

ETHICS AND TECHNOLOGY

CSU Northridge, Fall 2026

"You provide your students with the appearance of wisdom, not with its reality. Your invention will enable them to hear many things without being properly taught, and they will imagine that they have come to know much while for the most part they will know nothing. And they will be difficult to get along with, since they will merely appear to be wise instead of really being so."

—King Thamus to Thoth on the invention of writing (from Plato's Phaedrus 275a-b)

BASIC INFO

Catalog Info: PHIL 164, Section 01 (Class # 15309)

Class Location: Jerome Richfield 204

Class Time: TuTh 2:30PM - 3:45PM

NOTE: Due to a massive flood early August, the first floor of Jerome Ritchfield Hall is closed. You will have to access our classroom (on the second floor) either from the Sierra Center (east) or Sierra Tower (west). Both have stairs and elevators.

Instructor: Justin Kitchen (feel free to address me as "Justin" or "Mr. Kitchen")

Instructor Email: justin.kitchen@csun.edu

Office Hours: TuTh 10:00AM - 12:30PM

or by appt. (<https://justinkitchen.setmore.com>)

Office Location: Sierra Tower 532 (ST 532) and online via Zoom

- Join Zoom meetings from the 'Justin's Office' page on Canvas

COURSE TEXT

There is one textbook we'll use throughout the semester. **Physical versions are required and you should bring each week's reading to class** (i.e., you should have the physical book in front of you whenever you're in class).

Ethics of Artificial Intelligence: A Philosophical Introduction (2026) by Sven Nyholm [ISBN: 9781647922672]

Required Course Materials

You'll need college-ruled paper and something to write with for the weekly assignments (no "blue books" or "green books")

COURSE DESCRIPTION

As the catalog description says, this course introduces students to ethics through contemporary issues in the ethics of technology. As a skeleton for the course, we are going to read through a new book on the ethics of artificial intelligence that seems accessible to newcomers in philosophy but also invites readers to think more critically about the issues that the book reviews—perfect for an introductory course in ethics and technology. Alongside the textbook, I'll be providing many handouts and a few extra readings in order to introduce students to ethics and the philosophy of technology more generally.

This is a required course in the ["Philosophy and Emerging Technology" minor](#), which provides a focused program of study in philosophy for students interested in the nature of science and scientific discovery, the ethics of emerging technologies, and the role of technology in both philosophical reasoning and everyday life. It's an excellent complement to a broad range of majors, from Engineering and Computer Science to Biology, Journalism, Anthropology, and Film. Talk to me or visit the philosophy department (ST 522) if you want more information.

GE Contributions: This is a lower division course that provides 3 units towards the “Humanities” (3B) or “Lifelong Learning” portion of your General Education requirement. It also meets the Information Competency (IC) requirement.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Here is what you should expect in terms of the workload. If you suspect that we are not meeting these expectations or that too much is being asked of you, don't hesitate to reach out to the instructor.

As a 3-Unit course the following is expected (found in “[Policies and Procedures](#)” of the University Catalog): time spent with *direct faculty instruction* (i.e., video or in-person lectures) is set at 2.5 hours/week (50 min per unit); time spent on *other academic activities* (e.g., doing the assigned reading, completing weekly assignments, and reviewing instructor resources) should total 5 hours/week.

NOTE ON READING: We're going to be reading a few challenging philosophy texts in addition to the textbook (Weeks 2, 7, and 8). Keep in mind that it's normal to take much longer to read this type of text compared to non-philosophy texts. Plan to spend up to 4 hours of careful reading in preparation for each week.

As a “Humanities” GE course, at least two of the following Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are expected (found in “[GE Student Learning Outcomes](#)” of the University Catalog):

The main textbook at the weekly assignments will provide opportunities for students to ...

1. Explain and reflect critically upon the human search for meaning and values within and across the human experience, as expressed in [ethics and the philosophy of technology]
2. Analyze, interpret and reflect critically upon creative expression, discourse, or thought traditions from diverse perspectives.
3. Demonstrate the ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative development within the humanities.
4. Describe and explain the historical and/or cultural context within which a body of work or thought tradition was created or emerged.
5. Critically analyze how the humanities as disciplines of memory and imagination reflect upon the current conditions of the human experience and help envision progression as a society.

