



## Philosophy of Virtual World and Technologies (Fall 2021)

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- **Course Description:**

Cyberspace, also known as digital and virtual world, has encompassed all aspects of our lives. It is hard to exaggerate the importance of internet, social media, video games, artificial intelligence, simulations, augmented reality, blockchain and big data, for our lives. Further to be a collection of new technological products, cyberspace can also be considered as a new space and a new mode of living for human beings. As such, it is no surprise that there are many deep philosophical questions surrounding this newcomer to our lives. In this course, we try to engage with these philosophical questions. We examine whether digital technologies are value-neutral or value-laden. We also discuss certain frameworks that try to systematically embed human values in cyberspace technologies, including values-at-play and value-sensitive design (VSD). We also see how cyberspace technologies are changing the practice of science, through big data analysis and simulations, and discuss the potential philosophical implications of these changes for science. Whether and how the experience, life, and perhaps the nature of human beings are changing due to cyberspace, are other important questions that will be addressed during the course. The metaphysics and ontology of virtual worlds and ethical frameworks for solving the moral problems in this space are the other topics that we think about during the course. The course draws on various philosophical schools and methods, including analytic philosophy, phenomenology, critical school, and existentialism.

- **Objectives:**

Upon successful completion of the course, the students would be able to critically think about the philosophical implications of information technology, including the metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical aspects of virtual (digital) technologies. Students would be also able to spell out their own views on the problems with philosophical rigor.

- **Prerequisite:**

Although the course presupposes no philosophical knowledge, familiarity with digital technologies, metaphysics, ethics, and the philosophy of technology would be an advantage.

- **Assessment**

- Show up and active participation: 4.0 points
- Reading requirement: around 20 pages per week.
- Midterm Exam: 6.0 points
- Final Exam: 10.0 points

- **Main Sources** (selected chapters/papers from the following sources will be discussed during the course):

- Winsberg, E. (2010). *Science in the Age of Computer Simulation*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Vallor, S. (2020). *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Technology*. Oxford University Press.
- Grimshaw, M. (2014). *The Oxford Handbook of Virtuality*. Oxford University Press.
- Guelei, S. (2015). *Virtual Worlds as Philosophical Tools: How to Philosophize with a Digital Hammer*. Palgrave.
- Disputatio Journal, Volume 11 (2019): Issue 55, Special Issue: *Chalmers on Virtual Reality*.





- Tavani, H. (2015). *Ethics and Technology: Controversies, Questions, and Strategies for Ethical Computing*. Wiley.
- Silcox, M. (2017). *Experience Machines: The Philosophy of Virtual Worlds*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

## Syllabus

Session 1: What is the philosophy of virtual worlds and technologies?

Session 2 and 3: Metaphysics and Ontology of the Virtual Worlds

Sessions 4 and 5: Values, Ethics, and the Virtual Worlds

- Information Technology and Moral Philosophy
- Value-Ladenness of Virtual Technologies
- Axiology of the Virtual Worlds

Sessions 6 and 7: Human Beings and the Virtual Worlds

Session 8: Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence

Sessions 9 and 10: Knowledge, Science and the Virtual Worlds

- Big Data and Science
- Computer Simulation, Science and Reality
- Theory-Ladenness of Information

Sessions 11, 12 and 13: Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Existentialism, Critical School and the Virtual Worlds

Session 14: Philosophy of Video Games

