

Philosophy 3: Technology and Society

Summer Session II 2025

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Office Hours: Announced Weekly on Canvas

Zoom Link: <https://uci.zoom.us/j/4103189890>

Version: Jul 29, 2025. Note that I might need to make adjustments to the syllabus as the course progresses, please refer to the newest version on Canvas.

1 Course Overview

1.1 Course Description

Technologies are ubiquitous and play a pervasive role in our lives. The aim of this course is to help you develop a clearer and more articulate understanding of the metaphysical, epistemological, moral, and socio-political implications of technology. We will explore a wide range of philosophical questions raised by emerging technologies—such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, surveillance, and autonomous vehicles. Along the way, you will learn to think more clearly, argue more effectively, and engage more thoughtfully with the tools that shape your life.

1.2 Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, successful students should be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate an understanding of key philosophical questions, methods, and perspectives related to technology and society.
- Engage with major philosophical traditions and perspectives on technology and the human condition.
- Comprehend the underlying principles, assumptions, and limitations of science and technology.
- Critically assess the epistemic, ethical, and political implications of emerging technologies.
- Communicate philosophical ideas clearly and critically, in both writing and discussion, with attention to argument and diverse perspectives.

1.3 Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

1.4 Philosophy Major/Minor

Philosophy 3 satisfies a requirement for the B.A. degree in philosophy, the minor in philosophy, and the minor in humanities and law.

1.5 General Education Category II

Philosophy 3 satisfies the General Education Category II (Science and Technology). Courses in this category provide an understanding of the nature of scientific inquiry and of the effects science and technology have on personal and public policy decisions.

1.6 Add/Drop Option

The last day to add or drop the course without additional approval is August 8, 2025. The absolute deadline for adding or dropping the course with additional approval is August 22, 2025, PDT. The absolute deadline to change a grade option is September 8, 2025. These deadlines are strictly enforced.

2 Course Logistics

2.1 Course Website

All course content will be available via the Canvas course website. There is no required textbook for this course. The course is organized in ten modules for the five weeks of instruction. Each module includes:

- content pages - course readings, lecture videos, and lecture slides
- links to readings and other media
- discussions - which provide opportunities for ongoing interaction with your classmates as well as the instructors.
- Perusall annotations - which allow you to annotate readings in small groups with your classmates.

In addition, some modules contain prompts to upload assignments. The course website will specify the number of points that each assignment is worth and the due dates defined in Pacific Daylight Time (PDT).

Each module of the course will be released the previous week, usually on Thursdays. You will not be able to see modules ahead of this schedule, but the syllabus provides an overview of the entire course. Deadlines for all course assignments will be published at the start of the class.

2.2 Internet access

You are responsible for verifying that internet access with your equipment and at your location is reliable.

Please be aware that there may be issues with accessing Canvas/Turnitin with a phone browser. If you are connecting from abroad, it is important that you use the UCI Software VPN (not the web VPN) because it provides a more consistent and stable experience. You can visit this OIT page and choose the “Software VPN” tab to find more information.

2.3 User Account and Introduction

To participate in the online course, you must log in via your UCI user account. Within the first week, you must add a one paragraph personal introduction to the Welcome Forum and a picture to your account, and complete whatever other elements of your online profile you are comfortable providing.

2.4 Communication

The main means of communication in this course are discussion boards and canvas messages. The discussion boards produce a record that can be used like a FAQ. Ask us anything. We will send course announcements on canvas. So you should check the course website regularly. You can also set up your canvas account to receive notifications via email. To reach the instructor and the teaching assistants regarding questions that are personal in nature, please send us canvas messages. For questions related to the course, use the discussion board.

2.5 Office Hours

Discussion boards and canvas messages are in asynchronous format (meaning that there is no set time that you must be logged into the online course). This course also contains optional synchronous sessions that will give you a chance to interact with your instructor in real time and listen to conversations your classmates have with the instructor. These synchronous sessions are basically online office hours. You can participate in the online office hours either via video and audio, audio only or via chat. The days and times of the online office hours will be announced at the beginning of each week of class. Although these sessions are optional, you are highly encouraged to attend.

