

Philosophy of Ethics and Technology

**The Philosophy of Applied Ethics
and Artificial Intelligence:
Writing and Thinking Beyond the Human**

**PHIL 3XX- Contemporary Philosophy
(Sample Syllabus)**

**J.W. Symington IV, Ph.D.
Department of Philosophy**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores how developing technologies, most notably, artificial intelligence, transforms what it means to act, decide, and relate ethically. As machines begin to participate in perception, communication, and decision making, the question of intersubjectivity, of how meaning is shared, recognized and responded to, takes on new urgency.

Drawing from classical moral philosophy and contemporary continental thought, we explore how automation, algorithmic governance, and artificial intelligence challenge human-centered notions of responsibility, authorship, and consciousness. From Aristotle and Kant to Heidegger, Levinas, Jonas, and Stiegler, we will ask how technology, and AI, reshapes our ethical relation to others, the world, and to ourselves.

Through writing, discussion, and applied case studies, students will develop relational frameworks for thinking beyond the human, toward an ethics of co-creation, exposure, and shared intelligence in an increasingly artificial world.

COURSE READING LIST

1. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Hackett, 1999).
2. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge University Press, 1969).
3. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Duquesne University Press, 1969).
4. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (HarperCollins, 1993).
5. Hans Jonas. *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (University of Chicago, 1993).
6. Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford University Press, 1998).
7. Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do With Our Brain?* (Fordham University Press, 2008).
8. Shannon Vallor, *Technology and the Virtues: A Philosophical Guide to a Future Worth Wanting* (Oxford University Press, 2016).
9. Kate Crawford, *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence* (Yale University Press, 2021).
10. Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

Supplementary Readings

- Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Polity Press, 2013).
- Luciano Floridi, *The Ethics of Information* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction, What is Applied Ethics? -Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book I).

Weeks 2: Virtue and the Good Life- Aristotle (Books II-III).

Week 3: Duty and Autonomy- Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Week 4: Responsibility and Alterity: The Face of the Other- Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*.

Week 5: Technology and Enframing- Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology.”

Week 6: The Ethics of Responsibility in the Technological Age- Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*.

Week 7: Intersubjectivity in the Synthetic Age- Levinas revisited; Stiegler on technogenesis.

Week 8: Memory, Time, and Relation- Stiegler, *Technics and Time*.

Week 9: Plasticity and the Brain- Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?*

Week 10: Virtue and Flourishing in a Technological World- Vallor, *Technology and the Virtues*.

Week 11: Machine Intelligence and Ethical Agency- Bostrom, *Superintelligence*.

Weeks 12: AI, Ecology, and Relational Systems- Crawford, *Atlas of AI*.

Week 13: Writing and Thinking Beyond the Human- Excerpts from Malabou, Derrida, and Stiegler.

Week 14: Applied Case Studies- Ethics of bias, authorship, and data.

Week 15: Applied Ethics in practice.

Week 16: Final Reflection: The Future of Relation, Workshop and Synthesis Discussion

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

- Reading Responses (15%): Short reflections on ethics and relational questions.
- Midterm Essay (30%): Write a 5-8 page essay on one philosopher's account of technology.
- Final Essay (30%): 10-12 page essay on a theme from this course.
- Participation (25%): Active engagement through attendance, discussion and textual interpretation.

COURSE POLICIES

- Attendance: Required. More than three absences may affect your final grade.
- Late Work: Accepted with penalty unless arranged in advance.
- Academic Integrity: All writing must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism will result in failure for the assignment.
- Accessibility: Students with accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor early in the semester.
- AI Use Policy: Generative AI tools may be used to assist brainstorming or structure but **NOT** to generate your analysis.