As a “Lifelong Learning” GE course, it will encourage students to develop an appreciation for the importance of the continued acquisition of new and diverse knowledge and skills, and it offers opportunities to integrate personal, professional and social aspects of life.

GRADING SCALE

If letter grade method is selected, a standard grading scale with +/- increments will be used:

≥93.0% = A	80.0-82.9% = B-	67.0-69.9% = D+
90.0-92.9% = A-	77.0-79.9% = C+	63.0-66.9% = D
87.0-89.9% = B+	73.0-76.9% = C	60.0-62.9% = D-
83.0-86.9% = B	70.0-72.9% = C-	≤59.9% = F

If a CR/NC grade method is selected, a grade of CR is given for work equivalent to “C” or better and a grade of NC is given to work equivalent to a “C-” or less (<https://catalog.csun.edu/policies/credit-no-credit-grading/>)

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

The final grade is divided equally across four assignment categories:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| 1. Quizzes | 25% |
| 2. Discussions | 25% |
| 3. Participation | 25% |
| 4. Project | 25% |

Weekly Reading Quizzes

At the start of Tuesday's class, I'll give you a short closed-book quiz to test basic comprehension of the reading. It will usually be brief —no more than 10 multiple-choice, true-false, or short answer questions. You'll be provided a second attempt online if you score at least 60% in class. I'll drop the lowest scoring quiz at the end of the semester.

Weekly Discussion Questions

During Thursday's class, I'll ask you a series of Discussion Questions that allow for deeper reflections on the week's material and more engagement with your classmates. I'll grade your answers based primarily on completeness and effort. I'll drop the lowest scoring discussion at the end of the semester.

Participation

In addition to attendance and some miscellaneous in-class assignments, participation will be graded based on how well students "discuss more" when asked. Before the start of every week, I'll assign five or six students at random to "**Discuss More**" in class. These students will be *required* to **1**) participate more in class (talking through some of the discussion questions on Thursday) and **2**) follow-up on Canvas in a designated discussion forum. If you miss out on the week you're assigned, you can make up this assignment by coming to my in-person office hours.

Final Project

Besides the reading, this is the only substantial thing students are asked to do outside of class. You will have to do some research into the issues we've discussed in class as well as engage in conversations with friends, family, or acquaintances to better refine your understanding. More detailed instructions and a rubric will be provided later in the semester.

Note on extra credit

Before you ask ... *no, there are no assignments that are specifically marked "extra credit"*. But you can get extra credit if you engage more in discussions (online or in-class); ask thoughtful relevant questions; answer the questions of your peers; and just participate more overall. This extra credit takes the form of a boost to your overall course grade (no more than one gradation at the end of the semester, e.g., a "B" would be increased to a "B+").

FOUR IMPORTANT COURSE POLICIES

Electronics-Free Policy

Portable electronic devices are *counterproductive* in courses like ours (courses that pose many conceptual questions and demand students to reframe information in their own words). With that in mind, you're asked to embrace a rare opportunity to put aside your electronic devices (phones, tablets, laptops, headphones, watches) *for just one hour twice a week*. This means that all devices should be silenced and put away in your backpack or purse.

You're free to excuse yourself and check your devices outside the classroom, but if you insist on using them at your desk I will gently remind you and your course grade may be affected.

Policy on Late Assignments

For weekly assignments: these are due on specific days at specific times. As a general rule, *only one missing 'Reading Quiz' and one missing 'Discussion Questions' assignment can be made up in my in-person office hours*. Since there are many of these assignments, doing poorly on two or three is not terrible. If you miss or do poorly on more than one, I recommend that you email me ASAP to help you get back on track.

For the Project: Anyone who is late to complete the final Project or any draft of it will be penalized by one gradation per day. For example, a "B" would be reduced to a "B-" if one day late and to a "C+" if two days late.

