UAB
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Philosophy of Technology

Code: 100317
ECTS Credits: 6

2024/2025

Degree	Type	Year
2500246 Philosophy	OT	3
2500246 Philosophy	OT	4

Contact

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Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the end of this document.

Prerequisites

There are none.

Objectives and Contextualisation

The goal of this subject is to provide tools in order to think critically about technology, and to put them in practice through the situated analysis of specific artefacts and technological systems.

Smartphones, razor-wire, surveillance cameras, ventilators, computers, cruise ships, containers, biometric passports, diggers, electricity networks, transgenic food, high-speed trains, sewing machines, condoms, drones, rubber bullets, nuclear power stations, pliers...

How to think philosophically about the material constitution of the worlds we inhabit? How does technology embody social relations, ideas and values? How does it materialize power relations? What role does technology play in the construction of bodies, feelings, identities, and subjectivities? What ethical, political, ecological and ontological issues are at stake?

The tool-box that will be deployed and put into use during the course contains conceptual instruments, empirical materials and analytical techniques that come from different places. The reflections about technology from the philosophical tradition will be combined with perspectives from disciplines such as history, sociology, anthropology or the social studies of science and technology, as well as other engaged analyses and practices coming from outside academia.

Competences

Philosophy

- Analysing and summarising the main arguments of fundamental texts of philosophy in its various disciplines.
- Recognising and interpreting topics and problems of philosophy in its various disciplines.

- Students must be capable of applying their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional way and they should have building arguments and problem resolution skills within their area of study.
- Students must be capable of collecting and interpreting relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make statements that reflect social, scientific or ethical relevant issues.
- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Students must develop the necessary learning skills to undertake further training with a high degree of autonomy.
- Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.
- Thinking in a critical and independent manner on the basis of the specific topics, debates and problems of philosophy, both historically and conceptually.
- Using the symbology and procedures of the formal sciences in the analysis and building of arguments.

Learning Outcomes

1. Analysing and summarising information.
2. Analysing historical cases about scientific facts.
3. Autonomously searching, selecting and processing information both from structured sources (databases, bibliographies, specialized magazines) and from across the network.
4. Carrying out oral presentations using an appropriate academic vocabulary and style.
5. Communicating in the studied language in oral and written form, properly using vocabulary and grammar.
6. Correctly, accurately and clearly communicating the acquired philosophical knowledge in oral and written form.
7. Demonstrating a personal stance over a problem or controversy of philosophical nature, or a work of philosophical research.
8. Developing self-learning strategies.
9. Discriminating the features that define the writer's place in the context of a problem and reorganising them in a consistent diagram.
10. Distinguishing and outlining the fundamental content of a philosophical text.
11. Establishing relationships between science, philosophy, art, religion, politics, etc.
12. Explaining aspects of the history of science by using the discipline's specific terminology.
13. Explaining the specific notions of the History of Philosophy.
14. Formulating arguments for and against an issue, using proper vocabulary, conceptual precision and argumentative coherence.
15. Identifying the main ideas of a related text and drawing a diagram.
16. Leading working groups, overseeing collective tasks and working with commitment in order to bring together various positions.
17. Organizing their own time and work resources: designing plans with priorities of objectives, calendars and action commitments.
18. Producing an individual work that specifies the work plan and timing of activities.
19. Reading basic philosophical text thoroughly.
20. Recognising and implementing the following teamwork skills: commitment to teamwork, habit of cooperation, ability to participate in the problem solving processes.
21. Recognising, with a critical eye, philosophical referents of the past and present and assessing its importance.
22. Reflecting on their own work and the immediate environment's in order to continuously improve it.
23. Regularising arguments of any source and calculating its logical correctness.
24. Rigorously building philosophical arguments.
25. Solving problems autonomously.
26. Using computing tools, both basics (word processor or databases, for example) and specialised software needed in the professional practice of archaeology.
27. Using suitable terminology when drawing up an academic text.

