

Philosophy of Media and Technology

PHIL 4920/5920; HUM/SSC 5920
SPRING 2013, TR 12:30PM - 1:45PM

Course Description: In his poem *The Rock, I* T.S. Eliot asks, “Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?” As we are constantly reminded, we live in an ever-accelerating “Information Age,” an era of rapidly shifting images and voluminous data. Students and teachers alike feel overwhelmed by the changes surrounding them, and would like to better understand what these changes mean. Because philosophers have traditionally been concerned with the nature of wisdom and knowledge, they are particularly suited to assess the possible impact that current changes in the technological environment might have upon rationality, ethics, and democracy. For example, are these changes affecting our basic capacity to reason? Could floods of “data smog” and our compulsion to “multi-task” erode our ability to recognize wisdom and produce knowledge? More to the point, if ethical action rests upon justification, and justification depends upon certain forms of language then what does our age’s shift toward repaid visual imagery portend for judgments of right and wrong? And what might be the effect upon democracy—which requires from its citizens such traditional abilities as rational discussion and debate? To pursue these answers, this course will present philosophical accounts of visual literacy and criticism, the relations of those changes to human experience and our conceptions of living a meaningful life.

Course Objectives: Ideally, by the end of this course students should gain the following skills:

Familiarization. Gain a good sense of what is at stake in issues of course.

Comprehension. Be able to comprehend the arguments offered by various philosophers.

Critical analysis. Be able to criticize those arguments by pointing out where they lack evidence, make an unreasonable leap, hold a false assumption, etc.

Demonstration of the above through writing.

Verbalization. Be able to summarize a philosophical position, without notes, using your own words. Be able to criticize a position this way.

Conversation and Debate. Be able to discuss issues in a focused and informed way with others in the class. This will involve listening closely to their points, then responding in a way that moves the discussion ahead.

Required Texts: Books and PACKET available at Auraria Bookstore; books also at Big Dog Textbooks (1331 15th Street).

1. **Amusing Ourselves to Death** by Neil Postman; Publisher: Penguin Books; (November 1, 1986); ISBN: 0140094385
2. **Holding on to Reality: The Nature of Information at the Turn of the Millennium** by Albert Borgmann; Publisher: University of Chicago Press; (November 1, 2000); ISBN: 0226066231
3. **Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other [Paperback]** by Sherry Turkle; Basic Books, 2012. ISBN-10: 0465031463; ISBN-13: 978-0465031467
4. **Online assortment** of other readings on media and technology. These are on Blackboard and found under the menu item “REQUIRED READINGS”

BLACKBOARD/WEBSITE: There are two online sites related to this course. Familiarize yourself with them right away. Both will offer you access to information about the course such as study questions, announcements, grades, extra credit assignments.

1. The first and most important one is our course Blackboard site: <https://blackboard.cuonline.edu>. On this page are INSTRUCTIONS TO ENROLL. Please make sure you enroll right at the beginning of the class.
2. The second site is my home page at <http://www.davidhildebrand.org>. Here there are a variety of general study tips and resources in philosophy.

READINGS: It is expected that you have done the readings before we discuss them. As you read, copy out important points and questions you have onto a separate sheet of paper. (These will help you with your short reflection papers.) You may also want to note problem passages (e.g., with a "?" or "Q.") in your text as you read. These are good points for class discussion. You should come to each class able to discuss the main issues of the reading and you could be asked during class to present the main points to the class. Your well-prepared participation is crucial for a successful class. Please see the *Tips for Understanding Philosophy and for Writing Philosophy Papers* on my home page. See also this page for tips on participating and reading.

Very important: please set aside about 10 minutes shortly before class to look back over (skim-review) the readings and whatever you have written for that day.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/EVALUATION:

Max. points possible:

1000 points

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| 1. Participation (including presentation of short writings) | 150 points |
| 2. Short Writings (10 total) | 150 points (5 must be done by 3/18; the next 5 by May 8) |
| 3. Technology journal | 150 points (due: NOON, 5/13) |
| 4. Exam #1 Maximum length: 1250-1750 words | 250 points (Due in class, 3/6) |
| 5. Exam #2 GRADUATE students: 2500-3250 words | 300 points (due: NOON, 5/13) |
| | UNDERGRADUATE students: 2000-2500 words |

Grades: There are 1000 possible points for this class. An "A" will be a body of work achieving at or above 930 points; an "A-" will be 900-929 points; a "B+" is 870-899 points, etc. Values for those letters, as well as the policies regarding other grades such as Incomplete, are available in the CU Academic Policies and Regulations section of the handbook. I have set out my standards of what a grade means on my FAQ section of my website.

