

Dr. Lane DesAutels

Department of Philosophy & Religion
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Missouri Western State University
Office: Popplewell Hall 115G
Telephone: (816) 271-5688
Email: ldesautels@missouriwestern.edu

Office hours: 1:00-2:00, M/W
11:00-12:00, T/Th/F
(and by appointment)

Class time: T/Th 2:00-3:20

Location: Agenstein 326

Course Description

In our current age, it is difficult to deny that technology pervades all aspects of our lives. It broadens our experiences, satisfies our desires, and enhances our abilities. Question: have we ourselves *become* technological creatures? If not, is it *inevitable* that we will?

This course will explore some of the scientific, metaphysical, and ethical implications of the rapidly increasing role that technology plays in human society. To do this, we will explore questions like:

- What is technology?
- What is its relationship to science?
- How do we know we're not living in a computer simulation?
- What are the implications of human augmentation technologies on our understanding of the human mind? On human identity?
- Does technology contribute to oppression? By sex? Gender? Race?
- Are computers morally blame-worthy?
- What are the ethics of emerging technologies such as: human genetic engineering? Geoengineering? Autonomous weapons? And animal de-enhancement?
- Are video games bad for society?
- What about sex robots?

Objectives

1. To provide students with experiences that will help convince them that informed reflection on the role of technology in their lives is of significant importance in their personal lives and for their ability to live well in a complex global social order.
2. To provide students with a basic knowledge of several of the major philosophical and scientific debates surrounding technology.
3. To provide students with models of philosophical argumentation to help them better engage with and critically evaluate debates about technology and its role in society.
4. To provide students with opportunities to develop, express, and defend their own philosophical convictions in writing and orally, through discussion, debate, and/or class presentations.

Required Texts

- There are no required textbooks for this course. All assigned readings will be posted on Canvas in electronic format

Course Requirements

(1) 2-3 turns being 'up'. During the first week of class, you will sign-up for dates/topics to be 'up'. When you are 'up' for a class, you will be expected to come prepared to lead discussion, ask discussion questions, and be (something of) an expert on your topic.

(2) A 2-page writing exercise (topic to be announced). Late papers are accepted but 1/3 of a letter grade will be deducted for every 24 hours that the paper is late.

(3) An In-class Debate

(4) A 4-6-page argumentative essay. Students will submit their first paragraph and thesis before submitting their final draft. Both the first paragraph/thesis and the final draft will be graded, and the final paper grade will be an average of the two. A detailed assignment sheet to be provided. Again, late papers will be deducted 1/3 of a letter grade for every day they are late.

(5) A final examination.

(6) Class participation. Meaningful contributions to in-class discussion based on assigned reading is expected. Students uncomfortable with speaking in large group settings will be given additional options for gaining participation credit.

Grading Breakdown

Final grade calculation: 10% for 'up' assignments; 20% for 2-page writing exercise; 10% for in-class debate; 25% for 4-6 page argumentative essay; 20% for final exam; 15% for class participation.

Grading Scale:

A= 90%-100%; B= 80%-89%; C=70%-79%; D= 60%-69%; F=59% and below

Attendance: University Statement

“Missouri Western State University has the expectation that students should be active participants in their coursework. Regular class attendance is considered a key element of participation and an essential part of the educational experience.” (MWSU Student Handbook)

Attendance: Course Statement

Attendance is not strictly mandatory in this class. However, your participation in class discussions as well as your in-class quiz grade contribute significantly to your overall course grade.

Classroom Behavior Guidelines

- Please arrive on time and leave only after the class is over. Please do not talk to your neighbor during class. Turn off and put away all cell phones and message devices. Laptops may NOT be used during lecture (unless proper documentation is provided from the Accessibility Resource Center).

Academic Honesty, Due Process, and Grade Appeal

- “Academic honesty is required in all academic endeavors. Violations of academic honesty include any instance of plagiarism, cheating, seeking credit for another’s work, falsifying documents or academic records, or any other fraudulent classroom activity.” (MWSU Student Handbook)
- “Violations of academic honesty may result in a failing grade on the assignment, failure in the course, or expulsion from school. When a student’s grade has been affected, violations of academic honesty will be reported to the Provost or the designated representative.” (MWSU Student Handbook)
- For more details concerning Departmental Grade Appeal Procedure, see “GRADE APPEAL PROCEDURE MATERIALS” which is filed in Popplewell 115.
- For more details see <https://www.missouriwestern.edu/studentaffairs/wp-content/uploads/sites/292/2014/02/StudentHandbook2016.pdf>.
- For information about Academic Regulations and Standards Committee, go to <https://www.missouriwestern.edu/facsenate/academic-regulations/>.

Students with Disabilities

Students seeking accommodations must first provide documentation of needed accommodations to the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) located in Eder Hall, Suite 203. Once accommodations have been approved by the ARC, students are responsible for notifying their instructors of those accommodations. This should be done within the first two weeks of classes. Accommodations are not retroactive.

