PHL340: Issues in Philosophy of Mind
Technology and the Mind

Instructor: Daniel Munro   **Lectures:** Fridays, 9am-12pm
Email: daniel.munro@mail.utoronto.ca   **Location:** UC 152
Office hours: Wednesdays, 10am-11am on Zoom (or by appointment)

Course Description

This is an advanced course in philosophy of mind. One of the primary aims of the course is to familiarize you with some recent debates about the relationship between the mind and various modern technologies. Another primary aim is for you to develop your own stance on these debates, and to practice defending these stances through philosophical arguments in various formats.

We'll consider what studying modern technologies can tell us about the nature of our own minds, as well as how all the time we spend interacting with various technologies might mould and shape our minds. While exploring these topics, we'll touch on various core debates in philosophy of mind, both classic and contemporary. So, a secondary aim of the course is for you to engage with these foundational debates at an advanced level, through the specific lens of the intersection between philosophy of mind and philosophy of technology.

The course will be divided into four parts (3 weeks on each):

1. **Artificial Intelligence and the Mind**
2. **The Extended Mind Hypothesis**
3. **Virtual Reality and the Mind**
4. **Does Technology Manipulate Us?**

Course Evaluation

Attendance and Participation
Worth 10% of course grade. Classes will incorporate a lot of opportunity for discussion, in addition to short lectures and student presentations. You'll be expected to come prepared to discuss the readings and to support your peers by participating in discussions that build on their in-class presentations.

Presentation
Worth 20% of course grade. Sign up to present on one course reading this term. Presentation should be roughly 10-15 minutes. You have the option to present in class or record a video and post it on the Quercus discussion board. Find more details and a link to the signup sheet on Quercus.

Topical Reflection
Worth 20% of course grade. At some point during the first half of the term, find a current event, recent news article, popular science article, film, artwork, etc. that's in some way related to a reading from part 1 or part 2 of the course. Share a link to it on the Quercus discussion board with a 500-word explanation of its

relevance to the course and why it's philosophically interesting. **Due on Quercus discussion board by October 17**, but you're encouraged to submit it sometime earlier in the term once you find a topic that interests you. You may draw a connection to a course reading from any point in part 1 or 2 of the course, **except the reading on which you signed up to do your presentation**. Find more details on Quercus.

Term Paper or Public Philosophy Project
Worth 25% of course grade. You can choose one of two options for this assignment. **Due December 7, with all students automatically granted an optional extension until December 12.**

Option 1: term paper
Complete a term paper of 2,000 words. Will ask you to take an original stance on some debate we've covered in the course. More detailed instructions posted on Quercus before due date.

Option 2: public philosophy project
The majority of assignments you complete in university courses will be seen by you plus a TA or instructor, after which no one will ever look at them again. This option will instead allow you to prepare a piece of "public philosophy," philosophical work that is instead intended for consumption by a wider audience, thereby broadening the potential impact of your work in the course. The exact design of this project is relatively open-ended: I encourage to exercise your creativity in coming up with an idea that personally excites you. The main criteria are that the project directly relates to some aspect of this course's philosophical content, as well as that it includes some original philosophical work of your own (as opposed to only repeating other people's ideas). Here are some examples of how this could look, though you are by no means limited to these ideas:

- Create a YouTube video or podcast.
- Propose a substantive edit to a Wikipedia article or propose an entirely new Wikipedia article.
- Write a philosophical op-ed or blog post.
- Conduct a philosophically substantive interview with someone whose work is related to course content (philosopher, academic, artist, journalist, etc.).
- Utilize another online medium or social media platform (Reddit, Twitter, Facebook, etc.), perhaps by designing some way to engage non-course participants in philosophical activity.

If you'd like to take advantage of this option, you should **email Daniel by November 28 with a short description of your project idea**. As needed, I'll work with you to make sure the project is substantive enough to satisfy the assignment criteria while feasible to complete without taking up significantly more time and effort than a term paper would (but note that the open-endedness of this project may nevertheless result in slightly more work than a term paper). Once project details are figured out, I'll also make it clear how your project will be submitted and evaluated (since this may vary a bit by student).

Final Exam
Worth 25% of course grade. Essay-based. A list of topics that may be covered will be distributed closer to the exam date, to help guide your studying. **To be scheduled by the university during the exam period.**

Reading and Lecture Schedule

All readings will be posted on Quercus. It's recommended you read them in the order they appear here. You should plan to do the readings before each week's class, so that you're prepared to discuss them in class.