3 Assignments and Grading

3.1 Workload

This course has a workload that is approximately equivalent to an ten-week course in a regular quarter. According to the University of California: “The value of a course in units shall be reckoned at the rate of one unit for three hours’ work per week per term on the part of a student, or the equivalent.” Since this is a four unit course, we expect you will do approximately 12 hours of work per module, and 2 modules per week. These 12 hours might

be broken down as follows: 4 hours of in-class content (lecture/discussion), circa 4 hours of reading, and circa 4 hours of writing for assignments and preparation. Similarly, in this course, we expect that you will watch all the lecture videos (circa 2-3 hours of content/week), participate in all the discussions (circa 2.5-3 hours/week), do all the readings and perusall assignments (circa 5-6 hours/week), and work on your short writing assignment or final paper (circa 4-5 hours/week).

3.2 Grading

The course is graded out of 100 points, with 1 possible bonus point:

Assignments	Points
Weekly Perusall Annotations (5×5 points each)	25
Weekly Discussion Board Posts (5×5 points each)	25
Short Writing Assignment	10
Peer Review Assignment	10
Final Paper	30
<i>Bonus: Course Evaluation</i>	+1
Total	100 (+1)

3.3 Readings

There are readings assigned for each module. Each week you will read circa 70 pages. You are expected to read the material carefully and critically.

3.4 Lecture Videos

The course has numerous short lecture videos, that is, 15-30 minute videos featuring the instructor and/or invited guests.

3.5 Perusall Annotations

Each week, one of the readings (usually the more challenging one) will be assigned on Perusall, a platform that allows you to annotate and discuss the text collaboratively with your classmates. You can access Perusall through the course website. You are encouraged to read on Perusall, so you can engage with your classmates' annotations and replies as you go.

To receive full credit, you must contribute at least two annotations. These can be questions, comments, objections, pointing out passages you find difficult to understand, or replies to others. (I recommend contributing more than two — especially replies to others — to help both yourself and your classmates engage more fully with the material.) Each Perusall annotation is graded out of 5 points: 2.5 points for each annotation.

3.6 Discussion Board Posts

Each week, you will respond to an open-answer question based on the course materials. To receive full participation credit, you will need to

1. Post a substantive response to an open-answer question by Thursday at 11:59pm Pacific Daylight Time (PDT).
2. Provide substantive and critical feedback to at least two of your classmates by Sunday at 11:59pm Pacific Daylight Time (PDT).

Each discussion board assignment is graded out of 5 points: 1 point for your original response, 2 points for each of two meaningful replies to classmates.

A substantive post or response is generally > 100 words and introduces a new idea or is a meaningful reply to another person's post. When replying to another person's post, please either expand the thought, add additional insights, or respectfully disagree and explain why. Please do not evaluate each other's posts or give writing advices as a response, which you will do in the peer review assignment.

3.7 Short Writing Assignment

You will complete one short writing assignment (about 300 words), which asks you to discuss one philosophical issue or argument from class with someone not enrolled in the course, and reflect on the conversation.

3.8 Final Paper and Peer Review Assignment

You will write a final paper of approximately 1,200 words, submitted in two stages. A 800-word draft is due on Tuesday of Week 4 and will be peer-reviewed in the following week. The final paper is due by the end of the quarter, which is Tuesday of Week 6. Paper topics will be posted on Canvas at the beginning of Week 3. All submissions must be made through Canvas and will be checked for plagiarism via Turnitin.com.

The purpose of the peer review assignment is for you to learn to evaluate the work of your peers by offering constructive criticism. Evaluating the work of others can often help illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of one's own work. You are also encouraged to exchange drafts with your classmates before or after the peer review assignment. For fairness reasons, your instructors will not provide written feedback on your written drafts. However, you are welcome to ask questions about your paper during office hours.

To discourage inappropriate usage of AI generated text, up to 2 points of extra credit on the assignment will be awarded to students who can show an extensive edit/revision history of their paper. The easiest way to do this is to write entirely in a Google Doc and keep all notes, outlines, and drafts in the same document as you write.