Attendance: Attendance is required. Two *unexcused* absences over the course of the semester are permitted without penalty. An *excusable* absence is a medical illness or emergency that is completely unavoidable. It is the student's responsibility to talk to me about excusable absences ASAP after the absence. Each additional absence will lower your final course grade, approximately 30 points per absence. (E.g., having a total three unexcused absences would lower a cumulative 900 point course average by 30 points to 870—effectively a reduction from an A- to a B+—and so forth.)

(1) Participation: Course participation grades are not automatic. They are based on oral contributions to the collective learning experience of the class as a whole in terms of asking pertinent questions, answering questions correctly or, at least, provocatively, making insightful observations, and offering other meaningful expressions of interest in the material that help encourage learning. Shyness is not an excuse—oral participation is part of your evaluation. There will be ample opportunity for active and well prepared participation, which I value. I will measure your participation by a variety of components: informed dialogue, presentation of your short papers in class, participation in any group work, etc. Feel free to check with me at any point to see how well you're participating. **Important:** part of this grade will be determined by your presentation of your **short writings (see below):** when called upon in class, you must demonstrate that you know what you wrote and why you wrote it; in other words, show clarity of thought, effective

communication, and ability to field questions on your paper will all contribute to the participation portion of your grade. (I suggest looking over your short papers briefly before class to prepare.)

(2) SHORT WRITINGS (10 total) The purpose of these assignments is to help you clarify your understanding of the readings and to help you think critically about the issues. **Follow these instructions carefully, please.**

What to write on short/critical reaction papers:

- Short papers should be: 250-350 word, typewritten reactions or questions about some specific issue which you find compelling in the readings. Your paper must not simply sum up the reading or repeat points made there. (I.e., **no book reports**, please.) Rather, you must try to raise a question or discuss some original insight. You may use these papers to demonstrate your application of a concept/idea in the readings to an experience you have making or experiencing art, but the connection to the reading must be significant (and not a mere "jumping off" point. **See the website link "Writing short, critical papers" for further hints** about how to write a good paper.
- The first paragraph should state in 1-2 sentences a summary of what the paper is about.
- Only papers written on a reading or topic that will be discussed in the class immediately coming up are acceptable.

When to write short papers:

- You must do 10 critical papers total and you may not hand in more than one paper on the same date. **FIVE papers must be done by the course midpoint, March 18. Students who have not done 5 papers by this point will only be permitted to do 5 more papers.**
- You must come to class for a paper to be accepted.

Grading on short papers

- Grade: This will be a "graded" assignment only in a loose sense; in other words it will be either S-satisfactory (full credit or 20 points) or U-unsatisfactory (half credit or 10 points). A zero (0) will be awarded if nothing (or next to nothing) is turned in.
- **TWO MAKE-UPS:** If you get a Unsatisfactory on up to two papers, you may revise and resubmit them. The old grade will be dropped in favor of the revised paper's grade.

(3) Technology Journal: Over the course of the semester you will keep a journal on your ongoing relationship to technology in your daily life. The journal will be made up of will include two main assignments. Journals will be graded. Excellent entries will go into detail about the experiences and try to link those details to larger conclusions about the role of these technologies in your life.

A. Doing without. Choose 2 different technological objects you know are central to your life. In other words, 2 things which you use everyday (or almost everyday) to accomplish some activity (work or recreation, up to you). This could be small, like an iPod, laptop, or phone; it could be larger, like a microwave or television. Now, do the following: for each of these technologies give it up for three days--turn it off, put it away, avoid it, whatever it takes. Next, take notes each day about what it was like to do without it. Describe:

- (a) what it felt like to go without it,
- (b) whether you found some other substitute for the functions of the device (don't just borrow someone else's iPod!) or what you did in the space that habit had been taking up; finally,
- (c) record any insights you had about why you had formed an attachment to that technology in the first place.

Summarize these notes and type them up for each technology. Each set of notes should be a minimum of 1000 words. (2000 words total for this assignment.)

B. Alone together. People everywhere these days are on their phones, iPods, etc. For 7 days this semester, take note--all day long--of the ways in which you notice people connected to devices in public spaces. (These should be days you

are not home or alone most of the day!). Make sure each date recorded includes date, places observed, and duration of observation.

