

**ARCH 599**  
**PHILOSOPHY OF TECHNOLOGY**  
3.0 UNITS  
SPRING 2021

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**Course Description:**

This course provides a broad, general historical survey of the philosophy of technology, using Martin Heidegger's seminal lecture, "The Question Concerning Technology," as an inspiration and guide. Examining the ways in which technology has been addressed through time by different philosophical and critical traditions, from pre-Socratic discussions of techne to Deleuze's machinic delirium, this course charts the progress of the human relationship with technology and the nature it mediates. While primarily concerned with philosophical developments, this course will index the evolution of such thinking to the state of technology and architecture at the time, emphasizing issues of particular importance for architects.

**Course Organization:**

This is a seminar class. Each class meeting will be devoted to a presentation by the instructor, per the schedule below, followed by discussion. All readings for the course are available on the blackboard system, and should be read for discussion the following week; students will be responsible for downloading and/or printing these out for themselves and bringing them to class if they don't have a laptop. In addition, students will keep a notebook to record their observations and questions from the readings as well as their experience of the discussions in class. This notebook will be kept up weekly, with short entries synthesizing the readings for that week and listing questions to fuel that week's discussion; students should be prepared to be called on at any time to read from their notebook during class. This notebook may be physical or digital. Finally, a 3000-word paper on a related subject of the student's choosing, approved by the instructor, will be due at the end of the semester in place of a final exam.

**Course Objectives:**

- To introduce students to philosophical thought and Western metaphysics as they apply to technology and technological conditions in pre-modern and modern society.
- To encourage meaningful connections to architecture and design, recognizing both as basic forms of technology and thus subject to technological empowerment and enframing.
- To build skills in close reading, critical thinking and extrapolated and applied thought.

**Course Schedule:**

*Week 1 Introduction to course, conduct of class*

Definition of terms; establish historical context for emergence of a philosophy of technology as a distinct discipline; architecture's particular interest; logical preconditions for present argument.

*Week 2 Heidegger's work as the roadmap to a study of the philosophy of technology*

QCT: the basic text, the hardest questions, and the brightest potential. (reading: Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology")

*Week 3 Before Everything there was Anything*

The withdrawal of the Gods and beginning of the Western Metaphysical tradition (reading: Plato, selections from *The Republic*, and Aristotle, selections from *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Metaphysic*)

*Week 4 Dawn of the Scientific Revolution*

The turn from the pagan Greek Cosmic Harmony to the Christian dominion over Nature (reading: Francis Bacon, various selections from pamphlets, *New Atlantis* and *Novum Organum*)

*Week 5 The Scientific Revolution*

Critical foundations and critics (reading: selections from Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*)

*Week 6 Philosophy becomes technology*

Visions of the technocratic utopia (reading: Auguste Comte, "The Nature and Importance of the Positive Philosophy," from *Introduction to Positive Philosophy*). Paper topics due for review

*Week 7 Technology becomes everything*

Essential industrial reality and technological determinism vs. social determinism (reading: Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, various selections from *Das Kapital* and *The German Ideology*)

*Week 8 Intentionality and "equipmental being"*

Technological essence rooted in the question of Being rather than determinism (reading, again: Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology;" supplemental reading: "Origin of the Work of Art")

*Week 9 Post Heideggerian critiques of Technology*

The irrational element in the rationalization of society (reading: Herbert Marcuse, "On The New Forms of Control," from *One Dimensional Man*). Notebooks are to be turned in for review before students go on break.

*Week 10 Post Heideggerian critiques of Technology*

Structuralism, post-structuralism, knowledge and power (reading: Michel Foucault, "Panopticism," from *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*)

*Week 11 Post Heideggerian views of Technology*

Technological determinism or the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT). (reading: Pinch and Bijker, "The Social Construction of Facts and Artifacts," and Winner, "Social Constructivism: Opening the Black Box and Finding It Empty")

*Week 12 Post Heideggerian views of Technology*

One possible answer to the Question Concerning Technology may be a new technological delirium (reading: Gilles Deleuze, various selections from *A Thousand Plateaus*)

*Week 13 Post Heideggerian answers to the Question Concerning Technology*

The opposition of environmentalism to technological delusion (reading: Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement," from *Natural Resources Journal*, and Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement," from *Inquiry 16*)

*Week 14 Post Heideggerian answers to the Question Concerning Technology*

Will the computer solve everything? The question of resolution, scale, intent (reading: Wes Jones: "The Answer to the Question Concerning Technology," from *SouperGREEN*)

*Week 15 Doomsday Scenario for Architecture*

The virtual- and nano-technological revolutions, and the loss of architecture's "edge" (reading: TBD)

## Grading:

There will be no exams for this class. Grades will be determined entirely by class participation, a notebook, and a final paper. The paper will be worth half the grade (50%), the notebook another third (35%), and then participation will be worth 15%. At week 11 students will be advised of their standing with respect to class participation and notebooks. Notebooks will be submitted before week 10, for progress review by the instructor. Paper topics will be submitted at week 6 for approval. Final papers will be due at the end of Final Exam week.