3.9 Staying on Track

If you complete all the readings, discussions, Perusall annotations, watch all the lecture videos, and keep up with the week's writing tasks, you will stay on schedule. Be sure to familiarize yourself with assignment due dates. Many discussion assignments require reading and responding to classmates' posts, so please complete your work early enough to participate meaningfully in the conversation.

4 Schedule and Readings

Week	Content	Major Assignments
1	Module 1: Intro to Philosophy and Arguments Module 2: Nature and Technology	
2	Module 3: What is Technology? Module 4: Meaning, Understanding, and LLM	
3	Module 5: Consciousness and Artificial Intelligence Module 6: Rhetoric, Mass Media, and the Internet	Short Writing Assignment
4	Module 7: Skepticism and Virtual Reality Module 8: Privacy and Surveillance	Paper Draft
5	Module 9: Ethics and Autonomous Vehicles Module 10: Justice and Algorithmic Fairness	Peer Review Assignment
Final		Paper 2

Module 1: Intro to Philosophy and Arguments

- Bagini and Fosl, *The Philosopher's Toolkit*, Chapter 1.
- Russell, *The Value of Philosophy*.

Module 2: Nature and Technique

- Schadewaldt, "The Concepts of Nature and Technique According to the Greeks."
- Passages from *Zhuangzi*.

Module 3: What is Technology?

- Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology.
- Dreyfus, "Heidegger on Gaining a Free Relation to Technology."

Module 4: Meaning, Understanding, and Large Language Models

- Bender and Koller, "Climbing towards NLU."

Module 5: Consciousness and Artificial Intelligence

- Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” Sections 1-5.
- Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs,” 417-419. Optional: 419-424.

Module 6: Rhetoric, Mass Media, and the Internet

- Plato, Phaedrus, 274b-278b.
- Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Chapters 1.
- Nguyen, “Why It’s as Hard to Escape an Echo Chamber as It Is to Flee a Cult.”

Module 7: Skepticism and Virtual Reality

- Descartes, “Meditations on First Philosophy,” Meditations 1&2.
- Chalmers, *Reality+*, Chapter 5.

Module 8: Privacy and Surveillance

- Rachels, “Why Privacy Is Important.”
- Tunick, “Privacy in the Face of New Technologies of Surveillance.”

Module 9: Ethics and Autonomous Vehicles

- Rachels and Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, Ch1.
- Lin, “Why Ethics Matters for Autonomous Cars.”
- Thomson, “The Trolley Problem.”

Module 10: Justice and Algorithmic Fairness

- Angwin et al., “Machine Bias.”
- Fazelpour and Danks, “Algorithmic Bias.”

5 Course Policies

5.1 Respect

This class involves significant online discussion of topics on which you and your classmates may have differences of opinion. You may also have opinions that differ from those of the instructors. Please be respectful of classmates, the instructor, and teaching assistants at all times.

5.2 Late Assignments

Since students can add the class sometime during week 1, we do not penalize late submission of week 1 assignments — provided they are turned in by the end of week 2, i.e., Sunday 8/17/2025 11:59pm. Starting with week 2, the following policy will apply: Discussion board posts, Perusall annotations, and the short writing assignment submitted after the due date/time will receive a 1 point deduction for each week (or part thereof) past the due date. No late submissions will be accepted for the final paper draft, peer review assignment, or final paper, as timely completion is necessary for logistic purposes. This late policy will apply to all assignments for which no application for extension has been made prior to the due date/time.

5.3 Incompletes

We do not give incompletes. All students will receive a letter grade (with pass/not pass option) for the course.

5.4 Academic Honesty

Please familiarize yourself with UC Irvine’s academic honesty policy. The small artificial benefits to your grade are not worth the consequences of academic dishonesty—such as course failure, not learning the material, and damage to your character. The penalty for any violation of academic integrity — including but not limited to plagiarism — is failure for the course and a letter recording the violation sent to the Associate Dean for Curriculum and Student Services in the School of Humanities. If you have questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, it is always better to ask than to guess.

