

## Humanity and the Question Concerning Technology

IDH2930 #30031 (Fall 2024)  
Tuesdays, Period 5 (11:45 AM – 12:35 PM)  
Little Hall 0117

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Office Hours: Email for appointment

### Course Description

What does it mean to be human? Is technology changing human nature? Will your children or grandchildren be “posthuman” cyborgs? In this course, we will discuss such questions through the lens of Martin Heidegger’s philosophy.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) is widely considered the most important philosopher of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this course, we explore Heidegger’s theories of humanity and technology by reading several of his seminal works. We begin with a few readings on Western humanism for context, focusing on Plato’s “Cave Allegory” and Aristotle’s “Function Argument.” We then spend several weeks on selections from Heidegger’s 1927 magnum opus, *Being and Time*, focusing on his reconceptualization of the human being as what he calls “Dasein,” followed by excerpts from his “Letter on Humanism” (1946). We then read “The Age of the World Picture” (1938) and “The Question Concerning Technology” (1955) in full. In the final part of the course, we spend two weeks applying Heidegger’s thought to readings about the contemporary movements known as “transhumanism” and “posthumanism.”

### Schedule of Readings

	<b>Required Readings</b>	<b>Full course schedule at end of syllabus.</b>
Week #1 (8/27)	Syllabus [6pp] + Selections on Humanism [3pp]	
Week #2 (9/3)	Plato, <i>Republic</i> VII, 514a-521c [7.5pp] + Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , I.6-8 (1096a12-1098b12) [7pp]	
Week #3 (9/10)	BT Intro.1 (19-35) [11pp] + I.1 (67-8) [2pp] + BT Handout #1 [4pp]	<u>Abbreviations:</u>
Week #4 (9/17)	BT Intro.2 (36-64) [16pp] + Handout #2 [4pp]	BT = <i>Being and Time</i>
Week #5 (9/24)	BT I.3 (95-107) [9.5pp] + BT Diagram [1pp] + BT Handout #3 [7.5pp]	LH = “Letter on Humanism”
Week #6 (10/1)	BT I.4 (163-8) [5pp] + I.5 (210-20) [10pp]	AotWP = “Age of the World Picture”
Week #7 (10/8)	[discussion of BT cont’d, reading TBD, if any]	QCT = “The Question Concerning Technology”
Week #8 (10/15)	LH Excerpts [15pp]	
Week #9 (10/22)	AotWP 1 (115-128) [13pp] + AotWP Appendix 4 [1.5pp]	
Week #10 (10/29)	AotWP 2 (128-136) [8pp] + AotWP Appendix 9 [5.5pp]	
Week #11 (11/5)	QCT 1 (3-12) [9pp] + QCT Handout #1 [3pp]	
Week #12 (11/12)	QCT 2 (12-23) [12pp]	
Week #13 (11/19)	QCT 3 (23-35) [12pp]	
Week #14 (11/26) (NO CLASS)	“Transhumanism and Posthumanism(s) on Education”, Sections 1-2 [9pp] + “Transhumanist Declaration” [1pp]	
Week #15 (12/3)	“Mind is Deeper than Matter: Transgenderism, Transhumanism, and the Freedom of Form” [8pp] + “Why I Want to be a Posthuman When I Grow Up” Excerpt [11pp]	

\**Nota bene*: For the BT assigned readings, the page numbers in parentheses refer to the page range (in the 1962 translation) *from which* the assigned readings are *excerpted* (hence the number of assigned pages in brackets is often lower than that in parentheses).

## Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes

Students will receive guidance and practice in (1) critically reading and interpreting texts from the history of philosophy, (2) articulating their understandings and interpretations in both speech and writing, (3) applying these understandings and interpretations to the analysis of contemporary phenomena, and (4) engaging their peers in civil and intellectual discourse.

## Required Texts

Students must complete the readings before each class and be prepared to discuss them in depth. There is only one required text, the correct edition of which all students must purchase a hard copy of (and bring to every class):

- Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Transl. William Lovitt. New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc. (1977).
  - Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Question-Concerning-Technology-Perennial-Thought/dp/0062290703>
  - Lynx Books: <https://thelynxbooks.com/item/kmD66BQtTAhZdFsvJeahDw> (10% discount if you tell them you are buying it for this course)

All other required and supplementary readings will be provided by the instructor through Canvas. These are the editions we will be using for *Being and Time* and “Letter on Humanism”:

- Heidegger, Martin (1962). *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson. New York, NY: Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated.
- Heidegger, Martin (1998). *Pathmarks*. Ed. William McNeill. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

