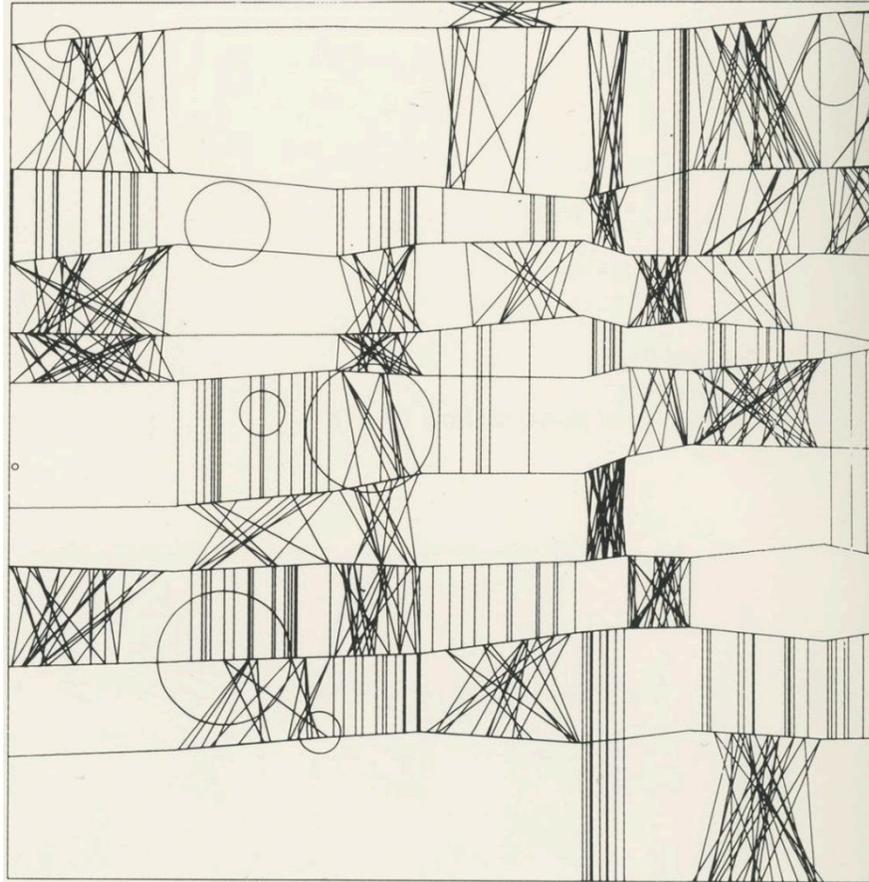


AI AND THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY:
PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES ABOUT TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN
SURVIVAL

PHIL 143.002

Fall 2025

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



COURSE INFORMATION

Credit Hours: 3

Target Audience: undergraduates

Prerequisites: none

Meeting Pattern: TR 8:00–9:15 a.m.

Instructional Format: in-person

Classroom or Location: Bingham 3006

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Myraeka d'Leeuwen (please call me Myraeka! pronounced Muh-rah-kuh)

Email: myraeka@unc.edu

Office Location: N/A 😞 office hours will be held in Epilogue at 109 E. Franklin St.¹

Office Hours: Thursday 9:30-11:30 a.m., or by appointment

COURSE CONTENT

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the ethical, political, and epistemic issues that have arisen or are expected to arise from the advent of advanced artificial systems. This class will have a particular focus on technology which is already making very real impacts on people's lives. We will cover bias and fairness in algorithmic systems, including lending, hiring, and criminal justice; social media, privacy, and online information ecosystems; generative AI, such as large language models and image or video generators; and the use of technically advanced systems in warfare. Though this class will use methods of philosophical inquiry to analyze these new and emerging phenomena, it presumes no background in philosophy.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENTS (45%)

There will be three short writing assignments, each worth **15%** of your final grade.

Short writing assignments are roughly 700-800 words (roughly 3 pages double spaced, totaling 10 pages of writing over the course of the semester). There is a detailed rubric for these assignments as well as a model assignment posted on Canvas. You will be expected to identify a philosophical claim in one of our assigned readings and reconstruct, **in premise and conclusion format**, the argument the

¹ I know that this is unusual and it is not my first choice of office hour locations! Unfortunately, the philosophy department building is undergoing renovations this semester so we simply do not have offices for the time being. If for any reason this poses a barrier to your attendance, I am always available to make office hour appointments on Zoom.

author has given for this claim. You then must describe how the author supports this argument, and finally provide your own objection to the claim. We will spend time in class discussing and practicing how to complete each element of this assignment.

PARTICIPATION (20%)

This is a discussion-based course. It is vital for your learning and the learning of everyone else that you come to class having done the readings and prepared to talk about them with your classmates. I count the *number* of classes in which each student participates and calculate a final participation grade on this basis. There will be a mid-semester check in for students to see what their final participation grade in the class would be provided you participate the same amount. Participation grades are not graded as a bare percentage, i.e., you will not lose points for *each* class you do not participate in.

I understand that some people might have legitimate barriers to participating in in-class discussions—if you are in this situation, please come talk to me about alternative methods for your participation grade.

READING QUIZZES (10%)

There will be 12 very brief reading quizzes—four multiple choice questions per quiz. These quizzes will typically be at the start of class on Thursday* and will cover the assigned readings for both Tuesday and Thursday of that week (meaning that we will have already had a class where we discussed one or more of the readings covered in the quiz).

