Objective:

The objective of this course is to launch an inquiry into the nature of technology and its influence on human relationships—that is, political life—in the modern world. We will begin this investigation with a careful reading of Hannah Arendt’s *Human Condition*, from which we will equip ourselves with a theoretical vocabulary that will help us to understand the contours of our technological world. From there, we will proceed to examine the kind of thinking, the kind of “consciousness” that underwrites a world like ours. Finally, we will explore the conditions of possibility for this kind of thinking. It is hoped that our analysis of the technological world and the technological imagination will enable us to interrogate critically our ways of being and thinking in a technologically determined community, especially with regard to new technologies of reproduction, war, mobility, and communication.

Required Texts:


Additional readings will be provided in .pdf form on Learn@UW.
Students are required to purchase these particular translations and editions. Since discussion of these texts will be the centerpiece of this class, a common and harmonious exploration of the texts will require that we all be able to reference the same pages and find the same words on those pages.

Requirements:

Participation: 20%
Paper 1: 15%
Paper 2: 15%
Term Paper: 50%

While examining technology and politics, this class intends to foster our ability to think and speak critically and clearly about texts and the world. Accordingly, the class requirements are threefold:

Participation: This class will proceed as a modified seminar. Thus, while there will be a lecture component to the course, there will also be substantial time reserved in each class period for open discussion. The effectiveness of this format will require that you fulfill two obligations: reading and participation. The grading schema is therefore designed to encourage both. A participation grade will be assigned based on your individual attendance, preparedness, and thoughtful participation in conversation. Of course, this requires faithfully reading the assigned material—which, aside from being excellent, has been confined to a reasonable level—before each class.

Short Essays: Two short reflection papers (5-7 pages) will be assigned as the class progresses. These essays will interpret and critically engage some aspect of one of our texts. They may also select a problem in contemporary technological politics, ethics, etc., and investigate it with the aid of our texts.

Term Paper: The class will culminate in a term paper (15-20 pages) due on the date of the final. Topics for the paper will emerge during the course of the semester as students discover themes of particular interest. Students are encouraged to consult the professor as they select essay topics. More information about this assignment will be provided in class.

All late papers will be penalized by half of a letter grade per day, starting from the minute they are due.

Part I: The Technological World
September 5: Introduction
September 7: Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, chap. 1 (Learn@UW)
September 12: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Part II
September 14: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Part III
September 17: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Part IV
September 24: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Part VI
September 26: Arendt, “The Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man” (Learn@UW)
September 28: Voegelin, “The Origins of Scientism”; Khan, “Ancients and Moderns, Technique, Cybernetics, and Entropy” (Learn@UW)

October 1: Ellul, *The Technological Society*, pp. 3-22, 190-193, 300-318
October 3: Ellul, *The Technological Society*, pp. 319-375
October 5: Ellul, *The Technological Society*, pp. 375-428; **Essay 1 Due**

**Part II: The Technological Consciousness**
October 8: Germain, “Part I: The Outward Journey,” *A Discourse on Disenchantment: Reflections on Politics and Technology* (Learn@UW)
October 10: Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology”
October 12: Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology”
October 15: Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture”
October 17: Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture”
October 19: Heidegger, “The Turning”
October 22: Marcuse, *The One Dimensional Man*, chaps. 5 and 6 (Learn@UW)
October 24: Oakeshott, “Rationalism in Politics” (Learn@UW)
October 26: Shelley, *Frankenstein*
October 29: Shelley, *Frankenstein*
October 31: Shelley, *Frankenstein*

November 2: Winner, *Autonomous Technology*, chaps. 1 and 8 (Learn@UW); **Essay 2 Due**
November 5: Movie Discussion (Film: *Gattaca*)

**Part III: The Technological Ethic**
November 7: Darby, “Nihilism, Politics, and Technology” and “The Three Waves of Technology” (Learn@UW)
November 9: Nietzsche, *The Will to Power and The Gay Science*, pdf selections (Learn@UW)
November 12: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Preface – Part II
November 14: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Part III and Part V
November 16: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Part VI and Part VII
November 21: Thanksgiving Holiday
November 23: Thanksgiving Holiday
November 26: Kohak, *Embers and the Stars*, “Prolegomenon” and “Theoria”
December 5: Voegelin, *New Science of Politics*, Chapter V and Chapter VI
December 7: Fukuyama, “Transhumanism”; Cooper, “The Political Significance of Technological Action”; Grant, “Abortion and Rights,” *Technology and Justice* (Learn@UW)
December 10: Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking” and “Why Do I Stay in the Provinces?” (Learn@UW)
December 12: Berry, “Why I Will Not Buy a Computer” and “Feminism, the Body, and the Machine” (Learn@UW)
December 14: Heidegger, “Only a God Can Save Us” (Learn@UW)

**Day of Final: Term Paper Due**

**Note/Warning:** *Frankenstein*, like most novels, is rather lengthy. Though not of Dickensian or Tolstoyan proportions, you may find the book more manageable if you start reading it well before it is actually assigned. Don’t worry: it’s fun reading.