20th Century Contemporary Philosophy: PHILOSOPHY OF TECHNOLOGY
PHIL-GA 1211
GPH-GU 1215
Fall 2016
Tuesdays, 6-8 pm
5 Washington Place, Room 202

INSTRUCTORS
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COURSE ASSISTANT
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
We will examine a number of issues in the philosophy of information technology. These include issues in many areas of philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, the philosophy of mind, and more) arising from many different technologies (artificial intelligence, cognitive extension and enhancement, the Internet, virtual reality, and more) as well as from computation and information in general.

REQUIREMENTS
Weekly Discussion Papers: Non-PhD students enrolled in the course are required (and PhD students are encouraged) to submit a 2-page (500 words; this is not a hard limit but do not go overboard) discussion paper each week engaging the readings for that week. The papers are due by 5 pm the Monday before each seminar and should be submitted to the instructors and the course assistant (or just to the instructors, for PhD students) via email.

The purpose of these papers is in part to help students hone their ability to analyze an argument and to present their own arguments for and against the argument. These papers should therefore be critical and should not just summarize the readings. Do not try to cover all the readings in these weekly

discussion papers as you won't have the space. Instead, select one of the articles AND focus on a point or two that the author has made and try to raise some issues that you think are interesting.

These discussion papers should follow the following format:
- First 250 words – summary of the position/argument you want to discuss
- Second 250 words – your own, original argument in response to the position/argument you've previously presented

Additional notes:
- Students have two "free-passes" throughout the semester. That is, on two occasions at their choosing, students can opt not to turn in a discussion paper.
- No weekly discussion papers are expected for the last two weeks of the semester. The purpose of this policy is to give the students more time to work on their Term Paper.

Term Paper: Students will be required to submit a paper of roughly 20 pages (5000 words; again, this is not a hard limit but do not go overboard) in length at the end of the semester, due at 5pm Sunday December 18. Students are strongly encouraged to submit a draft paper by November 18 so that the instructors can give feedback.

ASSESSMENT
Grading of the Weekly Discussion Papers and the Term Paper will be based in part on the following: a) grasp of key issues; b) knowledge of the literature; c) putting forward own ideas; d) quality of arguments for own position; e) adequate consideration of opposing views; f) the structure of the paper. For a good guide on how to write these papers, see http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html

The overall grade will be derived from the following:
Weekly Discussion Papers (where applicable) 20%
Seminar Participation 10%
Term paper 70% (or 90%)

READINGS
Readings will be posted on the NYU Classes. You should also be able to find most of the articles online.

TOPICS AND READINGS
The following topics and readings are tentative and could be subject to change.

* = required readings

1. Sep 6: Information technology and artificial intelligence [DC]

2. Sep 13: Artificial minds and the singularity [DC]
Turing, "Computing machinery and intelligence"
Searle, "Minds, brains, and programs"
*Chalmers, "The singularity: a philosophical analysis"
Vinge, "The coming technological singularity"
Schneider, "Future minds: Transhumanism, cognitive enhancement, and the future of persons"
Bostrom, *Superintelligence*

3. Sep 20: AI safety and machine ethics [ML]
Asimov, I, Robot
Allen, Smith, Wallach, "Artificial morality"
Gips, "Towards the ethical robot"
Lin, "Here's a terrible idea: Robot cars with adjustable car settings"
Price and Tallinn, "artificial intelligence—can we keep it in the box?"
*Bostrom and Yudkowsky, Ethics of artificial intelligence

4. Sep 27: Moral status of artificial minds [ML]
Sullins, "When is a robot a moral agent?"
Floridi and Sanders, "On the morality of artificial agents"
Asaro, "How just could a robot be?"
*Schwitzgebel and Garza, "A defense of the right of artificial intelligences"
*Liao, "The basis of human moral status"

5. Oct 4: Mind Uploading [DC]
*Chalmers, Mind uploading: A philosophical analysis
Hanson, *The Age of Em*
Dennett, Where am I?
*Sandberg/Bostrom, "Feasibility of whole brain emulation"

6. Oct 11: Cognitive enhancements [ML]
*Bostrom and Sandberg, "Cognitive Enhancement: Methods, Ethics, Regulatory Challenges"
*Karim Jebari, "Brain Machine Interface and Human Enhancement – an Ethical Review"
*Liao, "Selecting Children: The Ethics of Reproductive Genetic Engineering"

