

Phil 164: Technology and Human Values

Course Information

“Technology challenges us to assert our human values, which means that first of all, we have to figure out what they are.” –Sherry Turkle

Description

Philosophy can be characterized as a discipline of questions, and many of the most important questions are probably some of the same questions you have asked yourself: What do I value? How should I live? In this course, we will be concerned with these questions, particularly about technology.

One might ask many different questions about a given piece of technology: Will it be effective? Can it be put into practice? What effects will it have? Stepping back, though, more basic questions remain that are often not adequately addressed: Is this *good*? Who or what is it good *for*? How do we decide whether one way of doing something is *better* than another or better than doing nothing at all?

You will learn what many talented and well-respected philosophers say about these questions, but the class is designed to get you *doing* philosophy, not just learning about it. The course will develop some knowledge of the history and methods of philosophy, but the real point is to get you asking important questions, reasoning clearly and capably, and sharpening your critical thinking skills—developing abilities, in other words, that will make a difference in your life long after specific content details have faded from memory.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

describe	various ethical positions
discuss	the ethical aspects of many different technologies
explain	a specific ethical problem related to technology
construct	a public policy recommendation on technology use and development
collaborate	with fellow students on a research project

Contact Information, etc.

Professor Mara Harrell

Office: RWAC-Bldg 1, A&H, 4th floor, #0462

mharrell@ucsd.edu

Student Drop-in Hours

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:00-11:00 am & by appointment

(If you would like to see me over Zoom, email me to make an appointment)

TA Moraima Arias Bejarano

Office: RWAC-Bldg 1, A&H, 4th floor, #0430

moarias@ucsd.edu

Student Drop-in Hours

Tuesdays, 11:00-12:00 & by appointment

Lecture

12:30 – 1:50 pm, Tuesdays & Thursdays, ??

What should you call me?

Please call me either Professor Harrell or Dr. Harrell.

Course Communication

All course announcements will be posted on Canvas. If you need to contact me or a TA, you must use your UCSD email address and **include ‘PHIL 164’ in the subject line**. Replies can be expected within 24-48 hours. Please note that grade disputes will only be discussed and resolved in person (or via Zoom), not via email.

Student Drop-in Hours

If you cannot attend the scheduled drop-in hours, please contact me or Moraima to make an appointment. I encourage you to use the student drop-in hours as an opportunity to clarify points you don't understand, obtain additional readings, discuss the subject matter in relation to your own interests, go over work in progress, or address problems you may be having in the course.

Drop in early and often. Email is the most reliable way to contact us.

Texts

All required & recommended readings for this course will be available on the Canvas site. ALWAYS bring the materials assigned for that day's class to that day's class!

What else do I need for class?

- A copy of the required course text
- A good Internet connection
- A tablet/computer for access to Canvas, email, and websites
- Something to write on and write with during class

Assignments

This class will have five types of assignments: the syllabus quiz, reflections, in-class activities, a group project, and a final project. Research about learning strongly suggests¹ that the most critical factor in learning is **doing the work** of reading, writing, recalling, practicing, synthesizing, and analyzing. The assignments are designed to help with that. The specific requirements for each assignment will be given separately.

Grading

The assignments in this course will not be graded in the traditional fashion. Instead, they will all be graded on a "satisfactory/unsatisfactory" basis. The system is called "**specifications grading**." An assignment is "satisfactory" if it has met all the specifications for that assignment. The specifications for each assignment will be described in more detail in the Assignments folder on the Canvas site for this course.

Your final grade in this course will be determined by how many assignments you have completed satisfactorily (see below). This means that you can choose what grade you would like to earn in this course and aim toward that grade, as it will depend on the successful completion of various assignments. Rubrics will be available so you can see how each assignment is graded.

What counts as "satisfactory" for each assignment?

Syllabus Quiz: Answering at least 90% of the questions correctly earns a grade of "satisfactory" for that quiz. The quiz will be set up in Canvas so you automatically get 3 tries to get at least 90%.

Reflections: The instructions for the assignment will include a list of specifications that the assignment must meet.

Earning a grade of "satisfactory" means that the assignment has met *all* of the specifications.

In-class Activities: These are small-group or individual activities and/or writing that you'll complete during class time for us to discuss during class. I will assess them as either "satisfactory" (you did them and, if relevant, turned them in) or "unsatisfactory" (you weren't in class, you didn't do them, or you did them very weakly).

Group Project: The instructions for the assignment will include a list of specifications that the assignment must meet.

Earning a grade of "satisfactory" means that the assignment has met *all* of the specifications.

Final Project: The instructions for the assignment will include a list of specifications that the assignment must meet.