## Readings / Reference Material (all assigned readings available on Blackboard)

- *Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition*, ed. Robert Scharff, Val Dusek (Blackwell, Malden, MA, 2003). Almost all of the readings posted on Blackboard are taken from this source. They have been rendered digital and reformatted with wider margins for note taking. This source also provides a good bibliography for more in depth study of the individual thinkers
- *Philosophy of Technology, An Introduction*, Val Dusek (Blackwell, Malden, MA 2006)
- *Philosophy of Technology, An Introduction*, Don Ihde (Paragon, NY 1993)
- *The Gods and Technology: A Reading of Heidegger*, Richard Rojcewicz (SUNY, Albany 2006)
- *SouperGREEN*, ed. Douglas Jackson (Actar, Barcelona 2016)

## The fine print:

### **Course Requirements and Grades**

Grades will be determined based upon quality of work produced, improvement over the course of the semester, completion of class requirements, quality of participation, attendance, attitude and ethical conduct. USC grading policies will be discussed on the first day of studio, and any questions regarding grades or policies should be directed to the instructor and/or the registrar. A passing grade in the course requires committed completion of all work. Incomplete work will not be evaluated.

### **Class Policies**

The class meets Wednesdays from 1100am to 1:50pm. Attendance is mandatory at all class meetings. If you do not participate you will not receive credit. You are not to work on other classes during class hours. Students are not to use class time to leave school to run errands, etc. All activities that require one to be away should be scheduled to occur outside of class hours. Leaving in the middle of or prior to the end of regularly scheduled class times will result in an absence.

### **Attendance Policy**

Any student who is absent without an acceptable excuse more than three times during a fifteen-week term will not receive credit for the course. The instructor may view unexcused lateness or departures from class as full absences.

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### **Academic Conduct:**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>

### **Support Systems:**

**USC Student Health** is available through the single phone number **213-740-9355 (WELL)**—including all services 24/7. <https://studenthealth.usc.edu/>

**Counseling and Mental Health Services**, a division of the *Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Keck School of Medicine of USC*

**Medical Services**, with providers on clinical faculty of the *Departments of Family Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Dermatology, Orthopaedic Surgery, Keck School of Medicine of USC; and professional affiliations with the USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, the USC School of Pharmacy, and the Division of Physical Therapy and Biokinesiology.*

**Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services**, with counselors who are clinical faculty of the *Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Keck School of Medicine of USC*

A nurse (for medical concerns) or licensed counselor (for mental health concerns) is available 24 hours a day, even when the student health centers are closed and during university closures.

**Students in crisis may walk-in for urgent mental health services** at the health centers (Engemann Student Health Center on UPC or Eric Cohen Student Health Center at HSC) during operational hours without an appointment; this may include urgent matters involving a death in the family, suicide concern, crime/sexual assault survivor counseling, or other high-risk matters.

**Urgent “sick” appointments for medical care** are available “same-day” for students needing care during operational hours.

**The evening operators of the 24/7 phone service line** can connect to USC Student Health services when an urgent matter presents itself.

**Sexual assault survivors requiring transportation** to a SART center can ask RSVP to call a Lyft ride (an “on-call” staff advocates program to accompany survivors is currently staffing operations and will be activated this fall).

**MySHR (the student health record portal)** shows all available regular appointment times; many appointments can be made within 24-48 hours.

**Campus incident post-ventions** are regularly provided by Counseling and Mental Health Services on campus for students; departments are encouraged to contact us to learn more or to make arrangements.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255*

[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086*

[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

*Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 821-8298*

<https://campussupport.usc.edu/trojans-care-4-trojans/>

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*

[dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Campus Support & Intervention - (213) 821-4710*

<https://campussupport.usc.edu/>

Assists students, faculty, and staff in navigating complex issues.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321– 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000 - 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*

[ombuds.usc.edu](http://ombuds.usc.edu)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.