

**Eötvös Loránd University
Institute of Philosophy**

Course Code: BTKD-FIL-POL-9

Title: AI as a Problem for Social Philosophy

Lecturer: Joseph Tanke, Visting Profesor

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This course will begin on Thursday, October 8, 2026.

Course Description:

Unlike many courses in the discipline of philosophy, which consider AI primarily in terms of approaches drawn from the field of applied ethics, this course aims to understand emerging AI technologies from the standpoint of social philosophy. Social philosophy is the branch of philosophy that takes society as its object, asking how social relations, institutions, and identities are shaped by histories of capitalism, colonialism, racism, sexism, and, most importantly for our purposes, technological development. Accordingly, our course attempts to gauge how the proliferation of AI is reshaping the fields of language, labor, and life, together with their modalities of power, knowledge, and subjectivity.

This course is organized around four themes. We begin by briefly considering **popular representations** of AI, asking what literature, film, and popular culture have to say about our fears and expectations regarding intelligent machines. Next, we turn to the tradition I call **classical cognitivism** in order to understand philosophical debates surrounding both the possibility and nature of machine learning and intelligence. In the third phase, our approach to **AI misalignment and existential risk** begins with an analysis of several high-profile cases, such as Anthropic's report regarding agentic misalignment and OpenAI's intrusions into Hugging Face's infrastructure. Finally, we undertake a **critical genealogy of technology**, asking which critical frameworks prove most useful for understanding AI's conditions of possibility, its social functions, and political effects.

Tentative Schedule:

(Please come to class well prepared to discuss the readings assigned for each date. The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule as needed.)

Popular Representations of AI: Public Fears and Private Fantasies

October 8: Greetings and Overview; Literary and Filmic Representations of AI
Read: Laura Van Den Berg, "Samantha" and Joseph Tanke, "Connection Without Presence: AI & the Death of Man." View: excerpts of *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Colossus: The Forbin Project*.

Classical Cognitivism: From the Turing Test to the Chinese Room to Social Concerns

October 15: Read: Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," and John Searle, "Chinese Room," from *Minds, Brains, and Programs*. Also, for some historical

context, Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus, "Making a Mind versus Modeling the Brain," 15-24.

October 22: Read: Alan Turing, "Can Digital Computers Think," Alan Turing, "Intelligent Machinery, A Heretical Theory," Norbert Wiener, "Moral and Technical Consequences of Automation," and Irving John Good, excerpts from *Speculations Concerning the First Ultra Intelligent Machine*, 33-36 and 78.

Agentic Misalignment and Existential Risk

October 29: Fall Break

November 5: View: "Misaligned: AI was told to Work an Office Job—it Resorted to Blackmail," at YouTube.com. Listen: "AI is Outsmarting Its Creators," NYTIMES podcast at: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-daily/id1200361736?i=1000787630226>. Read: Nick Bostrom, "The Superintelligent Will," and Iason Gabriel, "Artificial Intelligence, Values, and Alignment."

Towards a Critical Genealogy of AI Technology

November 12: Read: Karl Marx, "Fragment on the Machines," selections from the *Grundrisse*.

November 19: Read: Herbert Marcuse, "Some Social Implications of the Modern Technology," and Jacques Ellul, "The Technological Order."

November 26: Read: Günther Anders, "Commandments in the Atomic Age," Gilbert Simondon, "Introduction" to *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, pp. 15-26 and Donna Haraway, selections from *A Cyborg Manifesto*, "The Informatics of Domination," "The 'Homework Economy' Outside the Home," and "Cyborgs: A Myth of Political Identity."

Also recommended: Gilbert Simondon, "Technical Mentality." And view: *Simondon of the Desert*, available on Vimeo.com

December 3: Read: Bernard Steiger, "Artificial Intelligence and Artificial Stupidity in the Anthropocene," and Kate Crawford, selections from *Atlas of AI*.

December 10: Seminar Presentations

Assignments and Evaluation:

Students are expected to read all assignments in advance of each seminar meeting. Moreover, students are expected to become active readers by posing questions to our texts and preparing for class discussion. Students will be asked to prepare several short position papers throughout the course of the semester, as well as one seminar presentation, and a term paper of approximately 2000-2500 words.

Policy Regarding the Use of Artificial Intelligence:

The use of artificial intelligence in this course is governed by Dean's Decree No. II/2025 (XII. 12.) and Rector's Decree No. 4/2025 (X. 28.). Every submitted paper must include a declaration stating whether and how artificial intelligence was used. In this course, permissible uses are restricted to specific supporting tasks, such as brainstorming and checking the language of

text already written by the student. **Artificial intelligence may not be used to generate, draft, or substantially rewrite any portion of a submitted paper, nor may it substitute for reading, analysis, argumentation, or independent scholarly judgment.** The instructor will discuss permissible and impermissible uses with students. Students must be able to explain and defend orally any work they submit. Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect prohibited AI use, the student may be required to complete an oral defense of the work, and the matter may be addressed through the applicable university channels.

Accommodations:

ELTE and your instructor are committed to ensuring equal access for students with disabilities, learning or neurodevelopmental conditions, and chronic illnesses. Students who require accommodations should register with the Faculty Disability Coordinator by contacting **specialis@btk.elte.hu** and submitting the required documentation. Once accommodations have been approved, please contact me so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. You are not required to disclose your diagnosis to me; however, I will treat all such requests with confidentiality and work with you to make sure that the course is genuinely accessible.