Earning a grade of "satisfactory" means that the assignment has met *all* of the specifications.

What happens if what I turn in doesn't earn a grade of "satisfactory"?

The point of having a grading system like this is to make the student's final grade in the course actually indicate the level of mastery of the material the student achieved. In traditional points-based grading, a student can consistently produce sub-standard work and still pass the class, in which case the passing grade does not reflect the fact that the student may not have actually mastered *any* of the material at all.

So, what to do? The answer is to give the students ways not only to master the content but also to demonstrate that mastery. So, for any assignment deemed unsatisfactory, the student can **revise and resubmit** it within 48 hours of the notification of the grade. On the other hand, the student should have incentives to turn in

¹ There are many good books that summarize research on how people learn. These include *Make it Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* by Peter Brown, Henry Roediger, and Mark McDaniel; *Small Teaching* by James Lang; and *Understanding How We Learn* by Yana Weinstein, Megan Sumaracki, and Oliver Caviglioli.

their best work on the first try. Thus, the opportunities the student has to revise and resubmit are limited to Reflections, the Group Project parts, and the Final Project, and only if the original submission is submitted on time.

How do I revise and resubmit an assignment?

Revising and resubmitting an assignment requires (1) informing me or a TA that you intend to revise the assignment, (2) revising the assignment based on my feedback given, and (3) a reflection (a short description of how you used the formative feedback you received to improve your revision).

Will late assignments be accepted?

For the Reflections, the parts of the Group Project, and the Final Project, there is a 48-hour grace period for submitting the assignment. This means that, for any of these assignments, you can submit up to 2 days after the stated deadline and still have the assignment graded. However, the only assignments a student can revise and resubmit (in the case of earning an “unsatisfactory” grade) are those that the student has submitted BEFORE the stated deadline. This means that if you submit your assignment during the grace period, you will NOT be able to revise and resubmit if the assignment earns an “unsatisfactory.” Any assignments submitted after the grace period are also automatically “unsatisfactory.”

So, what must I do to get an A (or B or C) in this class?

Each assignment has its own set of adequacy criteria included in the assignment description. The earned grade of “satisfactory” required for each final letter grade is:

	A	B	C	D
1. <i>Insultingly Easy Syllabus Quiz</i>	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
2. <i>Reflections</i>	9/10	8/10	7/10	6/10
3. <i>In-class Activities</i>	15/18	13/18	11/18	9/18
4. <i>Group Project</i>	> 86.9%	86.9% - 80%	79.9% - 70%	< 70%
5. <i>Final project</i>	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1

For a course grade of “F” just do less than what’s required for a course grade of “D.”

Can I only get A, B, C, D, or F? No plusses or minuses?

You can earn a + or - attached to your base grade in the following situations:

You will receive a ‘+’ on the letter grade if you earn a grade of “satisfactory” on at least one of 2, 3, or 4, with the percentage corresponding to a higher grade. You will receive a ‘-’ on the letter grade if you earn a grade of “satisfactory” on one of 2, 3, or 4, with the percentage corresponding to a lower grade.

- Example: Earn a grade of “satisfactory” on the syllabus quiz and the final project, at least 87% on the group project, 9 out of 10 Reflections, and 15 out of 18 in-class assignments ⇒ **Earn an A**
- Example: Earn a grade of “satisfactory” on the syllabus quiz and the final project, 86.9% - 80% on the group project (B-level), 7 out of 10 Reflections, and 11 out of 18 in-class assignments: you have a base grade of C and a + for meeting one higher standard ⇒ **Earn a C+**
- Example: Earn a grade of “satisfactory” on the syllabus quiz and the final project, 86.9% - 80% on the group project, 8 out of 10 Reflections, and 11 out of 18 in-class assignments: you have a base grade of C and two plusses for meeting two higher standards ⇒ **Earn a B-**

Note: An A and an A+ are both 4.0 in your GPA calculation; however, if you exceed all of the requirements to earn an “A” in the class, then your course grade will be “A+.”

How can I keep track of my grade in this course?

Find the grade above for which you met all the requirements. That will be your base grade. Then, determine if there are any categories in which you met a higher standard, which will determine the plusses or minuses. You can track your progress by how many reflections and in-class activities you have completed satisfactorily and your grade on the group project.

IMPORTANT! Please note that although Canvas will display the grades you have earned on each assignment, the score in the “Total” column in the grade book has no meaning and does **NOT** correspond to your grade for the class.