Plagiarism is defined as the act of incorporating ideas, words, or specific substance of another and submitting as one’s own work to fulfill academic requirements without giving credit to the appropriate source. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- Submitting work, either in part or in whole, completed by another
- Omitting footnotes for ideas, statements, facts, or conclusions that belong to another
- Omitting quotation marks when quoting directly from another, whether it be a paragraph, sentence, or part thereof
- Paraphrasing in a close or lengthy manner of the writings of another
- Submitting as one’s own work papers purchased from research companies.

5.5 AI-Generated Text

This is a course about technology, and artificial intelligence (AI)—especially large language models (LLMs)—is among the most impactful emerging technologies of our time. You are encouraged to explore and experiment with AI tools in ways that support your learning.

You are also welcome to use AI tools for assignments, provided you give proper acknowledgment. If you do, you must include a footnote or endnote explaining the following (which will not count towards the word limit):

- How did you use the tool? For example: What AI tool did you use? What was your prompt? How did you use the output?
- What did you find helpful about the tool?
- What did you find insufficient or misleading about the tool? How did you address this?

For the final paper, up to 2 points of extra credit may be awarded to students who demonstrate substantial original language generation through a clear editing record. See §3.8 Final Paper for details.

However, using AI as a substitute for your own thinking is strongly discouraged. You are expected to approach your work with creativity and independent thought. While it may be tempting to generate full responses using tools like ChatGPT in a seemingly “time-efficient” way, doing so risks failing the assignment, undermining your learning, and bypassing the very skills this course is designed to develop.

Any use of AI must comply with ethical and legal standards. As we will see in this class, current large language models tends to make up incorrect facts, fake citations, and may perpetuate biases. Image-generation models can occasionally come up with offensive images. If you use AI tools, the final text must accurately reflect your own thinking. You will be fully responsible for any inaccurate, biased, offensive, plagiarized or otherwise unethical content you submit regardless of whether it originally came from you or an AI model.

5.6 Copyrights

This course is provided by The University of California, which maintains policies regarding copyright. Materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection. The course content related video/file/module/unit was created to be used in compliance with the TEACH Act. 17 U.S.C. §110(2).

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Similarly, you hold the copyright to your original work, and your classmates hold the copy-

right to theirs. You may not reproduce, distribute, or display a classmate's paper or discussion board posts without their written permission. You may not cite or quote from a classmate's paper draft or discussion board posts for your assignments.

6 Student Resources

6.1 Disability Services

If you need support or assistance because of disability, you may be eligible for accommodations or services through the UCI Disability Service Center (DSC). Please contact the DSC directly at (949) 824-7494, TDD (949) 824-6272, or dsc@uci.edu. Please note that it is your responsibility to initiate this process with the DSC.

6.2 Basic Needs Security

Any student who faces challenges securing sufficient food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support (A Message from the Dean of Students; 949-824-5181). Also, note the following resources available at UCI:

- Student Outreach and Retention Center (SOAR)
- UCI Basic Needs Center - located at the FRESH Basic Needs Hub at 4079 Mesa Rd (Lot 5 trailers), open M-Th 11am - 5pm

6.3 UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harrassment

Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the Campus Advocacy Resources & Education (CARE) office, by phone at (949) 824-7273, or by email at care@uci.edu. We encourage you to also report incidents through the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity's (OEOD's) reporting page.

In addition, the campus Title IX Officer, along with the OEOD, has provided a number of local and national Sexual Violence Resources should you need immediate assistance related to sexual violence or other sexual misconduct. These resources are available even when the campus is closed or on an administrative holiday.

Faculty and TAs are required under the UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment to inform the Title IX Office should they become aware that you or any other student has experienced sexual violence or sexual harassment.

6.4 Other Campus Resources

- UCI Library

- UCI Center for Excellence in Writing and Communication
- The Learning & Academic Resource Center (LARC)
- UC Irvine Launches Online Learning Research Center
- UCI Student Portal
- Office Information Technology (OIT)
- UCI Wellness, Health, and Counseling
- UCI Office of Academic Integrity & Student Conduct
- UCI Counseling Center
- Student Affairs