Instructor: Dr. Anne Collins Smith

Office hours:

Face-to-face (in Boynton 208A; I am usually also online at these times):
  Monday and Wednesday 2-4 pm
  Tuesday 10:30-11:30 & 1:30-2:30

Online only:
  Tuesday 3-5 pm

I am also available by appointment; please note that I do not make appointments on Thursdays.

Contact information: The best way to contact me is through the "Mail" function within D2L. You can also contact me by regular email at acsmith@sfasu.edu, or call me at 936-468-2327 (x2327 from a campus phone). Please note that if you call me long distance, I cannot call you back.

Course description: An upper-level topics course focusing on philosophical issues arising from computers. Topics may include: metaphysics of computer-generated realities; theories of artificial intelligence; and philosophical issues having to do with cyberspace. May be re-taken when the topic changes for a maximum of 6 hours.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- A student will be able to trace the development of a philosophical issue within a historical period or across historical periods, addressing the contributions of specified philosophers.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Students will come to understand principles of metaphysics, epistemology, postmodernism, and transhumanism.
- Students will learn to apply philosophical principles to specific issues that arise within the context of cyberspace.
- Students will become familiar with the history and terminology of cyberspace.
TEXTS:
- Additional text readings will be provided by the instructor.
- You will need to obtain and view the following two movies by the first week in February:
  - *The Matrix* (dir. by The Wachowski Brothers, 1999)
  - *Paprika* (dir. by Satoshi Kon, 2006)

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:
*A detailed schedule with deadlines for all course activities is available in the Course Timeline.*

Getting Started
*January 20-25:* Familiarize yourself with course documents and introduce yourself to your classmates in the Getting Acquainted forum.

Unit 1: A Brief History of Cyberspace
*January 26-February 1:* Readings and quiz: Cyberspace from ARPANET to Twitter.

Unit 2: Levels of Reality
*February 2-26:* Readings and lecture on Plato, Descartes, and Berkeley; quiz, micropaper, and online discussion.

Unit 3: Human Identity
*February 29-April 1:* Readings and lecture on postmodernism and transhumanism; quiz, micropaper, and online discussion.

Unit 4: COLLOQUIUM
*April 4-May 6:* Submit final version of colloquium paper; write response papers; online discussion of colloquium papers and responses.
*Detailed information on your responsibilities for the Colloquium will be provided in a separate document.*
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Quizzes – 30%
There will be quizzes during the first three units to test your comprehension of the readings and lectures.

Reflection micropapers – 20%
You will write two micropapers, one for the second unit (Levels of Reality) and one for the third (Human Identity). There will be a list of suggested topics; you can also suggest a topic of your own. Each micropaper must be at least 300 words long and no more than 500 words long.

Participation – 30%
Students will be required to participate in an online discussion forum for the second, third, and fourth units. Your discussion grade is not solely based on the number of posts but on their quality, thoughtfulness, and collegiality.

Colloquium paper and responses – 20%
You will write a short research paper on a topic of your own choosing related to philosophy in cyberspace. Your paper must be at least 1800 words long and no more than 2500 words long. You will receive a detailed handout with the requirements for the paper.

In addition, you will receive advance anonymous copies of two of the colloquium papers written by your classmates. You will compose a response to each paper; each response should be approximately 800-1000 words long. Requirements for the responses will be included in the handout describing the colloquium paper.

The Colloquium Timeline:
You need to furnish me with a statement of your chosen topic and a preliminary bibliography no later than February 19. A rough draft of your colloquium paper is due March 11; the first week of the Colloquium unit, April 4-8, is reserved for individual meetings to discuss the draft with the instructor, after which you will compose final drafts that reflect the instructor's suggestions for revision. The final drafts of the papers are due on April 12. On April 13, you will receive two anonymous papers to comment on; your response papers are due April 22. The completed papers and responses will be posted by the instructor on April 25; the remainder of the unit will consist of online discussion of the papers and responses.
ADDITIONAL POLICIES

Academic integrity is the responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism. According to the SFA policy located at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp,

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit.

Anyone who commits an act of cheating or plagiarism will receive a grade of F for the course. Moreover, the student is required to meet with the instructor to discuss the incident, and a formal Report of Academic Dishonesty will be submitted to the student's permanent file. If you feel that the instructor's determination of academic dishonesty is in error, there is an appeals process described in full at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_appeals_students.asp.

Disability accommodations: To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

Withheld Grades [Semester Grades Policy (A-54)]
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Acceptable Student Behavior
Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

Extra credit is not available. The grade you receive in this class will be the grade you earn on course requirements.