Content

1. What is technology? Critical Genealogy of a Concept

2. Tools, Machines and Systems: On the Modes of Existence of Technical Objects

3. Design: The Social Shaping of Technology

4. Interactions: Agency, Delegation and Situated Actions

5. Subjectivation: Rituals, Emotions and Identities

6. Intersections: Gender, Race and Class

7. Tecnopolitics: Materiality, Power and Forms of Life

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Theoretical classes	23	0.92	2, 1, 24, 9, 10, 11, 14, 21
Type: Supervised			
Discussion Seminars	22	0.88	2, 1, 6, 24, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 5, 4, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22
Supervision	3	0.12	3, 8, 18, 17, 25
Type: Autonomous			
Reading and autonomous work	48	1.92	2, 1, 3, 8, 9, 10, 18, 11, 15, 19, 17, 21, 22, 25

The subject combines theoretical classes with discussion seminars around selected readings. It is expected from students a serious engagement with readings and an active participation in the collective discussion.

Eath topic will deal with one or several philosophical, historical, anthropological or sociological perspectives about technology, that will always be discussed in relation to specific and situated tools, artefacts or techical systems. Further bibliographical references for each of the topics will be published in the campus virtual.

15 minutes in one of the sessions will be devoted to the teaching evaluation polls.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes

Active participation at the discussion seminars	5%	8	0.32	2, 1, 6, 24, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 5, 4, 14, 15, 16, 20, 22
Final Essay	40%	40	1.6	2, 1, 3, 6, 24, 8, 9, 10, 18, 11, 12, 13, 5, 27, 14, 15, 19, 17, 21, 25, 26
Oral assignment	30%	4.5	0.18	2, 1, 3, 6, 24, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 5, 27, 14, 15, 19, 21
Written exam	25%	1.5	0.06	2, 1, 3, 6, 24, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 5, 27, 23, 14, 15, 19, 21

This course can be assessed through two modalities, continuous assessment and final assessment.

CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

The continuous assessment will consist in:

A) A final essay (40%). The format of the final essay will be announced at the beginning of the course.

B) A written exam (25%). The format will be announced at the beginning of the course.

C) An oral assignment (30%). The format will be announced at the beginning of the course.

C) The active participation in the discussion seminars (5%) through activities such as the presentation and analysis of texts, the moderation of the debate, the contribution to collective debate or the elaboration of reviews of the discussion. This activity cannot be reassessed.

All assessment activities will have the opportunity to be revised. On carrying out each evaluation activity, lecturers will inform students (on Moodle) of the procedures to be followed for reviewing all grades awarded, and the date on which such a review will take place.

To pass the subject through continuous assessment, an average minimum of 5 is required.

The student will be given the grade of "non-assessable" if less than 30% of the assessment activities are submitted.

In the event of a student committing any irregularity that may lead to a significant variation in the grade awarded to an assessment activity, the student will be given a zero for this activity, regardless of any disciplinary process that may take place. In the event of several irregularities in assessment activities of the same subject, the student will be given a zero as the final grade for this subject.

For their admission to reassessment, students must have been previously assessed from a set of activities that are equivalent to a minimum of 2/3 parts of the whole qualification. The minimum average grade of the assessed activities cannot be inferior to 3 nor higher than 5.

The 5% assigned to the active participation in the discussion seminars, as well as the assessment activities in which irregularities have been committed, cannot be re-assessed.

Re-assessment will consist in submitting again the assessment activities in which the student failed. The format will be announced with enough anticipation.

Any change related to assessment, methodology, etc., will appear at the Virtual Campus in due course.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

The final assessment modality consists in:

A) A final exam (70%).

B) A written exercise (30%) that will be submitted the day of the final exam. The format will be announced at the beginning of the course.

All assessment activities will have the opportunity to be revised. To pass the subject through final assessment, an average minimum of 5 is required.

In the event of a student committing any irregularity that may lead to a significant variation in the grade awarded to an assessment activity, the student will be given a zero for this activity, regardless of any disciplinary process that may take place.

For their admission to reassessment, the minimum average grade of the assessed activities cannot be inferior to 3 nor higher than 5. The reassessment will consist in the repetition of the assessed activities in the same format.

Any change related to assessment, methodology, etc., will appear at the Virtual Campus in due course.

Bibliography

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Winner, Langdon (1986). *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High-Technology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Software

None.

Language list

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(PAUL) Classroom practices	1	Catalan	second semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	1	Catalan	second semester	morning-mixed