7. Oct 18: Extended Mind [ML]

*Clark and Chalmers, "The Extended Mind"
Rupert, "Challenges to the Hypothesis of Extended Cognition"
Liao, "Who owns your memory?" (lecture notes)

8.   Oct 25: Simulation argument [DC]
*Bostrom, "Are you living in a computer simulation?"
Weatherson, Are you a Sim?
Something on Boltzmann brains

9.   Nov 1: Simulation and skepticism [DC]
*Chalmers, The matrix as metaphysics
Putnam, Brains in a vat

10. Nov 8: Virtual reality [DC]
*Chalmers, The virtual and the real
Velleman, Virtual selves
Brey, Virtual reality and computer simulation
Mooradian, Virtual reality, ontology, and value

11. Nov 15: Internet epistemology
*Lynch, The Internet of Us
Thagard, Internet epistemology
Vedder, Responsibilities for information on the internet

12. Nov 22: Philosophy of information [ML]
*Floridi, *The Fourth Revolution*

13. Nov 29: Traditional philosophy of technology
TBA

14. Dec 6: Open

STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
NYU values both open inquiry and academic integrity. Students are expected to follow standards of excellence set forth by NYU. Such standards include respect, honesty and responsibility. NYU does not tolerate violations to academic integrity including:
▪   Plagiarism

- Cheating on an exam
- Submitting your own work toward requirements in more than one course without prior approval from the instructor
- Collaborating with other students for work expected to be completed individually
- Giving your work to another student to submit as his/her own
- Purchasing or using papers or work online or from a commercial firm and presenting it as your own work

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the University's policy on academic integrity as they will be expected to adhere to such policies at all times.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, whether intended or not, is not tolerated. Plagiarism involves presenting ideas and/or words without acknowledging the source and includes any of the following acts:
- Using a phrase, sentence, or passage from another writer's work without using quotation marks
- Paraphrasing a passage from another writer's work without attribution
- Presenting facts, ideas, or written text gathered or downloaded from the Internet as your own
- Submitting another student's work with your name on it
- Submitting your own work toward requirements in more than one course without prior approval from the instructor
- Purchasing a paper or "research" from a term paper mill.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes plagiarism. Students are encouraged to discuss specific questions with faculty instructors and to utilize the many resources available at NYU.

Disciplinary Sanctions

When a professor suspects cheating, plagiarism, and/or other forms of academic dishonesty, appropriate disciplinary action is as follows:
- The Professor will meet with the student to discuss, and present evidence for the particular violation, giving the student opportunity to refute or deny the charge(s).
- If the Professor confirms that violation(s), he/she, in consultation with the Program Director may take any of the following actions:
  - Allow the student to redo the assignment
  - Lower the grade for the work in question
  - Assign a grade of F for the work in question
  - Assign a grade of F for the course
  - Recommend dismissal

Once an action(s) is taken, the Professor will inform the Program Director and inform the student in writing, instructing the student to schedule an appointment with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, as a final step. The student has the right to appeal the action taken in accordance with the CGPH Student Complaint Procedure.

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
New York University is committed to providing equal educational opportunity and participation for students with disabilities. It is the University's policy that no qualified student with a disability be excluded from participating in any University program or activity, denied the benefits of any University program or activity, or otherwise subjected to discrimination with regard to any University program or activity. The Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) determines qualified disability status and assists students in obtaining appropriate accommodations and services.

New York University provides reasonable accommodations to students who document their disability with CSD. Reasonable Accommodations are adjustments to policy, practice, and programs that "level the playing field" for students with disabilities and provide equal access to NYU's programs and activities. Accommodation plans and other related services are individualized based on each student's disability-related needs, disability documentation and NYU program requirements and are therefore determined on a case by case basis. Each student who registers with CSD works with a Disability Specialist to develop a reasonable accommodation plan.

Accommodations include, but are not limited to:
● Testing accommodations
● Note-takers
● Use of a computer for exams
● Materials in alternate format
● Provision of sign language interpreters

Reasonable accommodations do not negate requirements for successful completion of a program, course, or service or adherence to acceptable standards of behavior. It is important to note that some accommodations are not appropriate in all courses.

Further information about the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities can be found here: https://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/students-with-disabilities.html
If a student presents documentation from the Moses Center suggesting that unique considerations be applied for that student's optimal learning, please feel free to consult with the Moses Center or Julie Avina, Associate Dean of Student and Alumni Affairs.