Attendance

Attendance is required—you need to be in class to earn a grade of “satisfactory” on the in-class activities, which means that to earn an “A,” you can only miss 3 class periods over the quarter. Besides being able to do the in-class exercises, there are many reasons to come to class. First, the reading is either science fiction stories or philosophical

articles. Only in class will we make the connections between the philosophy and the science fiction. Additionally, you can't have your questions answered while reading the text or watching a video. In class, you can have your questions answered in real-time, and I can offer several alternative explanations if one isn't sufficient. Finally, both the verbal and non-verbal feedback I get from students in class help me determine whether I am going too fast or whether students are confused.

FAQ

How much time will I need to devote to this course?

Phil 164 is a 4-unit course, and it will meet for approximately three instructional hours per week for ten weeks. The general guideline for such a course is that you spend 3 hours on course-related work outside of class for every 1 hour you spend in class. That's an expected average, not a requirement. However, the course materials (and assignments) might require more time than you expect, so "budgeting" about 9 hours per week for this course should give you plenty of time.

What should I do during our class meetings?

1. It would be best if you arrived at class sessions on time, stayed for the required components of each class session, and constructively participated in all class activities.
2. During the class meetings, you should be focused on class, doing your best to avoid doing or interacting with things that will distract you, your classmates, or me.
3. The class sessions will be podcasted; only make audio or visual recordings of any part of the class session on your own if you and I have specifically discussed doing so as one of your documented accommodations for ADA purposes. Doing otherwise undermines the ability to maintain your classmates' trust, violates your classmates' legitimate privacy expectations, and could lead to their feeling (or even being) unsafe. Unless your classmates and I have explicitly said otherwise, you **DO NOT** have permission to take a photo or screen capture, live stream a small-group discussion, or record any part of a class meeting.
4. It would be best to treat everyone in the class with at least as much patience, respect, kindness, and consideration as you expect from the rest of us.

The listed items above apply to all our class meetings, whether in-person or online. These are not the only expectations, but they are some of the most important ones for helping to foster and maintain a culture of respect and engagement.

If you miss class, it will be recorded and podcast, and the podcast will appear in the Media Gallery section on the Canvas site.

What will we usually do in class?

On an average class day, you will **come to class having already read/watched/heard the assigned materials** for that day's class. We'll focus on questions and activities designed to help you understand that material more accurately and profoundly and generate new answers and questions. After class, you will be reading/watching for the next class meeting, talking with your classmates, talking with me, and working on your course assignments.

This class will encourage and require active participation from all students. Various well-designed studies – plus our own life experiences – show that most of us promptly forget most of what we read or hear unless we can apply the material very soon after we read or hear it. (Our brains are efficient: why would they remember something they can't use?) Our class activities and assignments are designed to help you use the ideas you encounter.

Late Assignments and Requests for Extensions

Assignments submitted after the 48-hour grace period will be marked "unsatisfactory" unless a request for an additional extension has been arranged ahead of the deadline. Requests for extensions need to be accompanied by relevant documentation and will be denied after the deadline for the assignment has passed.

Cell Phones, Laptops, and Other Related Technologies

How students interact with portable technology devices can greatly harm the dynamics of the classroom. Studies have shown that not only students who use these devices suffer but also the students around them. Therefore, I expect you to **turn off your cell phone** before coming to class. There is to be no text messaging, checking email, or otherwise "playing" with electronics during class.

Religious Observance

If you have a conflict between a religious holiday and a graded assignment, please get in touch with one of us in advance so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Disability

If you are differently-abled, I welcome a conversation to discuss your learning needs. I want to make sure you succeed in this course.

If you would like to request accommodations for this course due to a disability, you must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), which is in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to the faculty member (please arrange to contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged. Contact the OSD for further information: 858.534.4382 (phone), osd@ucsd.edu (email), disabilities.ucsd.edu (web).

If you aren't able to obtain an AFA in a timely manner, please come talk to me. I am here to help.

Academic Integrity

The integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and, in so doing, protect the validity of intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. More information about UCSD's policy on academic integrity is available at <http://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/appendices/2>.

Representing other people's ideas as though they were your own is plagiarism and a violation of academic integrity. I have a zero-tolerance policy about plagiarism. Plagiarism is not restricted to verbatim copying of other people's words. You should cite anything that (a) you got from someone else and (b) a reasonable person would not know beforehand. You should cite any ideas and quotes from other people for proper citation. (Your choice about citation format, but please be consistent.)

I realize that the vast majority of you will never consider cheating. However, a few of you may (for a variety of reasons) be tempted to plagiarize others' work. **Do not take chances with plagiarism:** if you are uncertain whether you are doing something unacceptable, please just ask. We are happy to answer questions about whether something constitutes plagiarism. And if you are ever tempted to present someone else's ideas as your own, please talk to one of us so that we can address the underlying challenges pushing you to that point.

