

5 Units

Contemporary Continental Philosophy: Technology and Politics

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In our contemporary world market dominated by economic consumerism it is becoming more evident that our dependency on the use of technological devices is becoming a totalizing relationship. This era in which students entering the university do not know of a time when personal computers and the internet were not around and to which everyone is connected to on hand-held devices, it is not hard to come to the conclusion that us “late moderns” have a serious and growing dependency on gadgets. Sixty years ago, Martin Heidegger and Herbert Marcuse recognized a growing dependency on devices, which evidenced significant social and political implications. These thinkers sought to articulate a critique of technology as a symptom of modernism. This class will explore these founding critiques as well as responses to them (including: Andrew Feenberg, Iain Thomson, Bert Dreyfus, Gianni Vattimo) and explore their relevance to our contemporary world of instant communications.

Course Materials: Materials with an asterisk (***) will be made available at the Literary Guillotine. Those without an asterisk will be made available as electronic selections on ecommons (make sure to print out a copy of electronic materials to bring to course meetings).

(suggested) Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volumes 3 and 4*. David Farrell Krell trans. (San Francisco: Harper, 1987)

Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. William Lovitt trans. (New York: Harper and Row, 1977)**

Gianni Vattimo, *A Farewell to Truth*. William McQuaig trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011)**

Herbert Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Technology” in the *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse: Technology, War, and Fascism Vol. 1*. Douglas Kellner, ed. (London: Routledge, 1998)

Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*.

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/marcuse/works/one-dimensional-man/index.htm>.

Accessed 6/25/14.

Andrew Feenberg “Critical Theory of Technology” in *Tailoring Biotechnologies* Vol.1 Issue 1, Winter 2005 pp. 47-64

Iain D. Thomson "[Phenomenology and Technology](#)," in Stig Andur Pedersen, Jan-Kyrre Berg Olsen, and Vincent F. Hendricks, eds., *A Companion to Philosophy of Technology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), pp. 195-201.

Vattimo, Gianni. *Nihilism and Emancipation: Ethics, Politics, and Law*. Santiago Zabala ed. William McCuaig trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

Jason Lindsey "Vattimo's Renunciation of Violence" *Ethic Theory Moral Prac* (2013) 16:99–111

Grading:

Final grades will be determined by evaluation of writing proficiency on one final term paper (3,000-4,000 words) and one in class 20 minute paper presentation (This works out to approx. 2,500 words) on one OR both of the readings to be covered that same meeting (I will need these typed out and handed in). The term paper is worth 50%, the presentation is worth 30% and attendance is worth 20%. For all written materials please use double-space 12pt. font. Be sure to cite all sources, etc.

Reading Schedule:

Week 1:

- 1) Introduction to the philosophy of technology and politics. Why is it important and how is it relevant? Assignment of presentations and minutes.
- 2) Iain Thomson "Phenomenology and Technology." Heidegger's reading of history as a grounding for a critique of technology: From *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* "The Word of Nietzsche 'God is Dead'" pp. 54-112. (Supplementary reading, from *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, "Introduction.")

Week 2:

- 1) Technicity – The Danger and the Saving Power: From Heidegger *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, "The Question Concerning Technology" pp. 3-35. Heidegger "The Memorial Address" (Supplementary reading: Selections from Heidegger's *Nietzsche* "Nihilism and the History of Being" pp. 199-250).
- 2) Danger and Saving Power (cont.) from *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* "The turning" pp. 36-49.
An alternative perspective – social factors and politics: Herbert Marcuse "Some Social Implications of Technology" pp.39-66.

Week 3:

- 1) Herbert Marcuse from *One Dimensional Man* "Introduction," "1: New Forms of Control," "2: The Closing of the Political Universe" pp. 7-50. Contemporary Issues: Feenberg "Critical theory of Technology" pp. 47-64,

- 2) Vattimo from *Nihilism and Emancipation* "Introduction" and "Postmodernity , Technology, Ontology."

Week 4 :

- 1) Vattimo, *A Farewell to Truth* Introduction and Ch.1 "Beyond the Myth of Objective Truth" pp. xxv – 45
- 2) *A Farewell to Truth* Ch. 2 "The Future of Religion" pp. 47-87,

Week 5:

- 1) Vattimo, Ch. 3 "The End of Philosophy" pp. 89-140. Vattimo from *Nihilism and Emancipation* "Liberty and Peace in the Postmodern Condition."
- 2) Dreyfus and Kelley, *All Things Shining*, "Conclusion: Lives Worth Living in a Secular Age." Lindsey "Vattimo's Renunciation of Violence"

Final paper due via ecommons on Thursday of this week (July 24).