**Description**:
This class explores the conceptual and ethical challenges raised by the relationship between religion and technology. In what ways is technology a response to the difficulties of labor and work, the biological limitations of bodies and lifespans, or the unpredictable forces of nature, for instance? What do Western religious and philosophical traditions have to say about such forms of augmentation of life capacities and processes? What promises and perils arise from technological progress? Why is the problem of technology seemingly central to the question of modernity, and how does religion fit in, if at all? We explore a variety of themes, which may include: bodily enhancements, biomedical procedures, humans vs. machines, robotics and AI, as well as digital and virtual worlds, asking what hopes and concerns certain religious and philosophical traditions in the West bring to such developments, and why it matters to think deeply about such issues.

**Learning objectives**:
Through participation in this course students should be able to:

- Cultivate a nuanced sense of the interplay between religion and technology
- Understand how human beings imbue technologies with meaning
- Analyze technological developments in light of religious frameworks
- Critically assess the ways societies deploy technologies and the impact of such technologies
- Appreciate the ethical challenges and possibilities of technological innovation
- Improve in critical and analytical reading skills, as well as in clarity, coherence, and persuasiveness of oral and written expression and argument.

**Class format**:
This course is a seminar and is focused on attentive reading of key texts and in-depth discussion in a group setting. Students should come prepared to engage one another thoughtfully and respectfully. The instructor will provide short lectures for background and framing of the conversation, and invite students to share comments, questions, or contributions, and to engage one another in dialogue. Students are strongly encouraged to take the initiative to offer thoughts and questions at any time during our discussions, and not simply wait to be called on to share. We will analyze these texts closely in class, so thorough reading beforehand is essential.

**Assignments and evaluation**:
*Attendance and participation* (10%):
Students should complete the assigned readings prior to class and come prepared to engage actively with one another. This means bringing your questions, comments, and concerns and sharing them in class. *Be prepared to be called upon at any point and in any session to share your thoughts in response to the readings*

*and discussion*. Please arrive on time. Repeated tardiness as well as unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade.

*Discussion leadership* (10%):
Students will sign up for <u>one</u> class session where they will lead and facilitate discussion of a particular reading due that day. This means being responsible to facilitate discussion for one 50-min block of class. Provide a summary of the reading and pose 4-5 questions and/or topics for discussion. You may break up your summary with questions for discussion along the way, or complete your summary first and then pose your questions and moderate the discussion. Remember, you are not expected to speak for the entire 50-min period (God forbid!) but rather, after an introduction (10-15 mins), to consider yourself the facilitator and point person to lead us in a conversation about the particular reading. Having generative questions and reflection exercises and activities are good strategies to get students talking. *Please provide a short handout as a supplement to your oral summary*. The handout should include a brief outline of your presentation and any useful quotes, images, diagrams, or additional resources that pertain to the topics covered. Sign up for your session on Canvas.

*Weekly reading responses* (30%):
Students will submit a total of six (6) reading responses over the quarter, due Thursdays by 11:59pm on Canvas. Reponses should be 500 words. The first half of the response should provide a succinct summary of one of the readings covered that week. In one paragraph, what is the author's main argument and how do they go about developing it? The second half/second paragraph is your critical assessment of their argument. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? Is the presentation persuasive or not, and why? What concerns does this reading raise for you? Etc. *Please devise a good tracking system to make sure you are aware of how many responses you have left.*

*Review and analysis paper* (20%):
Students will complete a short review and analysis paper (6 pages, double-spaced) assessing one of the following: Heidegger's "Question Concerning Technology, Foucault's *History of Sexuality* selection, or Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* selection. Provide a clear, concise summary of the viewpoint, including the major claims and distinguishing factors. Then provide your critical assessment as to what you find persuasive, explanatory, useful, etc., and why/not. Papers are evaluated on the clarity and accuracy of the summaries; thoughtfulness of engagement with the texts; incisiveness and persuasiveness of the evaluation and assessment; as well as matters of style, prose, grammar, etc.  Due as Word doc via upload on Canvas on XXX, by 11:59PM.

*Final position paper* (30%):
Students will submit a final 8-10 page paper, engaging an ethical issue about technology (whether one covered in class or another). Students will adopt a position concerning this issue and provide an argument aimed at persuading the reader of their position. The paper should engage and cite various course readings in building its case, and may also (but need not) include outside sources. The paper should include a clear and succinct introduction with thesis and roadmap for the argument, as well as conclusion indicating remaining issues to research or explore. Strong arguments will not only present evidence for the position but consider opposing viewpoints and arguments and offer reasoned rebuttals.

       Papers are evaluated on the incisiveness and persuasiveness of the analysis, argument, and evidence; clarity of the description of the issues involved; thoughtfulness of engagement with the texts and course themes; as well as matters of style, prose, grammar, etc. Students will submit a

complete draft (required and graded) and a final version. Students will also workshop revisions in class and provide peer evaluation and critique. Please submit as a Word Doc. Draft 1 (10%) of Analysis Paper is due XXX by 11:59PM. Via upload on Canvas. Final draft (20%) of Analysis Paper, on XXX by 11:59PM. Via upload on Canvas.