1. Artificial Intelligence and the Mind

September 9: AI and Language

- Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"
- Nitasha Tiku, "The Google Engineer Who Thinks the Company's AI has come to Life"
- Blake Lemoine, "Is LaMDA Sentient? – An Interview"

September 16: AI and Language (cont'd)

- John Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs"
- McClelland et al., "Extending Machine Language Models toward Human-Level Language Understanding"

September 23: AI and Consciousness

- David Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind* (excerpts)
- Ned Block, "Comparing the Major Theories of Consciousness"
- Dehaene et al., "What is Consciousness, and Could Machines Have It?"

2. The Extended Mind Hypothesis

September 30: Introducing the Extended Mind Hypothesis

- Andy Clark and David Chalmers, "The Extended Mind"
- David Chalmers, "Does Augmented Reality Extend the Mind?"

October 7: Extended Minds: What Can Science Tell Us?

- Evan Risko and Sam Gilbert, "Cognitive Offloading"
- Sparrow et al., "Google Effects on Memory: Cognitive Consequences of Having Information at Our Fingertips"
- Linda Henkel, "Point-and-Shoot Memories: The Influence of Taking Photos on Memory for a Museum Tour"

October 14: Skepticism about Extended Minds

- Brie Gertler, "Overextending the Mind"
- Julia Saores and Benjamin Storm, "Forget in a Flash: A Further Investigation of the Photo-Taking-Impairment Effect"

3. Virtual Reality and the Mind

October 21: Background on the Metaphysics of VR (**Daniel away; lectures to be posted virtually**)

- David Chalmers, "The Matrix as Metaphysics"
- David Chalmers, "The Virtual and the Real" (sec. 7 optional)

October 28: VR, the Mind, and Consciousness

- David Chalmers, "How do Mind and Body Interact in a Virtual World?"

- David Chalmers, "Can There Be Consciousness in a Digital World?"

November 4: VR, the Self, and Empathy

- Aaron Souppouris, "Virtual Reality Made Me Believe I was Someone Else"
- Ramirez et al., "What it's Like to be a _____: Why it's (Often) Unethical to Use VR as an Empathy Nudging Tool"
- Francisco Lara and Jon Rueda, "Virtual Reality Not for 'Being Someone' but for 'Being in Someone Else's Shoes'"

4. Does Technology Manipulate Us?

November 18: Online Communication: The Downsides

- Thi Nguyen, "How Twitter Gamifies Communication"
- Daniel Munro, "Internet Trolling as Social Exploration"

November 25: Online Communication: The Upsides?

- Jonathan Bishop, "The Psychology of Trolling and Lurking: The Role of Defriending and Gamification for Increasing Participation in Online Communities Using Seductive Narratives"
- Amy Gonzales, "Text-based Communication Influences Self-Esteem More than Face-to-Face or Cellphone Communication"

December 2: Technology and Agency

- Michael Madary, "The Illusion of Agency in Human–Computer Interaction"

Other Course Business

Course-related communications
All emails to Daniel should include "PHL340" in the subject line and be sent from a UofT email address. You can expect a reply within 48 hours (so try not to send questions about assignments less than 48 hours before due dates). If you don't hear back by then, send a follow up. Email is appropriate for short questions about course business not already answered on the syllabus or assignment sheets. More philosophically substantive discussion is better reserved for office hours.

Late and missed work
Late assignments will be assessed a penalty of 1/3 letter grade per day.

Requests for extensions
If extenuating circumstances prevent you from completing a paper on time, please get in touch as far in advance as possible to request an extension.

Requests for regrades
If you feel a regrade on an assignment is warranted, email with your request. Include a valid explanation of why you think a re-grade is warranted. (Note: "I need a better grade in this course to [bring up my average/ apply to grad school/etc.]" is not an example of a valid explanation).

Plagiarism detection

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (https://uoft.me/pdt-faq). Use of this tool is optional, but please email me well before the due date of an assignment if you'd like to make alternative submission arrangements.

Accessibility, accommodations, and other support

If you have any disability or health related concerns that require accommodation, please get in touch as soon as possible to figure out how we can best make this course a fruitful learning experience for you. Please also get in touch with Accessibility Services.

If you require accommodation for course conflicts with religious holidays, please also get in touch as soon as possible to make arrangements.

You may also be interested in resources for mental health support, in the philosophy essay clinic if you're looking for help with philosophical writing, or in UofT's English language learning supports.

Academic integrity

It's your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty. If you're feeling overwhelmed with coursework, worried about meeting a deadline, or having trouble understanding what's expected of you on an assignment, please get in touch with me instead of resorting to academic dishonesty. For information about academic integrity at UofT, visit the University's academic integrity page.