As you observe people, try to notice:

- *The ways* people are isolating from public spaces. (Are they on the phone with their mom? On Facebook in a lecture? etc.)
- *When* people are isolating themselves from public spaces?
- What *motivation* you think people have for disconnecting (e.g. to avoid the boredom of a long line, to contact their friends, etc.) Try not to speculate--if there are no clues as to why people are isolated, don't just guess wildly.
- Whether their isolation causes any practical, social, ethical *problems*. (E.g., did they miss their bus? Were they rude to another student? Did they disrespect a waiter trying to serve them? Etc.)

Summarize these notes and type them up for each technology. The notes should be a minimum of 1300 words.

(4&5) Longer Exams: There will be two longer exams required for this class. They will likely be take home, but may contain an in class portion. They will likely contain a mixture of shorter and longer parts, as well as objective and essay formats. NO late exams without prior and absolutely justified permission. You may email me at any time to discuss your progress on ALL papers/assignments or we can discuss them in office hours. **Only hard/paper copies will be accepted. I will not print out papers for you nor accept electronic copies as a way of meeting the deadline.**

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a form of stealing. It occurs when an author uses the words or ideas of others as if they were the author's own original thought. (It may include word-for-word copying, interspersing one's own words with another's, paraphrasing, inventing or counterfeiting sources, submitting another's work as one's own, neglecting quotation marks on material that is otherwise acknowledged.) Plagiarism is often unintentional. It can be avoided by always acknowledging one's debt to others by citing the exact source of a quotation or paraphrase. Since plagiarism is such a serious violation of academic honesty, the PENALTY for it may be an AUTOMATIC "F" FOR THIS COURSE. The CU handbook has a more complete description of plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

Contact Information and Office Hours

Phone : 303-556-8558 **E-mail:** david.hildebrand@ucdenver.edu **Website:** <http://davidhildebrand.org>
Office and Hours: Plaza M108 **Hours** MW 145--245 p.m. or by appointment.

Purpose: I *strongly* encourage you to participate by dropping by during office hours. We can talk about the class readings and lectures, exams and papers, your progress, or just philosophy in general. Note: If you are a student with a disability, I will make myself available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations. Before accommodations will be made, you may be required to provide documentation. **Students with disabilities** will be accommodated. Students with disabilities are required to register disabilities with the UCD Disability Services Office, and are responsible for requesting reasonable accommodations at the beginning of the term.

PLEASE NOTE: ALL COURSE REQUIREMENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE INSTRUCTOR.

Spring 2013 CLAS Academic Policies

The following policies pertain to all degree students in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS).

- **Schedule verification:** It is each student's responsibility to verify online that his/her official registration is correct: verify before classes begin and prior to the drop/add deadline. Failure to verify schedule accuracy is not sufficient reason to justify a late add or drop.
- **E-mail:** Students must activate and regularly check their official student e-mail account for CU Denver business: <http://www.ucdenver.edu/student-services/Pages/WebMail.aspx>. Those who forward email must check CU Denver e-mail regularly for messages not automatically forwarded.
- **Waitlists:**
 - Students are not automatically notified if they are added to a class from a waitlist.
 - Students are not automatically dropped from a class if they never attended, stopped attending, or do not make tuition payments.
 - Waitlists are purged after the 1st week of classes, after which a paper Schedule Adjustment Form (SAF or drop/add form) is required. It is the student's responsibility to get the form (online or at the Advising Office, NC 4002), have it signed, deliver it to the Registrar (Annex 100) or the Student Services Center (NC 1003), and verify her/his schedule online.
- **Late adds** (after 6 February) will be approved only when circumstances surrounding the late add are beyond the student's control. This will require a written petition and verifiable documentation. Petition forms are available in NC 4002. The signature of a faculty member on a SAF does not guarantee that a late add petition will be approved.
- **Late drops/withdrawals** (after 15 April) will be approved only when circumstances surrounding the late drop have arisen after the published drop deadline and are beyond the student's control. This will require a written petition and verifiable documentation. The signature of a faculty member does not guarantee that a late drop/withdrawal petition will be approved.
- **Tuition:** Students are responsible for completing arrangements with financial aid, family, scholarships, etc. to pay their tuition prior to Census Date (6 February). Students who drop after that date are (1) financially responsible for tuition and fees, (2) academically responsible and will receive a "W" grade, and (3) are ineligible for a refund of COF hours or tuition.
- **Graduation:**
 - Undergraduate students wishing to graduate in spring 2013 must (1) first meet with their CLAS advisor; (2) then meet with their major and minor advisor(s), who will complete the electronic form required to verify eligibility to graduate; and (3), only then, apply for graduation online through UCDAccess. These steps must be completed by Census Date (6 February), which is an absolute deadline without exceptions.
 - Graduate students wishing to graduate in spring semester 2013 must complete the online Intent to Graduate form and have a Request for Admissions to Candidacy on file with the CU Denver Graduate School (LSC 1251) no later than 5 PM, February 6, 2013.