If you can't submit any assignment on time *due to an accident or serious illness* (where the cause is clearly beyond your control), you may receive an extension at my discretion. Please email me ASAP (justin.kitchen@csun.edu) if you think this is the case.

Plagiarism

Any assignment found to be plagiarized will be given an "F" grade. A second instance of plagiarism will result in an "F" *for the course*. All instances of plagiarism in the College of Humanities will be reported to the Dean of the College and may be reported to Assistant Vice President for Student Life for further action.

For the weekly quizzes, just keep your eyes on your own paper.

For the final project essay, if you feel that your formulations of your ideas or the ideas themselves are adopted in any way from another work, you should mention that work in the body of your essay or in a footnote. Do not worry that crediting someone else will lead me to underestimate your own creativity or originality. I find that all of the most insightful ideas owe some debt to the work of others, and I will be able to see what is distinctive about your proposals and arguments even when you credit significant portions of them to someone else.

Examples of plagiarism and strategies for avoiding it can be found on the following webpage: <http://library.csun.edu/guides/newsreporting/plagiarism>.

Use of AI Technology

I'm familiar with how students can use AI to help with course assignments—ranging from grammatical help (e.g., Grammarly) to full text-generation (e.g., ChatGPT). This is fine if used judiciously and with restraint, but it's not fine if you submit something as yours that you did not actually write. That would be a form of plagiarism. Thus, if any of your online assignments get flagged as containing a substantial amount of AI-assisted writing, **A)** I may interview you to check your personal comprehension of the material; **B)** I may have you redo the assignment in its entirety; or **C)** I may just follow the policy above regarding plagiarism. *If you're concerned about this, please reach out to me ASAP* so we can ensure you use AI in an academically honest way.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE INSTRUCTOR

During our time together, I'm happy to communicate with you by means of three methods: (1) *Office Hours*; (2) *student/faculty email*; and (3) *Canvas Discussions* ...

If you have questions about → USE ↴	Personal Matters	Concepts/Terms from Reading	Assignment Instructions
Office Hours...	✗	✓	✓
Student/Faculty Email...	✓	✗	✗
Canvas Discussions...	✗	✓	✓

- **Office Hours:** The most reliable way to get answers about the reading or assignment instructions is during office hours. Come to my office in person or else enter the designated Zoom meeting during my standing office hours. You can also make an appointment with me *outside* office hours at <https://justinkitchen.setmore.com>
- **Student/Faculty Email:** For personal matters, you should email me—using your *student* email address—at justin.kitchen@csun.edu. Please try to include your course number in the subject line (PHIL 164). I will usually respond within 24 hours. If I don't, feel free to email me again.
- **Canvas Discussions:** If you have questions about class policies or assignment instructions, post in the "Question about the Course" discussion on Canvas. If you have questions about concepts or terms from the reading, post in the "Questions about the Reading" discussions.

MORE COURSE RESOURCES

The Learning Resource Center

The Learning Resource Center (LRC) provides free, on-campus writing tutoring for CSUN students. It enables students to improve their academic performance through a variety of learning programs. Check out <http://www.csun.edu/undergraduate-studies/learning-resource-center> and "self enroll" in the Online Writing Lab Canvas site.

Disability Access / Accommodations

If you have a disability and need accommodations, please register with the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) office or the NCOD: Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services department. The DRES office is located in Bayramian Hall 110 and can be reached at (818) 677-2684 or by email (dres@csun.edu). NCOD: Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services is located on Bertrand Street in Jeanne Chisholm Hall and can be reached at (818) 677-2611 or by email (ncod@csun.edu). If you would like to discuss your need for accommodations, please contact me to set up an appointment.

Student Disclosure of Sexual Violence and Title IX

CSUN fosters a campus free of sexual violence including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as a CSUN student, the course instructor is required to notify the Dean of Students. To disclose any such violence confidentially, contact:

- Campus Title IX Coordinator - (818) 677-2077; <http://www.csun.edu/eqd/>.
- University Police - (818) 677-2201 or (818) 677-2111 (24 hour police dispatch); <http://www.csun.edu/police/assault/>.
- Klotz Student Health Center - (818) 677-3666; <http://www.csun.edu/shc>.