A Note on Harassment, Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct

Consistent with its mission, Missouri Western seeks to assure all community members learn and work in a welcoming and inclusive environment. Title VII, Title IX and University policy prohibit harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct. Missouri Western encourages anyone experiencing harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct to talk to someone from the Campus and Local Resources list found in the Student Handbook about what happened so they can get the support they need and Missouri Western can respond appropriately.

There are both confidential and non-confidential resources and reporting options available to you. Missouri Western is legally obligated to respond to reports of sexual misconduct, and therefore we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of a report, unless made to a confidential resource. Responses may vary from support services to formal investigations. As a faculty member, I am required to report incidents of sexual misconduct and thus cannot guarantee confidentiality. I must provide our Title IX coordinator with relevant details such as the names of those involved in the incident. For more information about policies and resources or reporting options, see the MWSU sexual-misconduct policy

Students have received information via email regarding training regarding Title IX. Student employees may have additional required training. Please follow the link in the email sent to your MWSU student account to complete the training. Students who do not complete the training will receive a hold on their account, prohibiting future semester enrollment until the training is complete. These training courses will ensure that all students are appropriately educated about these important regulations.

Classroom Recording Policy

The course materials that I author, including, but not limited to, PowerPoint slides, Panopto recordings, Canvas screen shots, class hand-outs, web-based and social media content, and course syllabi, are my intellectual property and are protected by copyright law. Students in the course may download and make copies of my course materials for the course student's own use.

Students are not allowed to record course proceedings, publicly reproduce or distribute these materials or enable others to do so without my express written consent. Failure to comply with this direction may constitute a violation of the Student Code of Conduct as outlined in the Student Handbook and result in disciplinary action by the University.

Inclement Weather and Illness Policy

In the event that the instructor is unable to make it to a scheduled class session, you will be notified through your university email account, when possible. The email will contain instructions for what you are to do in lieu of coming to class that day.

Make-Up Exam Policy

Two days each semester will be provided for make-up quizzes and tests: one before mid-term grades, the other prior to final exams. Contact the instructor before the scheduled test date or as soon as possible after the test about the prospect of a make-up. Make-up tests will be given solely at the discretion of the instructor. Depending on the circumstances, the instructor may require documentation explaining why the student missed a scheduled test date. As a rule, only one make-up per student per semester will be allowed. Remember, a make-up is a privilege, not a right.

Meeting Basic Needs

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students, 226 Blum Student Union, for a list of resources and support.

The Campus Cupboard is a free resource with pantry and hygiene items, located at 214 Blum Student Union. The pantry is typically open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2-4 pm and by appointment. You can stop by the Vice President for Student Affairs Office, Blum 228, or contact the Dean of Students, grimes@missouriwestern.edu with questions or concerns. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable him/her to provide any resources that he/she may possess.

Schedule of Topics/Readings/Assignments (*Subject to Change*)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Required Reading</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
8/27	Introductions and Syllabus		
<u>I. What is Technology?</u>			
8/29	What is Technology?	Duska 2006	
9/3	Technology as Applied Science	Bunge 1966	
9/5	Technological Thought	Skolimowski 1966	
<u>II. Technology and Skepticism</u>			
9/10	The Simulation Argument	Bostrom 2003	
9/12	Critique of the Simulation Argument	Bruekner 2003, Bostrom 2009	2-page paper assignment up
9/17	The Matrix	Chalmers 2005	
9/19	Simulation and Experiment	Greene 2019	
<u>III. The Technological Mind</u>			
9/24	The Extended Mind	Clark & Chalmers 1994	
9/26	Uploading and Consciousness	Chalmers 2010 (1)	
10/1	Uploading and Personal Identity	Chalmers 2010 (2)	debate guidelines up on Canvas
10/3	Metaphysics of Uploading	Schneider 2014	
<u>IV. Technology and Oppression</u>			
10/8	Cyberfeminism	Rosser 2005	
10/10	Race and Technology	Chun 2009	
10/15	Technologies of Gender	Hausman 1992	
<u>V. Ethics of Technology</u>			
10/17	Technology and Blame	Bechtel 1985, Dennett 1997	
10/22	Autonomous Weapons	Simpson & Muller 2016	
10/24	Human Genetic Engineering	Metzl 2018	
10/29	Life Extension	Bostrom 2016	
10/31	Geoengineering	Gardiner 2009	Argumentative essay prompt/rubric up on Canvas
11/5	Animal De-enhancement	Thompson 2008, Palmer 2011	
11/7	Video Games	Anthropy 2012	
			***1st paragraph/thesis of argumentative essay

			due 11/10 by 11:59 pm *** (Canvas)
11/12	Video Games	Luck 2009	
11/14	Sex Robots	Donaher 2017	
11/19	Autonomous Vehicles	Jenkins 2016	Extra credit presentation guidelines up on Canvas
11/21	Formal Debate		Final exam review guide up on Canvas
11/26	FALL BREAK		
11/28	FALL BREAK		
12/3	Student Presentations		
12/5	Student Presentations and Exam Review		
			*** Argumentative Essay due 12/8 by 11:59 pm ***
			*** Final Exam in our usual Classroom 12/12, 8:30-10:30 ***