*Science fiction book review* (optional; up to 5% extra credit):
Students may choose a work of science fiction to review. Students will write a short book review (4-6 pages, double spaced), where they provide a brief summary of the story (first third) and a reflection on any religious, philosophical, or ethical matters of technology that the book addresses and how they relate to, amplify, or complicate themes addressed in our course (second two thirds). Papers are evaluated on the clarity of the summaries; thoughtfulness of engagement with the texts; incisiveness and persuasiveness of the evaluation and assessment; as well as matters of style, prose, grammar, etc. Due as Word doc via upload on Canvas anytime during the term up until XXX, by 11:59PM. *Please clear the book with the professor before beginning the review.*

**Grading scale**:

|  | 100-95  A | 94-90  A- |
|---|---|---|
| 89-87  B+ | 86-83  B | 82-80  B- |
| 79-77  C+ | 76-73 C | 72-70 C- |
| 69-60 D | 59-0 E |  |

On academic integrity:
Students are expected to do their own work for all assignments. They are also expected to provide accurate and complete documentation of sources and to cite correctly. Plagiarism or academic dishonesty of any kind is a serious offense of the Honor Code at Dartmouth. Violations can result in failure of the assignment, failure of the course, and other disciplinary actions at the college. It is your responsibility to know what plagiarism and academic dishonesty are. Please consult the Writing Institute's guidelines to familiarize yourself with what constitutes plagiarism:
http://writingspeech.dartmouth.edu/learning/materials/sources-and-citations-dartmouth

On special accommodations:
Students requiring special accommodations for learning-related challenges should consult the Office of Student Accessibility Services to have their needs documented, and are encouraged to speak with the professor as soon as possible in order to allow for any necessary adjustments.

On religious observances:
Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

**Office hours**:
Office hours this term are TBD or by appointment. Students should sign up for office hours (15 min increments) via the Canvas site, which will direct you to Calendly.com, an online scheduler. Please sign up rather than just drop in, to be sure you secure time to talk. If you cannot make regular office hours, please email me to set up an alternative time.

*All readings as PDFs on Canvas.

**Schedule**:
Week One:
Introduction: Why Religion and Technology?

**Historical and Social Shifts**
Week Two:
Agriculture and the City
- Genesis, selections on garden and flood
- *Gilgamesh*, selections
- James C. Scott, *Against the Grain*, selections
- F. Alesina, P. Giuliano, and N. Nunn, "On the Origins of Gender Roles: Women and the Plough," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 128, no. 2 (2013): 470–71.

Week Three:
Writing and Number
- Thomas Crump, *The Anthropology of Numbers*, selections
- Susannah Elm, "Inscriptions and Conversions: Gregory of Nazianzus on Baptism (*Or.* 38–40)," in Mills and Grafton, *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*
- Andrew Lakoff, "The Private Life of Numbers: Pharmaceutical Marketing in Post-War Argentina," in Ong and Collier, *Global Assemblages*
- Bill Kovarik, *Revolutions in Communication: Media History from Gutenberg to the Digital Age*, selections.

Week Four:
Money and Debt
- Richard Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, selections
- Alla Semenova and Randall Wray, "The Rise of Money and Class Society," in Jo and Lee, *Marx, Veblen, and the Foundations of Heterodox Economics*
- Michael Hudson, "Debt vs. Barter Theories of Money" in Wray, *Credit and State Theories of Money*
- Moritz Hütten and Matthia Thiemann, "Moneys at the Margins: From Political Experiment to Cashless Societies," in Malcolm Campbell-Verduyn, *Bitcoin and Beyond*
- David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5000 Years*, selections

**Theoretical Frames**
Week Five:
Technology and World-Making
- Martin Heidegger, "Question Concerning Technology"
- Walter Benjamin, "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility"
- Franz Kafka, "In the Penal Colony"

- Jeremy Stolow, *Deus in Machina: Religion, Technology, and the Things In Between,* selections

Week Six:
Biopolitics and Disciplinarity
- Michel Foucault, *Historical of Sexuality*, Vol 1, selections on biopolitics
- Stephen Collier, "Budgets and Biopolitics," in Ong and Collier, *Global Assemblages*
- Jessica Riskin, "Machines in the Garden," *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts* 1.2.2010, 16-43.

Week Seven:
Space and Place
- Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, selections
- Genesis, selections on tower of Babel and on other cities
- Graham Ward, *Cities of God*, selections
- Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City"

**\*Due**: Review and Analysis Paper, XXX at 11:59PM. Via upload on Canvas.


**Ethical Quandaries**
Week Eight:
Cloning and Genetic Engineering
- Ronald M. Green, "I, Clone," *Scientific American*.
- Michael Sandel, "The Case against Perfection"
- Ronald M. Green, *Babies by Design*, Introduction

Week Nine:
Computers, Robotics, and AI
- Ray Kurzweil, *Age of Spiritual Machines,* selections
- Stef Aupers, "Where the Zeroes Meet the Ones," in Aupers, *Religions of Modernity*
- Christopher Helland, "Online Religion as Lived Religion," *Online – Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* 1.1 (2005)

**\*Due**: Optional science fiction book review, XXX, 11:59PM. Via upload on Canvas

Week Ten:
Posthumanism, Transhumanism, and Afro-Pessimism
- Donna Haraway, "Cyborg Manifesto"
- Max Moore, "The Philosophy of Transhumanism," *The Transhumanist Reader* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 3-17.
- Jeffrey C. Pugh, "The Disappearing Human: Gnostic Dreams in a Transhumanist World" *Religion and the New Technologies*, 51-60.
- Calvin Warren, *Ontological Terror*, selections.

**\*Due**: Case Study Paper, XXX, 11:59PM. Via upload on Canvas.