Fall 9-1-2004

PHIL 477.01: Philosophy of Society and Culture - Technology and Ethics

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Technology and Ethics

(1) Goals

The goals of this course are these:

1. Knowledge of the major views of technology as the form of contemporary culture.
2. A grasp of the fundamentals of standard contemporary philosophical ethics.
3. An understanding of the incompleteness of standard ethics as regards technology and of the norms an ethics of technology requires.

(2) Readings

We will read the following texts in this order:
- Rawls, “Principles of Justice” (Course Pack).
- Railton, “Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality” (Course Pack).
- Hursthouse, “Introduction” and “The Virtues Benefit their Possessor” (Course Pack).
- Schlosser, Fast Food.
- McKibben, Enough.

(3) Requirements

A) Classroom Participation (30% of course grade)

It will be your obligation to show through participation in the classroom discussions that you are keeping up with the readings and are in command of the material presented in class. It will be my obligation to make everyone feel welcome and encouraged to participate.

B) Three In-Class Examination (each counting for 10% of the course grade)

1. February 24
2. April 6
3. May 11, 8:00 a.m. (final week)

C) Term Paper (40% of grade)

1. Intent

The major tasks are three. (1) You have to take on a limited but significant issue of technology and ethics. (2) You have to bring some of the important points and perspectives developed in class to bear on the issue. (3) You have to forge (1) and (2) into an argument that bears the imprint of your convictions.

Beyond these three requirements you are free to draw on any material whatever. But be careful not to do so to the detriment of the basic threefold intent.

2. Technical Details

The paper must be typewritten and paper-clipped. Follow some standard format. The deadline is April 27. You are required to submit an outline before you begin detailed work on the paper. The outline is due March 16 at the latest. The length should be paginated, 3000 words (12 pages). Use of scholarly material beyond that discussed in class is not required or encouraged since it usually dilutes the crucial ingredient-original reflection.

3. Graduate Students

Graduate students should aim at a paper of 20 pp. (5000 words) roughly. The paper has to contain a substantial research component. Graduate students will also give a brief report on some of their research to the class.

NOTE:

February 3 is the last day to add and drop classes by Cyber Bear.
March 9 is the last day to drop classes or change the grading option.

Office Hours: MWF 8:10-9:00 and by appointment in LA 149.
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If you have a disability, please let me know so we can provide accommodation.