The reading quizzes will not involve trick questions and are designed to be easily completed by anyone who has done the readings (or, on days where I assign a podcast or video, listened to or watched those). I will drop the two lowest quizzes, so the highest 10 grades will each constitute 1% of your final grade.

*Some weeks, we don't have class on either Tuesday or Thursday, and most of the time this will mean a respite from a reading quiz! Once, on Tuesday, October 14th, however, we will have a reading quiz covering the reading from the prior Thursday + the reading from that Tuesday. The complete reading quiz schedule is laid out in the course schedule in the syllabus and I will give ample warning and reminders in class ahead of any schedule weirdness.

FINAL EXAM (25%)

This course will have a final exam, worth **25%** of your grade. You will receive more information on the exact structure & content of the final closer to December, but you can expect it to consist of short answer and multiple choice questions (there will be no essay questions). They will test your understanding of authors and concepts we have covered in class. The final will be cumulative.

LATE WORK & MAKEUPS

Papers will incur a 5% late penalty per 24 hours they are late. Please reach out to me ASAP if you expect to miss a paper deadline so we can work something out. I am much more lenient if you notify me *before* a paper is due.

Due to the nature of the grading scheme for this course, though attendance is not required nor technically graded, there are many assignments that you have to be in class in order to be able to complete. If you have a *documented* absence, you may make up the reading quiz in office hours (or by appointment) and I will remove that day from the calculation of your participation grade altogether. In order to document your absence, you will need to show me some verification of the reason why you missed class. Generally speaking, if you are hoping to make up a quiz or get a participation grade expunged, you will need to show me something along the lines of a doctor's note, letter from your coach, screenshot of an appointment you cannot miss, etc.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Tuesday	Thursday	Assignments & Assessments
Introduction			
August 19/21	Syllabus Day + Background <i>Readings</i> N/A	Argument Reconstruction <i>Readings</i> Puppies, Pigs, & People, Norcross	N/A
Values in Technology			
August 26/28	Values in Design <i>Readings</i> Do Artifacts Have Politics?, Winner	Values in Design <i>Readings</i> Oppressive Things, Liao & Huebner	Reading Quiz Aug. 28
Large Language Models			
September 2/4	AI and Relationships <i>Readings</i> She Fell in Love with ChatGPT, The Daily	AI and Information <i>Readings</i> The End of the English Essay, New Yorker	Reading Quiz Sep. 4

	Chatbots & Delusional Spirals, NYT	AI Slop, Last Week Tonight	
Online Speech			
September 9/11	Echo Chambers <i>Readings</i> Echo Chambers & Epistemic Bubbles, Nguyen	Echo Chambers, cont. <i>Readings</i> Fake News and Partisan Epistemology, Rini	Reading Quiz Sep. 11
September 16/18	Conspiracy Theories <i>Readings</i> Conspiracy Theories and Self Isolation, Napolitano	Social Media <i>Readings</i> How Twitter Gameifies Communication, Nguyen	Reading Quiz Sep. 18 First SWA Due Sep. 16
Privacy Online			
September 23/25	Theories of Privacy <i>Readings</i> The Right to Privacy, Thomson	Privacy and Social Media <i>Readings</i> Girl Influencers, NYT The End of Consent, NYT	Reading Quiz Sep. 25
September 30/October 2	Big Data and Privacy <i>Readings</i> I've Got Nothing to Hide, Solove	Big Data and Privacy <i>Readings</i> Stewardship of Privacy, Nissenbaum	Reading Quiz Oct. 2
Algorithmic Bias			
October 7/9	No Class	Algorithmic Bias <i>Readings</i> Senses, Sources, & Solutions, Fazelpour & Danks	N/A
October 14/16	Algorithmic Fairness <i>Readings</i> Can an algorithm be racist?, WaPo How We Analyzed COMPAS, ProPublica	No Class	Reading Quiz Oct. 14* *Covers readings for Oct. 9 & Oct. 14! Second SWA Due Oct. 14

October 21/23	Algorithmic Monoculture <i>Readings</i> The Algorithmic Leviathan, Creel & Hellman	Predictive Policing <i>Readings</i> Predictive Policing and the Ethics of Redemption, Susser	Reading Quiz Oct. 23
Autonomous Systems			
October 28/30	Self-Driving Cars <i>Readings</i> Accident Algorithms for Self-Driving Cars, Nyholm & Smids	Self-Driving Cars, cont. <i>Readings</i> Trolleys and Autonomous Vehicles, Basl & Behrends	Reading Quiz Oct. 30
November 4/6	AI Warfare <i>Readings</i> Autonomous Weapons and the Ethics of AI, Asaro	AI Warfare, cont. <i>Readings</i> Acting for the Right Reasons, Purves et al.	Reading Quiz Nov. 6
Conscious Systems			
November 11/13	The Turing Test <i>Readings</i> Computing Machinery and Intelligence, Turing	Machine Intelligence <i>Readings</i> Minds, Brains, and Programs, Searle	Reading Quiz Nov. 13
November 18/20	Machines & Pain <i>Readings</i> Consciousness in Human and Robot Minds, Dennett	Machines & Moral Status <i>Readings</i> Robots with Moral Status, DeGrazia	Reading Quiz Nov. 20 Third SWA Due Nov. 18
November 25/27	Machines & Moral Status, cont. <i>Readings</i> Designing AI with Rights, Schwitzgebel	No Class	N/A
December 2	Last Class! Final Exam Review	No Class	N/A
December 11	Final Exam: 8 am		