## Reading Philosophy

*Most men pursue pleasure with such breathless haste that they hurry past it. They fare as did that dwarf who kept guard over a captured princess in his castle. One day he took a midday nap. When he woke up an hour later, the princess was gone. Quickly he pulled on his seven-league boots; with one stride he was far beyond her.*

- Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*

*A book like this, a problem like this, is in no hurry; we both, I just as much as my book, are friends of lento. It is not for nothing that I have been a philologist, perhaps I am a philologist still, that is to say, a teacher of slow reading:—in the end I also write slowly. Nowadays it is not only my habit, it is also to my taste—a malicious taste perhaps?—no longer to write anything which does not reduce to despair every sort of man who is ‘in a hurry’. For philology is that venerable art which demands of its votaries one thing above all: to go aside, to take time, to become still, to become slow—it is a goldsmith’s art and connoisseurship of the word which has nothing but delicate, cautious work to do and achieves nothing if it does not achieve it lento. But for precisely this reason it is more necessary than ever today, by precisely this means does it entice and enchant us the most, in the midst of an age of ‘work’, that is to say, of hurry, of indecent and perspiring haste, which wants to ‘get everything done’ at once, including every old or new book:—this art does not so easily get anything done, it teaches to read well, that is to say, to read slowly, deeply, looking cautiously before and aft, with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate eyes and fingers... My patient friends, this book desires for itself only perfect readers and philologists: learn to read me well!*

- Friedrich Nietzsche, 1886 letter, in *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*

Philosophy texts are not like popular novels or “page-turners.” They require reading that is both “slow” and “active,” and indeed slow *because* active: they require you to actively think about what you’re reading, as opposed to “going along with the flow” of the text and absorbing its contents passively. I encourage you to set aside more time than you think you will need for the reading assignments, to think deeply about what you read, and to take notes while you read.

Hence, though readings for this course average to a mere 15 pages per week, you should consider this a course with a “heavy reading load.”

## **Assignments and Assessment**

This course has four categories of assessment:

- |                               |                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| (1) Class Attendance:         | 15% of total grade |
| (2) Class Discussion:         | 30% of total grade |
| (3) Canvas Discussion Posts:  | 30% of total grade |
| (4) Oral Exam or Final Essay: | 25% of total grade |

### ***Class Attendance***

For this course, it is important that you attend as many classes as possible. All excused absences must include documentation (e.g., a doctor’s note if you are absent due to illness). Each unexcused absence will result in a deduction of 10 points from your class attendance grade (out of 100).

### ***Tardiness***

Since we only have 50 minutes together each class, punctuality is important. If you are late, I will record how late and penalize your attendance grade proportionally. For example, if you miss the first 5 minutes of class 9 times, that’s a total of 45 minutes, equivalent to 90% of one class—so you would lose 9 points from your overall attendance grade.

### ***Class Participation***

It is crucial that all students complete the readings before class and come to class prepared to discuss them. This *should* be the easiest part of the class for you to get an “A” on (besides class attendance), since I will only deduct points from this part of your grade if you don’t participate in class discussions and/or if it’s clear you haven’t done the readings.

### ***Canvas Discussion Posting***

- Students must make one post about the readings each week in the Canvas Discussion thread.
- Students must also make at least 2 replies to posts by other students each week.

Unless instructed otherwise, posts should be about the readings the previous class (e.g., the post due Friday, Sept. 6, should concern the readings for Class #2, on Tuesday, Sept. 3).

- Posts must be at least 200 words.
  - Replies have no word limit but must engage the substance of the post. (“Great post!” won’t cut it.)
- Posts are due by 11:59pm on Friday of each week.
  - Replies are due by 11:59pm on Monday of each week.
- Posts and replies should include page-number citations for all quotes and paraphrases.
- Students will receive a single grade for each week’s post and replies. Posts and replies will be graded primarily for content, but points may be deducted for missing citations or excessive amounts of typos, solecisms, etc.

Some weeks a prompt will be provided for the Canvas discussion, but otherwise students will be free to write on a topic of their choosing, so long as it relates to the assigned readings.

- Canvas posts about a passage, concept, claim, or argument from the text may be devoted to one or more of the following: explaining it; evaluating it (e.g., defending or criticizing); applying it (e.g., to a contemporary phenomenon). Or, finally, *questioning* it or about it—for I do not expect you to understand everything perfectly the first time you read it or we discuss it in class. Indeed, these posts are a good opportunity to explain a(ny) confusion you might have and to ask for help in clearing it up from your peers and instructor.

