In Search of Ex Machina: The Paradox of Being Human in the Age of AI

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Days: Thursday
Dates: September 19 through October 24, 2024
Time: 1:00pm-3:00pm
Meetings: 6
Location: Golden Bear Center, Suite 365
Delivery Method: In Person, Livestreamed and Recorded
Course Description

This course employs an inquiry-based approach rooted in Critical Theory, focusing on significant questions that impact individuals and cultures. The primary goal is for learners to develop an understanding of the human condition and consciousness in the 21st century. The course explores reality and human culture as co-constructed by technology, science, art, and ideology. The course addresses timeless questions about the mind, consciousness, power relations, neoliberalism, and explores the nature of reality, as well as our future trajectory in relation to humanity and its convergence with the AI driven ecosystem.

Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

A. Engage critically with key concepts and issues in the AI driven ecosystem.

B. Apply critical approaches to the analysis of the impact of digital technologies from cultural, artistic, economic, and socio-political perspectives.

C. Discover the intersections of humanities, arts, cultural production, and digital technologies.

D. Explain the convergence of technology and humanities.

E. Analyze critically the relationship between humanities and new digital technologies.

F. Analyze critically the trends in socio-cultural communication and society in the context of neoliberalism.

Course Outline

Session 1 [Methods and Guiding theories]

Lecture (powerpoint) + Q & A Discussion

Suggested Readings & Viewing TBA

Topics to cover:

- An Introduction to Methodology: Critical Theory from the Frankfurt school to Today
- Theories of Consciousness: Epistemology and metaphysics
- AI & Theories of Singularity
- Critical Analysis of Conscious Experience: Cultivating the ability to critically analyze different states of consciousness in the Digital Age.

Session 2 [Data Driven Society]

Lecture (powerpoint) + Q & A Discussion

Suggested Readings & Viewing TBA

Topics to cover:

- Existentialism & Metric Society: Existentialism as a philosophy of life and how it can apply as a lens of understanding life in the Digital Age.
- Understanding the Social Implications of Data Analytics: How to explore the ways in which metrics and data analytics influence and shape societal structures, norms, and individual behavior, fostering an understanding of the broader social impact of data-driven decision-making.
- Critical Analysis of Data-Driven Policies: Developing the ability to critically assess the impact of data-driven policies on diverse social groups, examining issues of equity, justice, and the potential for reinforcing or challenging existing social inequalities.
- Ethical Considerations in Data Collection and Analysis: Investigating the ethical dimensions of data collection and analysis, exploring issues such as privacy, consent, and the potential for surveillance, and fostering a critical awareness of the ethical implications of widespread data use in society.

Session 3 [Machines and manipulation of Human Behavior]

Lecture (powerpoint) + Q & A Discussion

Suggested Readings & Viewing TBA

Machine Learning: Potentials and Biases

Psychological Theories of Power

New Gilded Age: Tech Barons vs. Railroad Barons

Session 4 [Social Media and Society]

Lecture (powerpoint) + Q & A Discussion

Suggested Readings & Viewing TBA

• Critically Examining the Societal Implications of Social Media.

• Investigating the social, cultural, and psychological effects of social media on individuals and communities.

• Developing Strategies for Responsible Social Media Engagement.

• What is the quality of life for societies in the Digital Age.

Session 5 [Critical Media Literacy]

Lecture (powerpoint) + Q & A Discussion

Suggested Readings & Viewing TBA

• What is Critical Media Literacy

• How Cinema Affects us, emotionally, psychologically, ideologically, and intellectually

• What is critical media literacy and its necessity in the Digital Age

• Internet Addiction and the ways in which we can combat it

• Nietzsche's philosophy of life and its relevance to the Digital Age

Session 6 [The Future]

Lecture (powerpoint) + Q & A Discussion

Suggested Readings & Viewing TBA

• Exploring Emerging Trends and Technologies in AI (Artificial Intelligence).

• Investigating the latest advancements and breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, including machine learning, natural language processing, and computer vision.

• The ways to evaluate the ethical, social, and economic implications of widespread AI adoption in society.

• The ways to promote awareness of ethical considerations in AI development and deployment, addressing issues such as bias, fairness, transparency, and accountability.

• Exploring the existing legal frameworks governing digital activities, including regulations related to data protection, intellectual property, cybersecurity, and electronic commerce.

• Investigating global and regional privacy laws and regulations, such as GDPR, CCPA, and others, that govern the collection, storage, and processing of personal data in the digital space.

Partial Bibliography

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