

# Human Nature and Technology (HTEC) CTY Course Syllabus

## Course Overview

What is technology, and what is its relation to human nature? Is our technologically enhanced environment an expression of something fundamentally human, or is it changing who and what we are? Are the effects of technology good, bad, or neutral, and to what extent can we control our technological world? This course will approach these and other philosophical questions from a variety of perspectives in order to develop a framework for understanding contemporary technological issues, including the Internet, social networking, robotics and artificial intelligence, privacy, security, and the nature of humanity.

## 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. Some class topics will be controversial, but it is important to remember the difference between critiquing an idea and personal attacks; *ad hominem*s will not be tolerated. Students must always show respect for their instructors, their classmates, and the learning environment. Students will use all technology responsibly and maturely.

## Assignments

Response Journal:

Throughout the course, you will be responsible for regularly recording your comments, questions, criticisms, and reflections on readings, assignments, lectures, and course themes. These responses will be recorded not on paper, but in updates to the social networking site Twitter. You will post using either your own username, or using the class username @hteca. All posts will be tagged with the hash #htec so that we (and others) can easily follow the conversation. Details will be provided early on in the course.

## Weekly Debates and Writing Assignments:

Writing well and making effective arguments are both parts of being a good philosopher. Each week will culminate with a class-wide debate on a central topic from that week's reading. After each debate, you will be asked to write a short paper expanding on one of the points raised by either side. Occasionally, you will be asked to write a short paper on other topics as well.

Papers will be read by the instructors, and returned with comments and suggestions. You will also have an opportunity to work with a group to develop a presentation on an emerging piece of technology.

Day	Session	Topics	Activities
Day 1	Morning	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Course expectations / honor code</li><li>• <b>Brainstorm philosophy and human nature</b></li><li>• <b>Discuss philosophy brainstorm</b></li></ul>
	Afternoon	Themes of the course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Technology policy / introduction to twitter</li><li>• Library research: problems in technology</li></ul>
	Evening	Research and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Finish library research</li><li>• Pre-assessment</li></ul>

Day	Session	Topics	Activities
<b>Day 2</b>	Morning	Current events in technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group presentations on current events</li> </ul>
	Afternoon		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finish presentations / discuss current events</li> <li>• Read Kline</li> <li>• Discuss Kline</li> </ul>
	Evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Discuss Kline</b></li> <li>• <b>Read Aristotle</b></li> <li>• <b>Discuss Aristotle</b></li> </ul>
<b>Day 3</b>	Morning	Unit 1: Human Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Revisit brainstorm for human nature</b></li> <li>• <b>Lecture/discussion - essentialism and human nature</b></li> </ul>
	Afternoon	Animals and Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Videos: Bowerbirds, leaf-cutter ants, NC crows, termites, lyrebird</b></li> </ul>
	Evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read: Gehlen</b></li> <li>• <b>How to write a philosophy paper</b></li> </ul>
<b>Day 4</b>	Morning	Philosophy of mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Paper: Gehlen vs. Aristotle on Essentialism</i></b></li> <li>• <b>Discuss Gehlen</b></li> </ul>
	Afternoon	Philosophy of Mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crash-course in the philosophy of mind (Substance dualism, idealism, behaviorism)</li> </ul>

Day	Session	Topics	Activities
	Evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The modern story: mind-brain identity, functionalism, property dualism</b></li> <li>• <b>Discuss: philosophy of mind</b></li> </ul>
<b>Day 5</b>	Morning	Debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for debate with HTECB</li> </ul>
	Afternoon	Debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debate with HTECB</li> </ul>
	Evening (Sunday)	Extended mind, externalism, cyborgs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Clark Ch 1-2</li> </ul>
<b>Day 6</b>	Morning	Plasticity, opportunism, neuroscience, psychology, cognitive science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Continue Clark</b></li> </ul>
	Afternoon	Affect, emotion, free will, yadda. Meta questions: is there any sense to the question "What is human nature?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecture/discussion on extended mind</li> </ul>
	Evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive enhancement discussion</li> </ul>
<b>Day 7</b>	Morning	Conclude extended mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finish Clark (3-4)</li> </ul>
	Afternoon	Artificial Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss Clark and extended mind</li> </ul>
	Evening		Watson video

Day	Session	Topics	Activities
<b>Day 8</b>	Morning	Robotics, Machine autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read: Turing and Searle</b></li> </ul>
	Afternoon	End Unit 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activism Project</li> </ul>
	Evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finish Turing and Searle</li> </ul>
<b>Day 9</b>	Morning	Begin Unit 2: Philosophy of technology, artificial/natural distinction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Turing game, discuss AI</b></li> </ul>
	Afternoon	use and design, interfaces, performance enhancement, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation for Heidegger</li> </ul> <p>(Aristotle review)</p>
	Evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second paper: Is Technology Neutral?</li> </ul>
<b>Day 10</b>	Morning	Alienation, criticism of technology, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prepare for 2nd debate</b></li> </ul>
	Afternoon	End Unit 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2nd debate</li> </ul>
	Evening (Sunday)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Heidegger</li> </ul>
<b>Day 11</b>	Morning	Begin Unit 3: What is the internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Finish Heidegger, discuss Heidegger</b></li> </ul>
	Afternoon	Wikipedia, collective action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read Lanier</b></li> </ul>
	Evening	nudges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Lanier</li> </ul>

<b>Day</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Activities</b>
<b>Day 12</b>	Morning	Copyright & Piracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lessig copyright talk</li> <li>• Discuss remix culture</li> </ul>
	Afternoon		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Music Era Identification game</b></li> </ul>
	Evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Shirky</li> </ul>
<b>Day 13</b>	Morning	Privacy and 4th amendment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Shirky</li> </ul>
	Afternoon		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Structure of the Internet / packet sniffing demo</b></li> </ul>
	Evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finish Shirky</li> </ul>
<b>Day 14</b>	Morning	Revolution and the internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss Shirky and contemporary issues</li> </ul>
	Afternoon	Anonymous/emergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Closing remarks</b></li> </ul>
	Evening		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post assessment</li> <li>• Evals</li> </ul>
<b>Day 15</b>	Morning		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Movie: Primer</b></li> </ul>