Important Dates and Deadlines

- **January 21, 2013:** Martin Luther King Holiday. Last day to withdraw from all classes via UCDAccess and receive a refund of the \$200 advance payment and all tuition.
- **January 22, 2013:** First day of classes.
- **January 27, 2013:** Last day to add or waitlist classes using UCDAccess. After this date, a Schedule Adjustment Form (SAF) is required to change, add, or drop.
- **January 28, 2013:** Last day to drop without a \$100 drop charge. No adds permitted on this day.
- **January 29 - February 6, 2013:**
 - UCDAccess registration is closed; registration now requires a SAF with faculty signature.
 - Verify your registration via UCDAccess. You are not registered for a course unless your name appears on the official roster; conversely, your name may have been added automatically from the waitlist without notification, which means that you will be held responsible.
- **February 6, 2013: Census date.**
 - **2/6/13, 5 PM:** Last day to add structured courses without a written petition for a late add. This is an absolute deadline and is treated as such. This does not apply to independent studies, internships, project hours, thesis hours, dissertation hours, and modular courses.
 - **2/6/13, 5 PM:** Last day to drop a course or completely withdraw from spring 2013 using a SAF and still receive tuition refund, minus the drop fee. After this date, tuition is forfeited and a "W" will appear on the transcript. This includes section changes. This is an absolute deadline.
 - **2/6/13, 5 PM:** Last day to request Pass/Fail or No-Credit option for a course.
 - **2/6/13, 5 PM:** Last day for a graduate student to register for a Candidate for Degree and last day for a Ph.D. student to petition for a reduction in hours.
 - **2/6/13, 5 PM:** Last day to apply for spring 2013 graduation. If an undergraduate, you must make an appointment and see your academic advisor to apply. If a graduate student, you must complete the Intent to Graduate and Candidate for Degree forms.
- **February 18-27 (estimated), 2013:** Faculty can use the Early Alert system.
- **March 25-31, 2013:** Spring Break.
- **April 1, 2013, 5 PM:** Last day for non-CLAS students to drop or withdraw without a petition and special approval from the academic dean. After this date, a dean's signature is required.
- **April 15, 2013, 5 PM:** Last day for CLAS students to drop or withdraw with signatures from the faculty and dean but without a full petition. After this date, all schedule changes require a full petition. Petitions are available in NC 4002 for undergraduates and in the CU Denver Graduate School offices for graduate students.
- **May 13-18, 2013:** Finals Week. No schedule changes will be granted once finals week has started--there are no exceptions to this policy. Commencement is May 18.
- **May 22, 2013 (tentative):** Due date for faculty submission of grades.
- **May 27, 2013 (tentative):** Spring final grades available on UCD Access.

Course Schedule: Readings and Assignments

Where should you look for the readings? Either in the book we're reading at the time or "**online**" which means on Blackboard site. **Due dates below in RED.**

Note: This is a rough schedule. Subject to revision. I will let you know in each class what is coming up.

Date	Readings	Notes
JANUARY		
W 23	Introduction to Course IN CLASS FILMS: Short clip from Curb (Larry's invisible cell phone); Neil Postman on the rise of the Internet (in class discussion)	Introduction to one another, class, syllabus. Discussion about what we take technology to be and the various meanings it has for us.
M 28	(a) Drengson; (b) Encyclopedia article on Technology ONLINE	What is the "philosophy of technology"? How do general definitions and approaches to technology differ?
W 30	Mumford; ONLINE	
FEBRUARY		
M 4	Ellul; ONLINE	
W 6	Winner; ONLINE	
M 11	(a) Heidegger BREMEN LECTURES 253-267; (b) Borgmann article "Technology" from Blackwell Companion to Heidegger ONLINE	Heidegger sees technology implicated in a whole new way of being in the world--a new way of being a human being. We undertake to see what he means.
W 13	Heidegger 267-end	Guest lecture: Mark Tanzer
M 18	Heidegger, reread Bremen lectures	One more try...
W 20	Borgmann: (From Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life) 1-12; 33-48; ONLINE	Albert Borgmann is one of the most influential philosophers of technology alive today. He attempts to put into practice Heidegger's philosophy and develops his own view by doing this. By reading him, we can both understand the more obscure aspects of Heidegger and see Borgmann's own Neo- Heideggerian attempt at repair.
M 25	Borgmann: (From Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life) 48-68; 101-107; 114-124. Recommended: 124-143 ONLINE	
EXAM QUESTIONS OUT IN CLASS		

