Philosophy of Technology

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office hours: Mon 6-7pm • Thurs 11-12pm

Every technology is both a burden and a blessing; not either-or, but this-and-that. - Neil Postman

Course Description
This course provides a framework for a philosophy of technology and raises questions inherent to the role of technology in modern culture. Exploring the development of modernity and technology, we will examine questions such as: What is the meaning of technology? What is the purpose of technology? What is the human relationship to technology? Who controls technology, or does technology control us? Through examination of critical theories of technology, our goal will be to understand the context of and develop parameters for a technological democracy.

Course Requirements
• Read all material required for the course by the due date
• Think critically about and be ready to analyze the course readings
• Attend class and participate in class discussion (Note: 2 or more unexcused absences will lower your final grade)

Required Texts
Selected web readings (MUST be printed out and brought to class on discussion days)

Grading
Your final grade will be calculated with the following percentages:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>35%</td>
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Academic Integrity
Presenting others' work as your own or failing to appropriately credit resources results in plagiarism, which can lead to academic probation. If you ever have any questions about this issue, please talk to me or consult a coach in the Writing Center (7-2007).

Important Note
MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. If you have a disability and need reasonable accommodation for equal access to education and services at MTU, please call the Student Affairs Office at 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department chair, or the Affirmative Action Office (7-3310).
Course Calendar

Readings and Assignments Due

**Week 1**
- 1/10 introduction to course
- 1/12 Winner, Introduction to *Autonomous Technology* (In class film: *Metropolis*)

**Week 2**
- 1/17 web reading: Andrew Feenberg, "What is Philosophy of Technology?" Part I
- 1/19 web reading: Marshall Berman, "Modernity — Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow"; Quiz

**Week 3**
- 1/24 web reading: Feenberg, "Technology as Meaning"
- 1/26 web reading: Winner, "Technologies as Forms of Life"; Quiz

**Week 4**
- 1/31 Slack and Wise, Ch. 1 & 2 — Progress and Convenience
- 2/2 Slack and Wise, Ch. 3 — Determinism; Quiz

**Week 5**
- 2/7 Slack and Wise, Ch. 4 — Control
- 2/9 Winter Carnival — No Class

**Week 6**
- 2/14 Review (In class film: *Matrix*)
- 2/16 Michel Foucault, "Panopticism"; Quiz

**Week 7**
- 2/21 Winner, Ch. 5 — Artifice and Order
- 2/23 MIDTERM

**Week 8**
- 2/28 Winner, Ch. 6 — Technological Politics
- 3/2 web reading: Feenberg, "What is Philosophy of Technology?" Part II

**Spring Break**

**Week 9**
- 3/14 Slack and Wise, Ch. 5 & 6 — Luddism and Appropriate Technology
- 3/16 Slack and Wise, Ch. 7 — The Unabomber

**Week 10**
- 3/21 Slack and Wise, Ch. 8, 9 & 10 — Defining Technology, Causality and Agency; Quiz
- 3/23 No Class

**Week 11**
- 3/28 Winner, Ch. 7 — Complexity and Loss of Agency
- 3/30 Slack and Wise, Ch. 11 — Articulation and Assemblage; Quiz

**Week 12**
- 4/4 Winner, Ch. 8 — Frankenstein's Problem
- 4/6 Wark, *A Hacker Manifesto*; Quiz

**Week 13**
- 4/11 Wark, *A Hacker Manifesto*
- 4/13 Wark, *A Hacker Manifesto*; Quiz

**Week 14**
- 4/18 Slack and Wise, Ch. 15 & 16, Conclusion
- 4/20 Review
- FINAL TBA

Important Notes: Additional readings, films, and assignments will be added as required. I reserve the right to change this syllabus at any time to meet the needs of the class.