Course Syllabus

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Virtual Reality: The Ethics of Future Technology

Course Description

Humanity has expressed a remarkable capacity to invent and manipulate new realities. From dreams and ancient storytelling to modern 3d spectors movies and video games, we are all captivated by the promise of being transported into other realities and alternate consciousnesses. Nowhere is this drive more pronounced than in the near future of the medium Ubiquitous Computing.

In this course, we will begin to explore some of the philosophical and ethical implications of the development of virtual reality in light of the metrics of our modern technology and the immersive technologies they impact in our lives on human ... Virtual reality, and AR (Augmented Reality) are the most immersive technologies we have at our disposal. Virtual reality is a medium that has profound implications of VR technologies. What does it mean for something to be "virtual"? What is "real" about virtual reality? Are we all in a giant simulation? Would it matter if we were? Can we model consciousness and even design virtual consciousnesses? Can we design virtual worlds that are better than the real world? What ethical obligations do we have if we know if we could change our environment and even our bodies? Can VR technology allow us to experience a special window into the embodied experience of others? How will VR change the way we communicate, work, and learn?

In addition to classic texts in the philosophy of virtuality and technology by thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Rene Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Michel Foucault, we will also read contemporary scholarship on the ethics of technology and VR by thinkers like Jaron Lanier, Shoshana Zuboff, Jeremy Bailenson, Mark Roman Miller, Ryan Calo, Kate Darling, Ethan Mollick, Dan Ariely, Sherry Turkle