### ***Final Examination***

Students will choose between the options of an oral exam or a written essay for their final assignment.

- Oral exams consist of a 20-30 minute conversation about topics from the course text and class discussion. A good way to practice for the oral exam is to email me for an office hours appointment to discuss the week’s readings.

- The final essay will be 2000-4000 words. A list of potential topics will be provided, but students are encouraged to come up with their own. Topics must be emailed for approval 3 weeks before the final class. More details will be provided later in the semester.
- Students may submit an outline or draft of their final paper for feedback up to 1 week before the deadline. If a student requests feedback *less* than a week before the deadline, I will try to provide it, but it is not guaranteed.

***Late Submission Penalties***

Late submission of any assignment will be penalized 2/3 letter grade per 24 hours late. Hence, if you make a Canvas post between 12:00am and 11:59pm the day after the deadline for that post, the *highest* grade you could receive would be a B+.

- If you have an excused absence, you have a 48 hour grace period on Canvas posts.

***File Format***

Any writing assignments besides Canvas posts/replies should be submitted as Microsoft Word (.docx) files. If you cannot do that, you must submit them as PDFs. Other file formats (e.g., .pages) will not be accepted.

***UF Canvas Grading Scheme***

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
94-100	90-93	87-89	84-86	80-83	77-79	74-76	70-73	67-69	64-66	61-63	0-60

**Free Speech and Civil Discourse**

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution reads as follows:

*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*

As a public land-grant institution, the University of Florida is a governmental entity for First Amendment purposes. Students, staff and faculty at UF thus possess First Amendment rights that may protect their right to engage in speech. To learn more about freedom of speech and expression at UF, students may consult [freespeech.ufl.edu](http://freespeech.ufl.edu).

Freedom of speech is one of the hallmarks of modern liberal democracies like the United States, but free speech is not absolute in the United States. For example, while the First Amendment protects offensive speech, it does not protect “true threats”, i.e., “statements where the speaker means to communicate a serious expression of an intent to commit an act of unlawful violence to a particular individual or group of individuals” (*Virginia v. Black*, 538 U.S. 344).

Moreover, free speech can only truly flourish in a context of civil discourse, in which participants who hold a variety of viewpoints converse together in good faith and with respect for certain norms designed to ensure civility. This is especially important for a discussion-centered class like this one. In this class, all students will be expected not only to respect their fellows’ First Amendment rights, but also basic norms of civil discourse. For example, insulting fellow students may be constitutionally protected speech, but it is inappropriate in the context of an academic discussion in the classroom and may even constitute “disruption” of the class’s academic activity.

In this class, all students should feel not just free but also comfortable in expressing their viewpoints, exploring historical and conventional (and unconventional!) viewpoints, and interrogating the viewpoints of others—regardless of whether they are controversial, offensive, etc. There is no expectation that students will agree with each other’s views or those of the instructor, with one exception, namely, regarding the norm of civil discourse. In other words, we must all agree to respect each other in the classroom and in our academic interactions with each other. I cannot say it better than Prof. Robert P. George:

*My philosophy of teaching is straightforward and rather simple: My job is not to tell students what to think or induce or encourage them to think as I do; it is, rather, to help students to think more deeply, more critically, and for themselves. What I ask of students is open-mindedness, tolerance of those whose opinions differ from yours, a willingness not only to challenge others but to be challenged in turn, and a genuine and deep desire to learn--and to learn by seriously engaging authors and fellow students whose ideas differ, even radically differ, from your own.*

For further information on the sort of behaviors considered unacceptable in a UF classroom environment, students should consult the Regulations of the University of Florida ([https://regulations.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/4-040\\_2021-12-06.pdf](https://regulations.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/4-040_2021-12-06.pdf))—in particular, section (3)(d) (“Interference with an Academic Activity”) and section (4)(c) (“Disruptive Conduct”).

### **Electronics Policy**

In order to encourage participation and focus attention, electronics are prohibited in the classroom unless explicitly permitted by the instructor on a case-by-case basis. If a student feels they need to use an electronic device for some reason, they should consult with the instructor in advance of class. That includes students with relevant disabilities (see the Disability Statement below) and students who wish to record class (see the statement on In-Class Recording below).

### **Course Evaluations**

Course evaluations are an extremely important part of the university’s assessment of teachers and classes, and they can have a great impact on instructors’ future ability and opportunities to teach. Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing GatorEvals. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens.

- Students can access the evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in the Canvas course menu under “GatorEvals,” or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>.
  - Guidance on how to give respectful feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>.
  - Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

### **Extra Credit**

There will be opportunity for extra credit in this course. I will update this section with details later in the semester.

