

# Human Nature and Technology (HTEC)

## CTY Course Syllabus

### 1. Course Overview

What is technology, and how does it affect human nature? Is technology natural or artificial, and can we make a sense of this distinction in the contemporary scientific world? Are the effects of technology good, bad, or neutral, and are these changes ultimately out of our control? This course will approach these and other philosophical questions from a historical perspective in order to develop a framework for understanding contemporary technological issues, including the Internet, robotics and artificial intelligence, privacy, sustainability, and biotechnology.

### 2. Expectations

**All students must sign and commit to the CTY Honor Code.**

Students are expected to actively participate in group and class discussions. Discussions should be lively, passionate, and friendly.

### 3. Requirements

**Worksheets:** Most activities will be accompanied by worksheets. These are designed to be open workspaces where you are encouraged to critically engage the material. Worksheets will include a brief writing prompt or important passage from the reading to help guide your response. You are not required to respond directly to the prompts; they are merely suggestions to help organize your thoughts. You should use these worksheets to take notes as you read, to highlight interesting concepts or passages, and to develop your own ideas and arguments on the topic. The worksheets will also be used to develop the weekly projects.

Worksheets will be collected and reviewed at the end of each day.

**Projects:** Each week you are expected to complete one major project.

**Week 1: Interest Proposal (2-3 pages)**

During the first week of the course, we will be discussing the relation between human nature and technology in broad terms. Though we will cover a lot of ground, the discussions will remain at a fairly abstract level. This proposal is your chance to get concrete with some specific topic, issue, or example that you find interesting. Describe the issue thoroughly, and discuss why you think it is important for understanding the relationship between human nature and technology.

**Week 2: Class Presentation (7-10 minutes)**

The class will be presented with a question that is relevant to their individual interests. Prepare a short presentation that approaches the question from the perspective of your particular interest. Although this will not be a formal debate, you are encouraged to explore arguments from many perspectives as they relate to your particular interest, and to form and defend a position on the issue. Be prepared to answer questions from the class following your presentation. Library/Internet research may be required.

**Week 3: Writing Assignment (5-7 pages)**

The final project is an expansion and elaboration on your interest, using what you have learned in the course and in preparing your presentation. You will write a formal college level philosophy paper. Clearly state a thesis, offer arguments in favor of your position, defend against possible objections, and develop the implications of your thesis.

## Schedule of Readings, Lectures, and Activities

Items in **bold** are accompanied by a worksheet.

		Topics	Activities
<b>Day 1</b>	morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is Human Nature?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-assessment</li> <li><b>Brainstorm</b></li> <li>Group discussion</li> <li>Course Expectations</li> </ul>
	afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is Technology?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>[Film] Connections</b></li> <li><b>Read: Kline</b></li> </ul>
	evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Read: Plato</b></li> <li><b>Read: Descartes</b></li> </ul>
<b>Day 2</b>	morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reason and human intelligence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss Rationalism</li> <li>Read and interpret Aristotle (groups)</li> </ul>
	afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How are humans unique?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Bowerbirds</b></li> <li>Interest Proposals</li> </ul>
	evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Read: Gehlen</b></li> </ul>
<b>Day 3</b>	morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Humanity's technological nature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss Gehlen</li> <li>Interest Proposals</li> </ul>
	afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Man the tool-maker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Read: Marx</b></li> </ul>
	evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Read: Heidegger</b></li> </ul>
<b>Day 4</b>	morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Episteme and techne</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss Heidegger</li> </ul>
	afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instrumentality</li> <li>Enframing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read: Heidegger</li> </ul>

		Topics	Activities
	evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest proposals</li> </ul>
<b>Day 5</b>	morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The philosophy of technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare debate</li> <li>• Debate: Gehlen vs Heidegger</li> </ul>
	afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest Proposals Due</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read and discuss Interest Proposals</li> </ul>
	evening (Sunday)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read: Clark</b> ch 1</li> </ul>
<b>Day 6</b>	morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extended mind</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss Clark</li> <li>• Read Clark ch 4</li> </ul>
	afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Natural Born Cyborgs</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read: Haraway</b></li> <li>• Continue Clark</li> <li>• Begin presentations</li> </ul>
	evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Clark ch 5</li> </ul>
<b>Day 7</b>	morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The phenomenology of technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finish Clark</li> <li>• <b>Read: Dreyfus</b> ch 1</li> </ul>
	afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The history of the internet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss Dreyfus</li> <li>• Discuss the Internet</li> </ul>
	evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: Dreyfus, ch 2</li> </ul>
<b>Day 8</b>	morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills and embodiment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read: Dreyfus, ch 3</li> <li>• <b>Nature on Wikipedia</b></li> </ul>
	afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telepresence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss Dreyfus</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>
	evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read: Dreyfus</b> ch 4</li> </ul>

		Topics	Activities
<b>Day 9</b>	morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nihilism and the public sphere</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss Dreyfus</li> <li><b>Read: Sterling</b> (course packet)</li> </ul>
	afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare for class debate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare presentation</li> </ul>
	evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentations</li> </ul>
<b>Day 10</b>	morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technology and human nature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class Debate: Clark vs Dreyfus</li> <li><b>Read: Adams</b></li> </ul>
	afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class Presentations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group Discussion, Unit wrap up</li> </ul>
	evening (Sunday)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin Final Papers</li> </ul>
<b>Day 11</b>	morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Artificial Intelligence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Read: Turing</b></li> </ul>
	afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Against AI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Read: Searle</b></li> <li>Paper</li> <li><b>Prepare for Debate</b></li> </ul>
	evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Read: Sterling</b> ch. 1-3</li> </ul>
<b>Day 12</b>	morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can machines think?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>AI Debate</b></li> <li><b>[Film] The Great Robot Race</b></li> </ul>
	afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborating with machines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Read: Jenkinson</b></li> <li><b>Read: Chaing</b></li> </ul>
	evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final Paper</li> </ul>
<b>Day 13</b>	morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gizmos and Spimes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read Sterling, ch 4-6</li> </ul>

		Topics	Activities
	afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Privacy and security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network Neutrality</li> <li>• NSA and FISA</li> <li>• <b>[Film] Spying on the Home Front</b></li> </ul>
	Evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Paper</li> </ul>
<b>Day 14</b>	morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability and Obsolescence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Sterling ch 7-9</li> </ul>
	afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biotechnology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>[Film] The Eyes of Nye</b></li> </ul>
	evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Paper</li> </ul>
<b>Day 15</b>	morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Paper Due</li> <li>• Machines and War</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>[Film] Dr. Strangelove</b></li> </ul>
	afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Wrap-up</li> </ul>	
	evening (Sunday)		