For more information on your rights and available resources:

<http://www.csun.edu/eqd/title-ix-addressing-sexual-misconduct-gender-based-discrimination>.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Take advantage of these resources before you graduate!

A lot of resources are now found at CSUN's new [Basic Needs Office](#) at the Valera NEST

- [CSUN Immigration Resources Hub](#)
- [Emergency MataCare grants](#): one-time grants to prevent evictions, urgent child care issues, etc.
- **DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) Resources**: Check out the [Central American Resource Center facebook page](#), [legal resources](#) listed on CSUN's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) [Dream Center](#) that was created to support all undocumented students & allies.
- [University Counseling Center](#) (Bayramian Hall 5th Floor): Did you know part of your tuition covers a certain number of free counseling sessions each year? Once you leave CSUN, these sessions can cost up to \$200 per hour.
- [Help lines](#) (after hours when the University Counseling is closed) for numerous topics/needs (e.g., suicide, drug, rape, LGBTQ, military, or any crisis). You don't have to manage these feelings alone.
- [Pride Center](#): offers support and resources to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, & questioning students, faculty, & staff.
- [Learning Resource Center](#) offers tutoring, a writing center, & more
- [Campus computer labs](#)
- To de-stress, invite students to our [Oasis](#) for relaxation or our [Student Recreation Center \(SRC\)](#)
- [Disabilities Resource Educational Services \(DRES\)](#) for assistance with any disability
- [Klotz Student Health Center](#): Numerous health services including primary care, dental, nutritional counseling, acupuncture, massage and lots more.
- [Career Center](#) for resume writing & interviewing and much more;
- [USU](#) for more student services
- [Clubs & Organizations](#): Hopefully a dozen people have already advised you to "get involved" at CSUN
- [Associated Students](#) offers recycling, and a Children's Center providing child care
- [Financial Aid & Scholarships](#) offers aid for applications
- [University Library](#) for many additional academic resources
- [Veterans Resource Center](#) assists CSUN students as they transition from military service to academic success.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This is a *proposed* schedule of readings. I strive to stick to the schedule so that you can plan your semester accordingly, but this syllabus is subject to change as I reevaluate the workload and in light of unforeseen events. Please keep an eye out for announcements on Canvas and glance at the “Syllabus Revision History” section at the very end of the document.

I recommend completing as much of the readings as possible **over the weekend *before*** their respective week begins (otherwise, make sure to finish reading on Monday). **Unless otherwise stated, each task will be undertaken and submitted *during class time*.**

WEEK 1 (Aug. 23–29): Introductions

READING:

- Course Syllabus
- *Recommended:* Nyholm’s *The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence* Introduction

TASKS:

- Task #1: Intro Group Assignment on Thursday
- **Task #2: GET PHYSICAL COPY OF BOOK ASAP**

WEEK 2 (Aug. 30 – Sep. 5): Intro to Technology

READING:

- Tiles & Oberdiek “Conflicting Visions of Technology” (provided in class during Week 1)

TASKS:

- Task #1: Quiz #1 on Tuesday
- Task #2: Discussion #1 on Thursday
- Task #3: *If selected*, “Discuss More”

WEEK 3 (Sep. 6–12): Intro to AI

READING:

- Nyholm Ch. 1

TASKS:

- Task #1: Quiz #2 on Tuesday
- Task #2: Discussion #2 on Thursday
- Task #3: *If selected*, “Discuss More”

WEEK 4 (Sep. 13–19): Control and Value Alignment

READING:

- Nyholm Ch. 2

TASKS:

- Task #1: Quiz #3 on Tuesday
- Task #2: Discussion #3 on Thursday
- Task #3: *If selected*, “Discuss More”

WEEK 5 (Sep. 20–26): Responsibility and Accountability

READING:

- Nyholm Ch. 3

TASKS:

- Task #1: Quiz #4 on Tuesday
 - Task #2: Discussion #4 on Tuesday
 - Task #3: *If selected*, “Discuss More”
-

