that erase traumatic memories

Human enhancement, including genetic modification

Regulating the Internet

Autonomous weapons/robots that can kill people

Lab-grown meat

Uploading a human mind into a computer

Punishing criminals by altering their behavior with neurointervention

Brain implants that predict our behavior

Self-driving cars

Sexual reorientation technology

The role of personal values in scientific inquiry

Bringing back extinct animals