

# Ethics and Technology: Syllabus

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Instructor: Matthew Adams (please call me Matthew!)

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Office hours: By appointment. (We can meet either after any class or at a mutually convenient time).

Class Meeting Times: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 1:00-3:15pm in New Cabell Hall 183. (We will take a break during the middle of each class).

## Welcome to the Course

Welcome to this intensive summer course on Ethics and Technology! The course will allow us to become immersed in the interesting topic of ethics and technology and to explore it from a number of different vantage points; it will also serve as an introduction to some core topics in philosophy. If there is anything that I can do to help you during the course, or if any issues arise, please let me know. I am very happy to meet you outside class and to give you as much individual help and support as you need.

Below is an overview of the material that I provisionally plan to cover. The schedule is not rigid and we will proceed at a natural pace. Therefore, if we don't get around to covering all of this material or we decide to explore a particular topic in more depth that will be just fine. Also, if anyone is particularly interested in covering a topic that is not presently included on the syllabus please let me know, as I am flexible about what we cover.

## Overview of Material Covered

### Course texts

1. Ronald L. Sandler ed. *Ethics and Emerging Technologies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
2. Morton Winston and Ralph Edelbach eds. *Society, Ethics, and Technology* (Cengage Learning, 2013).

The Sandler edited anthology is required; the Winston edited anthology is not required. I will post all the readings *not* in the Sandler edition on collab.

### *Unit 1: Introductory Unit*

Monday July 11: Introduction to the class (no reading assigned)

Tuesday July 12: James Rachels *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 7.1, 7.2, 8.2, 8.3, 9.1., 10.1 (collab).

Wednesday July 13: John Zerzan, "Interview," (collab) and Ronald L. Sandler ed. "Introduction," 5-7, 12-16.

Thursday July 14: Nick Bostrom "Existential Risks: Analyzing Human Extinction Scenarios and Related Hazards," (collab).

### *Unit 2: Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence*

Friday 15: Nicholas Carr, "Is Google Making us Stupid," in Winston and Edelbach eds.

Monday July 18: Jay Stanley and Barry Steinhardt, "Bigger Monster, Weaker Chains," in Sandler ed.

Tuesday July 19: First Exam.

Wednesday July 20: Kenneth Himma and Maria Bottis, "The Digital Divide: Information Technologies and the Obligation to Alleviate Poverty," in Sandler ed.

Thursday July 21: John Basl, "What to do about Artificial Consciousness," in Sandler ed.

Friday July 22: Patrick Lin et al., "Ethics War and Robots" in Sandler ed. and Alan Ryan "Kant is my Co-Driver: Philosophy and Driverless Cars," (collab).

### *Unit 3: Biomedical Technology*

Monday July 25: Michael J. Sandel, "The Case against Perfection," in Edelbach eds.

Tuesday July 26: Thomas Douglas, "Moral Enhancement," in Sandler ed.

Wednesday July 27: Second Exam

Thursday July 28: Lucy Frith, "Reproductive Technologies Ethical Debates," in Sandler ed.

Friday July 29: Fritz Allhoff, "The Coming Era of Nanomedicine," in Sandler ed.

### *Unit 4: Environmental and Agricultural Technology*

Monday August 1: Philip Cafaro, "Avoiding Catastrophic Climate Change: Why Technological Innovation is Necessary but not Sufficient," in Sandler ed.

Tuesday August 2: Gary Comstock, "Ethics and Genetically Modified Foods," in Sandler ed.

Wednesday August 3: Paul Thompson, "Artificial Meat," in Sandler ed.

Thursday August 4: Third Exam.

## **Assessment**

**Participation (25%):** You are expected to attend all of the classes and to read the required material in advance. If you are ill or cannot attend a particular session for a good reason then please email me and let me know in advance. Merely attending the lectures will not be sufficient. Active and thoughtful participation (including active listening) will be expected and required. The assessment grade will also reflect your contribution to group projects and individual writing assignments that are done in class.

**Exams (75%):** There will be three exams each worth 25% of the final grade. I will explain the structure and content of these exams in advance. I will also give you advice on how best to prepare for them nearer the time. (There will be an optional review session before each exam.)

## **Exam Dates**

First Exam: Tuesday July 19

Second Exam: Wednesday July 27

Third Exam: Thursday August 4

## **Policies**

1. No electronic devices in class. (Yes I appreciate the slight irony of this policy given that it is a course about technology; however, electronic devices are—as we will learn!—distracting).
2. Please show respect and courtesy at all times to your fellow students.