

## PHIL 344 How to Become What you Are: The Art of Living in the Network Society. Spring 2021

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HOURS AVAILABLE: 12:00 – 13:00  
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### Class Meetings:

DAY Tuesdays/Thursdays HOURS 11.00 – 12.35

### Course Description

In this course we will define the characteristics of new media; social and political uses of new media and new communications; new media technologies, politics and globalisation; everyday life and new media; theories of interactivity; simulation; the new media economy; cybernetics and cyberculture; the history of automata and artificial life in order to offer students conceptual frameworks for thinking through a range of key issues which have arisen over two decades of speculation on the cultural implications of new media. The aim is to describe an art of living in the network society, which encompasses a questioning of institutions in the public sphere and the expression of the creative subject's ability to shape its life.

### Course Resources and Activities

1. Philosophical texts
2. Class Discussions
3. Film (e.g. The Circle)
4. Guest Philosophy Lectures

### Learning Objectives

This course offers students conceptual frameworks for thinking through a range of key issues which have arisen over two decades of speculation on the cultural consequences of new media. It helps students to understand themselves as thinking acting beings, as well as the digital world they inhabit and their relation to each other. The students will develop skills that will allow them to use new media in order to communicate their ideas in an original and powerful way. They will also acquire skills that will enable them to think carefully, critically, and with clarity, take a logical approach to addressing challenging questions and examining hard issues, reason well and evaluate the reasoning of others. The students will learn how to critically examine their own views as well as those of others and discuss sensibly. The course will enhance their problem-solving capacities, their ability to organize ideas and issues and their ability to distinguish what is essential from what is not. In doing so this course will not only be a valuable preparation for any career, but it also will be important for life as a whole, beyond the knowledge and skills required for any particular profession preparation, contributing to an enhanced intellectual, political, and social existence.

## Course Requirements

- 1) **Class Participation:** I am a strong believer in relating arguments from political philosophers to contemporary political controversies and examples, especially when they were themselves politically engaged. In my opinion this accomplishes two objectives: First, it usually sparks your interest in the theoretical arguments of the different thinkers. Second, a well-chosen example can help you grasp what are often abstract and difficult arguments. Connecting thinkers' arguments to contemporary issues can help you see that these arguments are not merely of historical interest. For the above reasons I often will ask you to think about how one philosopher might respond on a topic and then ask you to marshal arguments or examples in favour of one position or the other (or in favour of some synthesis of the two positions). Hoping to make my lectures more participatory I will break you up in groups asking you to evaluate each other's presentations, to defend different positions and to vote on controversial issues.
- 2) **Weekly Reflections:** You will be asked to turn in one weekly 1-2 pages free report or reaction to the discussion of the last class that will be delivered to my email address before the next class. The reports will not be graded separately. You will be graded just for turning them all in on time. You will get an A+ if you've turned them all in on time and an F if there are more than two reports unjustifiably missing or written in such a manner as to convey that the reading was not actually done. Please paste your reflection in the main body of the email, not in an attachment and send to [thefanistasis@gmail.com](mailto:thefanistasis@gmail.com).
- 3) **Home Assignments and Presentations:** You will be asked to participate in a group presentation. Along with two other students you will present a philosophical text and prepare questions for a discussion in class.
- 4) **Papers:** You will be asked to write a final paper of 7 to 10 pages. The particulars of the process will be discussed in class. Guidelines for writing a paper will be discussed in class as we move on and you turn in more reading reports. Paper topics will be selected freely by you, after prior consultation with me.  
**There will be no exams for this class.**

## Grading and Evaluation

Assessment Distribution:

Class participation: 20% of the grade.

Weekly reflections 20% of the grade. (Completion Requirement)

Home assignments and presentations: 20% of the grade. (Completion Requirement)

Final paper: 40% of the grade.

## SYLLABUS

1. Postmodernism is Not What You Think: Modernity and its discontent.
2. A Mediated New World: Types of postmodernism and digitalization.
3. New Media and New Technologies I: Do we know what they are?
4. New Media and New Technologies II: Determining or determined?
5. New Media and Visual Culture I: What happened to virtual reality?
6. New Media and Visual Culture II: Virtual images/Images of the virtual.
7. Networks, Users and Economics I: Globalisation, neo-liberalism and the Internet.
8. Networks, Users and Economics II: YouTube and post television.
9. New Media in Everyday Life I: Cyberspace and cyberculture.
10. New Media in Everyday Life II: The technological shaping of identity.
11. Technology, Nature and Culture I: Cyberculture and cybernetics.
12. Technology, Nature and Culture II: Theories of cyberculture.

### Rubrics

Below you will find the rubric I use for papers.