Policy on using GenAI (ChatGPT, etc.): we will formulate our policy in class on 10/1/24.

Health and Well-being

Take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this quarter by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. Many helpful resources are available on campus, and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is almost always helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, complex life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. If there are issues related to coursework that are a source of particular stress or challenge, please speak with me or a TA so we can support you. UC San Diego provides several resources to all enrolled students, including:

Counseling and Psychological Services (858-534-3755 | caps.ucsd.edu)

Student Health Services (858-534-3300 | studenthealth.ucsd.edu)

CARE at the Sexual Assault Resource Center (858-534-5793 | care.ucsd.edu)

The Hub Basic Needs Center (858-246-2632 | basicneeds.ucsd.edu)

Course Schedule*

Texts: All readings will be posted on Canvas.

Week/Day	Topic	Reading/Assignment Due
0 Th 9/26	Introduction	
1 T 10/1	Create AI Policy	Read: “How ChatGPT and Other LLMs Work” “ChatGPT is Cutting Non-English Languages Out of the AI Revolution” “An AI Bot Named James Has Taken My Old Job” “AI is Steeped in Big Tech’s ‘Digital Colonialism’” In-class Activity #1 due 2:00pm
1 Th 10/3	What is technology? What do we value? How do technology and values interact?	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winner, “Do Artifacts Have Politics?” & • Jasanoff, “The Power of Technology” Reflection #1 due 11:30am In-class Activity #2 due 2:00pm Syllabus Quiz due Monday, 10/7, 11:59pm
2 T 10/8	How do technology and values interact? Case Study: Reproductive Technologies	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rzepka, “American Values and Contraceptive Acceptance” & • Brezina, “The Ethical, Legal, and Social Issues Impacted by Modern Assisted Reproductive Technologies” In-class Activity #3 due 2:00pm
2 Th 10/10	Case Study: Reproductive Technologies	Reflection #2 due 11:30am In-class Activity #4 due 2:00pm
3 T 10/15	Case Study: Weapons	Read: Teays, “The Ethics of Drone Killings” In-class Activity #5 due 2:00pm
3 Th 10/17	Case Study: Weapons	Reflection #3 due 11:30am In-class Activity #6 due 2:00pm Group Project Survey Due
4 T 10/22	Case Study: Use of Algorithms	Read: O’Neil Ch5, Christian Ch1 In-class Activity #7 due 2:00pm
4 Th 10/24	Case Study: Use of Algorithms	Reflection #4 due 11:30am In-class Activity #8 due 2:00pm

5 T 10/29	Case Study: Generative AI	Read: In-class Activity #9 due 2:00pm
5 Th 10/31	Case Study: Generative AI	Reflection #5 due 11:30am In-class Activity #10 due 2:00pm <i>Group Assignment A due Friday, 10/5</i>
6 T 11/5	Case Study: Healthcare	Read: Weber & Kleine, "Cybersecurity in Health Care" In-class Activity #11 due 2:00pm
6 Th 11/7	Case Study: Healthcare	Reflection #6 due 11:30am In-class Activity #12 due 2:00pm <i>Group Assignment B due Friday, 11/6</i>
7 T 11/12	Case Study: Human Enhancement	Read: "One Day There May Be a Drug to Turbocharge the Brain. Who Should Get It?" and "Brain Implants Allow Paralyzed Man to Walk Using His Thoughts" In-class Activity #13 due 2:00pm
7 Th 11/14	Case Study: Human Enhancement	Reflection #7 due 11:30am In-class Activity #14 due 2:00pm <i>Group Assignment C due Friday, 11/20</i>
8 T 11/19	Case Study: Surveillance	Read: Kudina & Verbeek, "Ethics from Within" In-class Activity #15 due 2:00pm
8 Th 11/21	Case Study: Surveillance	Reflection #8 due 11:30am In-class Activity #16 due 2:00pm
9 T 11/26	Case Study: Mass Media	Read: Riemer & Peter "Algorithmic Audiencing" In-class Activity #17 due 2:00pm <i>Group Assignment D due Wednesday, 11/27</i>
9 Th 11/28	Thanksgiving – No Class	
10 T 12/3	Case Study: Mass Media	Reflection #9 due 11:30am In-class Activity #18 due 2:00pm
10 Th 12/5	Wrap-Up	Reflection #10 due 11:30am <i>Group Assignment Final due Friday, 12/6</i>
T 12/10		Final Reflection due 11:59pm

*Subject to change as necessary