### **Syllabus Change Policy**

This syllabus is only a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice. The version # and date created is listed in size 2 font at the very top of the first page of this syllabus.

### **Boilerplate**

#### ***UF Attendance Policies***

Requirements for class attendance in this course are consistent with university policies, available here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>.

#### ***Disability Statement***

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. Click this link to get started with the Disability Resource Center: <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

### ***UF Conduct Code***

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Click here to read the Conduct Code: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

### ***Campus Resources: Health and Wellness***

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website (<https://umatter.ufl.edu/>) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website (<https://counseling.ufl.edu/>) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website (<https://shcc.ufl.edu/>).
- *University Police Department*: Visit UF Police Department website (<https://police.ufl.edu/>) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website: <https://ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center>.
- *GatorWell Health Promotion Services*: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website (<https://gatorwell.ufsa.ufl.edu/>) or call 352-273-4450.

### ***Campus Resources: Academic Resources***

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk (<http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).
- *Career Connections Center*: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services. <https://career.ufl.edu/>
- *Library Support*: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources. <https://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>
- *Teaching Center*: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>
- *Writing Studio*: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>
- *Student Complaints On-Campus*: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-%20code-student-conduct-code/>.
- *On-Line Students Complaints*: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process: <https://distance.ufl.edu/state-authorization-status/#student-complaint>.

### ***UF Grading Policy***

Information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points can be accessed by clicking this link: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>.

### ***In-Class Recording***

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

## Course Schedule

	<b>Required Readings</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Supplementary Readings</b>
Week #1 (8/27)	Syllabus [6pp] + Selections on Humanism [3pp]	9	
Week #2 (9/3)	Plato, <i>Republic</i> VII, 514a-521c [7.5pp] + Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , I.6-8 (1096a12-1098b12) [7pp]	14.5	
Week #3 (9/10)	BT Intro.1 (19-35) [11pp] + I.1 (67-8) [2pp] + BT Handout #1 [4pp]	17	Polt (1999), <i>Heidegger: An Introduction</i> , Chapter 1 [6pp]
Week #4 (9/17)	BT Intro.2 (36-64) [16pp] + Handout #2 [4pp]	20	BT I.1 (70-5) [2.5pp]
Week #5 (9/24)	BT I.3 (95-107) [9.5pp] + BT Diagram [1pp] + BT Handout #3 [7.5pp]	18	BT I.5 (188-193) [4.5pp]
Week #6 (10/1)	BT I.4 (163-8) [5pp] + I.5 (210-20) [10pp]	15	Crowell (2013), <i>Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger</i> , Chapter 10 [22pp]
Week #7 (10/8)	[discussion of BT cont'd, reading TBD, if any]		
Week #8 (10/15)	LH Excerpts [15pp]	15	
Week #9 (10/22)	AotWP 1 (115-128) [13pp] + AotWP Appendix 4 [1.5pp]	14.5	Porter (2023), "Heidegger's 'Metametaphysics': Heidegger on Modernity and Postmodernity" (Excerpt: p.83-107) [26pp]
Week #10 (10/29)	AotWP 2 (128-136) [8pp] + AotWP Appendix 9 [5.5pp]	13.5	
Week #11 (11/5)	QCT 1 (3-12) [9pp] + QCT Handout #1 [3pp]	12	Borgmann (2005), "Technology", in <i>A Companion to Heidegger</i> (ed. Dreyfus & Wrathall) [12pp]
Week #12 (11/12)	QCT 2 (12-23) [12pp]	12	
Week #13 (11/19)	QCT 3 (23-35) [12pp]	12	
Week #14 (11/26) (NO CLASS)	"Transhumanism and Posthumanism(s) on Education", Sections 1-2 [9pp] + "Transhumanist Declaration" [1pp]	10	
Week #15 (12/3)	"Mind is Deeper than Matter: Transgenderism, Transhumanism, and the Freedom of Form" [8pp] + "Why I Want to be a Posthuman When I Grow Up" Excerpt [11pp]	19	

\*I've excerpted the BT readings via redaction, using the Adobe Acrobat "strikethrough" tool: somewhat like Thomas Jefferson with his Bible, I have carefully gone through the text and struck out with a red line numerous passages, both large and small. What is struck out is still readable, but it is not assigned reading.

### ***Important Assignment Dates/Deadlines:***

- Canvas Posts and Replies: due **every Friday and Monday**
- Final Paper Submission: due **December 7**
- Oral Exams: conducted **December 6-10**