	<b>Fails Completely</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Exemplary</b>
<b>Thesis</b>	No identifiable thesis or thesis shows lack of effort or comprehension of assignment.	Difficult to identify, inconsistently maintained, or provides little around which to structure paper.	Unclear, buried, poorly articulated, lacking in insight and originality.	Promising, but may be unclear or lacking insight or originality.	Easily identifiable, interesting, plausible, novel, sophisticated, insightful, clear.
<b>Structure and style</b>	No evident structure or organization. No transitions between major points.	Unclear, unfocused, disorganized, lacking in unity, transitions abrupt or	Generally unclear, unfocused, often wanders or jumps around. Few or weak transitions. Does	Generally clear and appropriate, though may wander occasionally. May have some unclear	Evident, understandable, appropriate for thesis. Essay is focused and unified. Words chosen effectively.

		confusing, context unclear.	not provide sufficient information, explanation, and context for readers.	transitions or lack of coherence. Does not fully appreciate reader's need for information, explanation, and context.	Excellent transitions between points. Anticipates reader's need for information, explanation, and context.
<b>Use of sources (when applicable)</b>	No attempt made to incorporate information from primary and secondary sources.	Very little information from sources. Poor handling of sources.	Moderate amount of source information incorporated. Some key points supported by sources. Quotations may be poorly integrated into paragraphs. Some possible problems with source citations.	Draws upon sources to support most points. Some evidence may not support thesis or may appear where inappropriate. Quotations integrated well into paragraphs. Sources cited correctly.	Draws upon primary and secondary source information in useful and illuminating ways to support key points. Excellent integration of quoted material into paragraphs. Sources cited correctly.
<b>Logic and argumentation</b>	No effort made to construct a logical argument. Failure to support thesis.	Little attempt to offer support for key claims or to relate evidence to thesis. Reasons offered may be irrelevant. Little to no effort to address alternative views.	Arguments of poor quality. Weak, undeveloped reasons offered in support of key claims. Counter-arguments mentioned without rebuttal.	Argument is clear and usually flows logically and makes sense. Some counter-arguments acknowledged, though perhaps not addressed fully.	Arguments are identifiable, reasonable, and sound. Clear reasons are offered in support of key claims. Author anticipates and successfully grapples with counter-arguments.
<b>Mechanics</b>	Difficult to understand because of significant problems with sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	Several problems with sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	Some problems with sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	Sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling strong despite occasional lapses.	Correct sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

**Rubric I shall use to assess class participation (both in symposia and in regular class discussions)**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Sophisticated</b>	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Not Yet Competent</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>
<i>Conduct</i>	Student shows respect for members of the class, both in speech and manner, and for the method of shared inquiry and peer discussion. Does not dominate discussion. Student challenges ideas respectfully, encourages and supports others to do the same.	Student shows respect for members of the class and for the method of shared inquiry and peer discussion. Participates regularly in the discussion but occasionally has difficulty accepting challenges to his/her ideas or maintaining respectful attitude when challenging others' ideas.	Student shows little respect for the class or the process as evidenced by speech and manner. Sometimes resorts to ad hominem attacks when in disagreement with others.	Student shows a lack of respect for members of the group and the discussion process. Often dominates the discussion or disengages from the process. When contributing, can be argumentative or dismissive of others' ideas, or resorts to ad hominem attacks.
<i>Ownership/Leadership</i>	Takes responsibility for maintaining the flow and quality of the discussion whenever needed. Helps to redirect or refocus discussion when it becomes sidetracked or unproductive. Makes efforts to engage reluctant participants. Provides constructive feedback and support to others.	Will take on responsibility for maintaining flow and quality of discussion, and encouraging others to participate but either is not always effective or is effective but does not regularly take on the responsibility.	Rarely takes an active role in maintaining the flow or direction of the discussion. When put in a leadership role, often acts as a guard rather than a facilitator: constrains or biases the content and flow of the discussion.	Does not play an active role in maintaining the flow of discussion or undermines the efforts of others who are trying to facilitate discussion.

<i>Reasoning</i>	Arguments or positions are reasonable and supported with evidence from the readings. Often deepens the conversation by going beyond the text, recognizing implications and extensions of the text. Provides analysis of complex ideas that help deepen the inquiry and further the conversation.	Arguments or positions are reasonable and mostly supported by evidence from the readings. In general, the comments and ideas contribute to the group's understanding of the material and concepts.	Contributions to the discussion are more often based on opinion or unclear views than on reasoned arguments or positions based on the readings. Comments or questions suggest a difficulty in following complex lines of argument or student's arguments are convoluted and difficult to follow.	Comments are frequently so illogical or without substantiation that others are unable to critique or even follow them. Rather than critique the text the student may resort to ad hominem attacks on the author instead.
<i>Listening</i>	Always actively attends to what others say as evidenced by regularly building on, clarifying, or responding to their comments. Often reminds group of comments made by someone earlier that are pertinent.	Usually listens well and takes steps to check comprehension by asking clarifying and probing questions, and making connections to earlier comments. Responds to ideas and questions offered by other participants.	Does not regularly listen well as indicated by the repetition of comments or questions presented earlier, or frequent non sequiturs.	Behavior frequently reflects a failure to listen or attend to the discussion as indicated by repetition of comments and questions, non sequiturs, off-task activities.
<i>Reading</i>	Student has carefully read and understood the readings as evidenced by oral contributions; familiarity with main ideas, supporting evidence and secondary points. Comes to class prepared with questions and critiques of the readings.	Student has read and understood the readings as evidenced by oral contributions. The work demonstrates a grasp of the main ideas and evidence but sometimes interpretations are questionable. Comes prepared with questions.	Student has read the material, but comments often indicate that he/she didn't read or think carefully about it, or misunderstood or forgot many points. Class conduct suggests inconsistent commitment to preparation.	Student either is unable to adequately understand and interpret the material or has frequently come to class unprepared, as indicated by serious errors or an inability to answer basic questions or contribute to discussion.