

freshman seminar
#ourtech: building the web we want
critical theory of digital technology

PHIL 87 - Fall 2019 // Thursdays, 12:30pm-1:30pm
Philosophy Department Library
Humanities and Social Sciences [H&SS] 8th fl, room 8025

INSTRUCTORS

Philosophy: Clinton Tolley	Library: Erin Glass
Email: ctolley@ucsd.edu	Email: erglass@ucsd.edu
Office: HSS 8018	Office: Geisel 2 nd fl west
Hours: Tues 1230-145pm	Hours: by appointment

EMAIL LIST

phil87-f19-1@mailman.ucsd.edu

ONLINE DISCUSSION SITE

<https://knit.ucsd.edu/ourtechf19/>

COURSE READINGS

All of the course readings will be made available electronically through the course's KNIT site.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar will examine political, technical, and philosophical issues surrounding the use and development of digital technology in our everyday and academic lives. The course will involve both theory and practice: we will critically engage with articles on topics like algorithmic thinking, data surveillance, and software licensing, and then also explore concrete methods from digital humanities (text mining, data visualization, virtual reality, digital publishing, content management systems). The seminar will also use our discussions of digital technology as a bridge to serve as an introduction to philosophy more generally.

REQUIREMENTS

1. *Weekly online discussion posts* (40%)

By Tuesday midnight each week before our meeting, everyone will post a short paragraph or two (150-word min) of thoughts about the week's reading. The post might include:

- a quote of a sentence or two of particular interest to you;
- an explanation in your own words of the main idea or claim being discussed;
- some of your own thoughts about this idea (do you agree, do you disagree, does this make you think of something else related, do you think the author is missing something, etc.)

and your post should include:

- at least one question

2. *Weekly online replies to posts* (20%)

By Wednesday midnight each week before our meeting, everyone will pick someone else's post to write a few sentences of thoughts in reply (50-word min). Everyone should reply to a different person's post.

3. *Attendance and class participation* (40%)

Everyone should attend each of the eight class meetings and participate in the in-class discussion and activities.

* **NOTE:** A minimum of 75% recorded attendance at lectures (6 out of 8) is required in order to receive passing course credit.

NOTES ABOUT REQUIREMENTS

A. No extensions will be granted for any assignment or exam, except in cases of genuine emergency (e.g., earthquake, flood, fire, death in the family, illness certified by a doctor).

B. The UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship must be observed in this course. This includes observance of the following six principles:

As a student,

1. I will not receive or provide unauthorized assistance in examinations.
2. I will not use unauthorized materials during an examination.
3. I will not use materials from sources without proper quotation, acknowledgement or citations.
4. I will not alter examinations, essays, or other assignments for regrading.
5. I will not fabricate data or references.
6. I will not use false excuses to obtain extensions of time for examinations or writing assignments.

C. *Maintaining academic integrity:* Though students are strongly encouraged to discuss the assignments with one another, each student must submit answers to the assignments independently of one another, written in her or his own words. Additionally, students agree that by taking this course, their mid-term examinations and final papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted exams and papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

D. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing (i) will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office, (ii) will receive a failing grade on the assignment at issue, and (iii) will be in jeopardy of failing the entire course, depending on the nature of the breach of academic integrity.

E. If any accommodations are needed due to a disability or for religious reasons, please notify me during the first class period or as soon as possible. Students requesting accommodations for the course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please make arrangements to contact me privately) and also to the OSD Liaison in the Philosophy Department (Nancy Guerrero) in advance so that accommodations may be arranged.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

{to be read prior to date listed; recommended in parentheses}

week	topics	readings: req (rec)
0 Sept 26	introduction to the critical theory of digital technology	- Lynch, <i>The Internet of Us</i> - Mansell, <i>Imagining the Internet</i>
1 Oct 3	ontology and infrastructure: hardware and software; access, resources; proprietary, open, free; software politics	- Dexter, Chopra, <i>Decoding Liberation</i> , 'Introduction' - Schneider, 'Joys of Slow Computing' - (Dexter, Chopra: 'Free software and political economy')
2 Oct 10	epistemology, networks, algorithms, search: traffic; infrastructural bias; collection, archives, the cloud	- Safiya Noble, <i>Algorithms of Oppression</i> , 'A Society, Searching' - ('Introduction') - (Virginia Eubanks, 'the high-tech poorhouse')
3 Oct 17	economics and society: social media platforms, surveillance, mining, profiling	- Shoshana Zuboff, 'Big other: surveillance capitalism and the prospects of an information civilization'
4 Oct 24	ethics, politics, the state: censorship, violence, net neutrality, cyberwarfare	- Zeynep Tufekci, 'It's the (democracy poisoning) golden age of free speech' - ('Twitter and tear gas')
5 Oct 31	scientific research, knowledge production, access to information	- Aaron Schwartz, "Guerilla Open Access Manifesto" - Ian Gruber-Stiehl, "Science's Pirate Queen"
6 Nov 7	digital humanities, arts, and social sciences: distant reading; data visualizations	- Kathryn Schulz, 'What is Distant Reading' - Jennifer Schuessler, 'When big data meets literature'
7 Nov 14	education and technology: teaching, learning, building	- Macgilchrist et al., 'Three future 'histories' of education and technology' - (Chris Gilliard, "Pedagogy and the Logic of Platforms") - (Audrey Watters, "The Weaponization of Education Data")