# Syllabus for UWXPH237

**NOTE:** This syllabus document contains the basic information of this course. The most current syllabus is available in the full course.

## Course Description

An examination of how technology shapes and in shaped by cultural, social, economic, and political forces.

The class will begin by examining how artifacts, like smartphones, are the end product of a vast system of interrelated resources, techniques, and knowledge, and which are built upon a past history and for a particular social context.  As we will see, this means that technology is never simply a tool but rather reflects the values of its creators and users, for good or for ill.

And it is this point – the ethical orientation of technology – that we will focus on, examining the racial, gendered, and ideological orientation of the internet, medical research, and yes, our smartphones.

This course is designed to sharpen your critical thinking skills, to challenge you to look beyond the immediate so as to see larger patterns, to think about how systems – social, economic, environmental, and so on – are created and maintained out of a set of values.

## Prerequisite(s)

None

## Course Outcomes

Upon completing this course, you will be able to do the following:
- Explain the concept of "technology as a system"
- Distinguish cogent from fallacious reasoning used in technological debates
- Analyze ethical issues surrounding technology, electronic surveillance, and free speech in online platforms
- Reflect on the role that technology plays in one's personal and civic life, alongside the challenges present to the global community

## Course Requirements/Components

### Discussions

Throughout the semester, you will be asked to provide critical commentary on the course's learning resources (readings, podcasts, videos, etc.)  Some of this

commentary will ask you to articulate, in your own voice, critical concepts and arguments central to studying technology, values, and society.  Other times, you will be asked to give your own evaluation of these ideas and to explain and justify your position.

### Quizzes
The function of quizzes in this class is to help you gain a deeper and more precise understanding of some of the more difficult concepts and arguments we will study.  The quizzes will be designed to give you feedback on how well you understand the nuances of the material.

### Scaffolding Writing
The final paper asks you to engage in a very sophisticated analysis of complicated and controversial ideas.  You will begin with smaller steps, writing shorter pieces of analysis and getting feedback on these.  Ideally, you will be able to take this work and apply them to your final paper.

### Final Paper and Outline
As you will discover, technology is not simply inert and neutral; every technology brings with it economic and social opportunities and dangers.  Technology is not exempt from the biases and concerns regarding mirrors gender, race, class, age, accessibility, and other barriers; it can and has been used to lessen but also enlarge these problems.

The capstone of the class will be a final paper in which you will write a paper linking a technology of your choice to both its larger social implications and how this impacts your own life.

You will be asked to write a detailed outline of your position and then submit this for review, suggestions and critique.  Once you have it back, you will have time to rework, expand, or otherwise polish up your writing before you submit a final version.

# Grading
The following grading scale will be used to evaluate all course requirements and to determine your final grade:

| Percent | Letter Grade |
|---|---|
| 93-100% | A |
| 90-92% | A- |

| | |
|---|---|
| 87-89% | B+ |
| 83-86% | B |
| 80-82% | B- |
| 77-79% | C+ |
| 73-76% | C |
| 70-72% | C- |
| 67-69% | D+ |
| 60-66% | D |
| 59 and under | F |