W 27	Borgmann: (From Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life) 196-210; Hickman (on Borgmann) “A Neo-Heideggerian Critique of Technology: Albert Borgmann” ONLINE	Here we wrap up Borgmann’s earlier book on technology and look to Hickman for perspective on Borgmann. Keep your eye on the differences between Focaltechnics and Pragmatechnics.
MARCH		
M 4	Borgmann: <i>Holding On to Reality</i> , 1-46	Borgmann developed his view by shifting from technologies per se toward the kinds of changes in “information” visited upon human beings by technology; a shift in the symbolic ways humans exist and get along in the world. Reflect on the title of Borgmann’s book: what is he trying to hold on to--and why?
W 6 EXAM 1 DUE IN CLASS	Borgmann: <i>Holding On</i> , 47-72;	
M 11 Guest: Gillian Silverman, UCD English department	Borgmann: <i>Holding On</i> , 85-92; Hickman, “Literacy, Mediacy, and Technological Determinism” ONLINE	The changing nature of reading and what those changes portend.
W 13	Borgmann: <i>Holding On</i> , 166-192	
M 18 Course midpoint: 5 of 10 short papers must be done by this point. Only 5 more will be counted after today.	Borgmann: <i>Holding On</i> , 193-233 <i>Recommended:</i> "You Are Not a Gadget" author Jaron Lanier. Online on Blackboard under “Audio/Video” menu link.	Borgmann’s conclusions about the direction we’re headed and what he’s worried about.
W 20	Verbeek, Chapter 6; ONLINE	Verbeek is younger philosopher of technology who draws more heavily on Jaspers while criticizing both Heidegger and Borgmann. Verbeek wants to bracket the Heidegger-type analyses and do more phenomenology of things. Borgmann wants to save Heidegger by returning to a phenomenological approach--which is also what Verbeek wants--but not as an effort to save Heidegger. Instead, Verbeek argues that Borgmann does not go far enough.
M 25/27	Spring Break	
APRIL		
M 1	Verbeek, Introduction, Chapter 1 (up to p. 31); ONLINE	Verbeek’s own introduction to philosophy of technology and to Jaspers

W 3	Verbeek, Chapter 1 (pp. 31-46); ONLINE	
M 8	Verbeek, Chapter 2 (pp. 47-75); ONLINE	Verbeek reviews Heidegger's philosophy of technology and then critiques it.
W 10	Verbeek, Chapter 2 (pp. 75-95); ONLINE	Verbeek critique of Heidegger.
M 15	Hickman on Dewey From <i>Pragmatism as Post-Postmodernism</i> "Doing and Making in a Democracy: John Dewey" ; ONLINE	Hickman looks beyond both the Heideggerian and phenomenological toward the pragmatic--a Deweyan way of looking at technology.
W 17	Turkle <i>Alone Together</i> (up to 67) <i>Recommended:</i> Interview with Turkle online at NPR. Online on Blackboard under "Audio/Video" menu link	Sherry Turkle examines, through extensive studies and analysis, the ways in which robots and technological connectivity are changing what it means to us to be alone and together.
M 22	Turkle <i>Alone Together</i> ; (68-150) <i>Suggested:</i> Hayles on Deep Attention vs. Hyper Attention ONLINE.	
W 24	Turkle <i>Alone Together</i> (151-228)	
M 29	Turkle <i>Alone Together</i> (229-end)	
MAY		
W 1 EXAM QUESTIONS OUT IN CLASS	Postman <i>Amusing Foreword</i> , 1-3, 4-5	Neil Postman's cultural critique of the kind of meaning-environment created by technology and whether that environment is good for democratic discourse.
M 6	Postman <i>Amusing</i> 6-7. 10-11	
W 8 Last Class	Postman <i>Technopoly</i> 1-4, 10-11 ONLINE	Postman's cultural critique of the kind of values and societal forms created by technology
M 13	Exam and Journal Due	