WEEK 6 (Sep. 28 – Oct. 4): Meaning and Creativity

READING:

- Nyholm Ch. 4

TASKS:

- Task #1: Quiz #5 on Tuesday
 - Task #2: Discussion #5 on Thursday
 - Task #3: *If selected*, “Discuss More”
-

WEEK 7 (Oct. 5–11): Borgmann Interlude Pt. 1

READING:

- Borgmann (provided in class during Weeks 5-6) (provided in Week 5-6) pp. 1-9

TASKS:

- Task #1: Quiz #6 on Tuesday
 - Task #2: Discussion #6 on Thursday
 - Task #3: *If selected*, “Discuss More”
-

WEEK 8 (Oct. 12–18): Borgmann Interlude Pt. 2

READING:

- Borgmann (provided in class during Weeks 5-6) pp. 10-20

TASKS:

- Task #1: Quiz #7 on Tuesday
 - Task #2: Discussion #7 on Thursday
 - Task #3: *If selected*, “Discuss More”
-

WEEK 9 (Oct. 19–25): Human Enhancement

READING:

- Nyholm Ch. 5

TASKS:

- Task #1: Quiz #8 on Tuesday
 - Task #2: Discussion #8 on Thursday
 - Task #3: *If selected*, “Discuss More”
-

WEEK 10 (Oct. 26 – Nov. 1): Consciousness

READING:

- Nyholm Ch. 6

TASKS:

- Task #1: Quiz #9 on Tuesday
 - Task #2: Discussion #9 on Thursday
 - Task #3: *If selected*, "Discuss More"
-

WEEK 11 (Nov. 2–8): Identity and Digital Duplicates

READING

- Nyholm Ch. 7

TASKS:

- Task #1: Quiz #10 on Tuesday
 - Task #2: Discussion #10 on Thursday
 - Task #3: *If selected*, "Discuss More"
-

WEEK 12 (Nov. 9–15): TBD

NO CLASS TUESDAY (VETERANS' DAY)

READING:

- TBD

TASKS:

- Task #1: Quiz #11 on Thursday
 - Task #2: Discussion #11 on Thursday
 - Task #3: Clear your Final Project "Plan" with the instructor by Saturday evening
-

WEEK 13 (Nov. 16–22): Moral Principles for Humans and AI

READING:

- Nyholm Ch. 8

TASKS:

- Task #1: Quiz #12 on Tuesday
 - Task #2: Discussion #12 on Thursday
 - Task #3: *If selected*, "Discuss More"
-

WEEK 14 (Nov. 23–29): Discussion on Virtue Ethics

NO CLASS THURSDAY (THANKSGIVING)

READING:

- TBD

TASKS:

- Task #1: Quiz #13 on Tuesday
 - Task #2: Discussion #13 by Wednesday (on Canvas)
 - Task #3: Prepare to start your 10-day experience no later than next Monday (Dec. 1st)
-

WEEK 15 (Nov. 30 – Dec. 6): Human Flourishing

READING:

- Nyholm Ch. 9

TASKS:

- Task #1: Begin your ten-day Experience no later than Monday

- Task #2: Quiz #14 on Tuesday
 - Task #3: Discussion #14 on Thursday
 - Task #4: *If selected*, “Discuss More”
-

WEEK 16 (Dec. 7–13): Sustainable Technology

READING:

- Nyholm Ch. 10

TASKS:

- Task #1: Bring two print-out of your “Initial Findings” to class on Tuesday
 - Task #2: Quiz #15 on Tuesday
 - Task #3: Submit your “Initial Findings” on Canvas by Tuesday evening
 - Task #4: Discussion #15 on Thursday
 - Task #5: *If selected*, “Discuss More”
-

WEEK 17 (Dec. 14–20): FINALS WEEK

READING:

- TBD

TASKS:

- Task #1: Submit Final Project by Dec. 18th.

Document Revision History:

Aug. 21 —syllabus made available to students

NOTICE ANY TYPOS? LET ME KNOW!