Course Title: The Philosophy of Technology and Our Technological Future
Course Code: PHI 112
Instructor: Forrest Hartman

Course Summary:

This course is a comprehensive survey of the many facets of the newly-emerging discipline of the philosophy of technology. We will begin with the history of definition of modern technology as a Western phenomenon that was driven and undergirded by a rationalist philosophy. The scope of the philosophy of technology includes a wide variety of topics, including, among others, ethics, ecology, artificial intelligence, and virtually every aspect of culture. The aim of the course is to provide resources for understanding and evaluating our unavoidable technological future and the ways in which we may successfully and satisfactorily shape it in humane ways.

*Please see course page for full description and additional details.

Tentative Weekly Outline:

(PLEASE NOTE: Readings are selections that have been collected into anthologies and average about 10 pages each.)

I. ESTABLISHING THE WAYS OF TECHNOLOGY: WHERE IT COMES FROM AND HOW IT CAME TO BE WHAT IT IS

Week 1: 15 January
The Formation of the Technological Frame of Mind in early Modern History in the West:

2. Immanuel Kant, “Ideas for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View”
5. “Introduction” to *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology*
6. Lynn White, Jr., “Classical Climates and Technological Advances in the Middle Ages”
Week 2: 22 January
The Definition of Technology and the Aims of the Philosophy of Technology:
1. Mary Tiles and Hans Oberdick, “Conflicting Visions of Technology”
2. Andrew Pickering, “The Mangle of Practice”
5. Maartin Franssen, “Analytic Philosophy of Technology”
7. Hans Jonas, “ Toward a Philosophy of Technology

Week 3: 29 January
Philosophical Perspectives on Technology I:
A Heideggerian Approach: What is the Fundamental “Essence” of Technology? What is our proper relationship to it?
1. Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology”
2. Hubert Dreyfus, “Heidegger on Gaining a Free Relationship to Technology”

Week 4: 5 February
Philosophical Perspectives on Technology II:
Other Approaches and Their Relationship to Heidegger’s Philosophy
1. Albert Borgman, “Focal Things and Practices”
2. Don Ihde, “A Phenomenology of Technics”

Week 5: 12 February
The Ethical Directions of Technology:
2. Peter-Paul Verbeek,”Moralizing Technology: On the Morality of the Technological Artifacts and their Design”

Please contact the Stanford Continuing Studies office with any questions
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650-725-2650
II.

QUESTIONING TECHNOLOGY:
HOW IT IS GAINING IN POWER
AND WHERE IT IS LEADING US

Week 6: 19 February
Is Technology Becoming Autonomous, and How will Its Autonomy Affect Us?
2. Herbert Mercuse, “The New Forms of Control”
3. Robert L. Hellbrenner, “Do Machines Make History?”
4. Kevin Kelly, What Technology Wants (Selections)

Week 7: 26 February
Will Technology Totally Redefine and Reconfigure Our Understanding of What It Means to be Human?
1. Nick Bostrom, “The Transhumanist FAQ”
2. Ray Kurzweil, “Twenty-First Century Bodies”
3. Hubert Dreyfus and Steward Dreyfus, “Why Computers May Never Think Like Us”

Week 8: 4 March
Will Technological Progress Result Finally in the Complete Control and Irretrievable Destruction of the Natural World as We Know It?
1. Carolyn Merchant, “Mining the Earth’s Womb”
5. Gary Comstock, “Ethics and Genetically Modified Food”
6. Synthetic Biology and CRISPR-Cas9: The Ultimate Control of Nature (selected articles)

Week 9: 11 March
How will the Rise of the Robots and Machine Intelligence Challenge Human Being?
1. Daniel C. Dennett, “Consciousness in Human and Robot Minds”
3. Hubert Dreyfus, “Anonymity versus Commitment on the Internet”
4. Nick Bostrom, Superintelligence (selections)
Week 10: 17 March
Will Technology Irrevocably Divide People with Respect to an Unequal Distribution of Power and Wealth, Resulting in Political Upheaval?
   1. Michel Foucault, “Panopticism”
   2. Emmanuel G. Mesthene, “The Social Impact of Technological Change”

EPILOGUE:
CAN WE LEARN TO LIVE SUCCESSFULLY AND TO FLOURISH IN OUR TECHNOLOGICAL FUTURE?

   1. Carl Mitcham, “Three Ways of Being-With Technology”
   3. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Charles Spinoza, “Heidegger and Borgmann on How to Affirm Technology”

Grade Options and Requirements:

- No Grade Requested (NGR)
  - This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.

- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
  - Score will be determined by student attendance and participation. Whoever chooses this option needs to sign in on an attendance sheet each week.

- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
  - Written work, a 5 to 10 page paper, to be arranged with the instructor and to reflect the particular interest of the student, will determine the grade.

*Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.*