



Technology and Society

course syllabus for the academic year 2024/2025

Basic information	<p>Meeting times & place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In-person: to be determined, Main Building WUT• Online: MS Teams <p>Instructor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Michał Piotr Pęgowski• E:mail: michal.pregowski@pw.edu.pl• Office hours: to be determined (90 minutes per week), room 228 Main Building WUT• Contact also available via MS Teams (personal chat + course team)
Brief course description	<p>Human beings live among others and are biologically wired to be social. However, in the 21st century mankind is also <i>wired</i> in a more technological sense. This course offers an in-depth look into group dynamics as a driving force behind our perception of self and the world that is more connected than ever – and, at the same time, perhaps more disconnected as well.</p> <p>Throughout the course the students will gain better understanding of human nature by looking into the past (selection pressure, prosociality) and into the present (norms, values, social practices). We will look at the natural predispositions of humans (e.g., cooperation, conformity, empathy, conflict resolution, controlling impressions) and observe the impact of information and communication technologies on contemporary societies – both positive (connectivity, exchange of knowledge and ideas) and negative ones (e.g., online disinhibition effect, information overload, multitasking/switchtasking). We will also investigate a few socially important but often misunderstood ideas, such as conflict, toughness and mindset.</p>
Assessment criteria	<p>The final grade results from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparation of two home assignments (short essays) – max 5 points each.• Completion of the final exam in written form (multiple choice test & short answer questions) – max of 10 points. <p>Overall point cutoffs are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 0-10 points = 2.0. (fail)• 11-12 = 3.0• 13 = 3.5• 14-15 = 4.0• 16 = 4.5• 17-20 points = 5.0 <p><u>Additional requirements to be met:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least one essay needs to be turned in.• Class participation throughout the semester.

<p>Course content</p>	<p>PART I. HUMANS AS SOCIAL CREATURES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction. No man is an island: the society as the natural habitat of <i>Homo sapiens</i>. Norms, values, sanctions. 2. Hierarchies soft and strong: Cooperation, competition, conformity. 3. The loner goes extinct. Moral continuity between humans and other social species. 4. Understanding ourselves through other humans. “I” vs. “me”: social expectations, roles, and identities. 5. Life as a scene. The presentation of self in everyday life. 6. Conflict as a social phenomenon. Interpersonal, community, workplace conflicts. 7. The core principles of conflict resolution. <p>PART II. HUMANS AS DIGITAL CREATURES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Learning to be human: Communication and social interaction as developmental tools. The psychological features of computer-mediated communication (CMC). 9. Antisocial behaviors in CMC. Conflict resolution in online communities. 10. Who stole our focus? The dark side of ICT: switchtasking/multitasking, information overload, social bubbles, and their consequences. <p>PART III. HUMANS COMPLETE?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Taking back control. Boundaries, resilience and (real) toughness. 12. The lure and a trap of specialization – from Ortega y Gasset to Epstein. 13. What holds us back. Fixed vs. growth mindsets. <p><i>Note: The extent of topic analysis is subject to change due to fruitful discussions, questions from the students and other factors. For these reasons, the numbers above do not have to translate one-to-one to subsequent class meeting, and not all topics may end up being covered. At the same time, the sequence of topics is expected to be kept intact. Topics not covered in class are not part of the final exam.</i></p>
<p>Source materials and other references (subject to slight changes)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dweck, C. (2007). <i>Mindset: The New Psychology of Success</i>, Ballantine Books 2. Epstein, D. (2019). <i>Range</i>, Riverhead Books 3. Goffman, E. (1956). <i>The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life</i>. University of Edinburgh Press 4. Hartley, P. (1999). <i>Interpersonal communication 2nd ed.</i>, Routledge 5. Lewitter F., Bourne PE., Attwood TK (2019). <i>Ten Simple Rules for avoiding and resolving conflicts with your colleagues</i>. PLoS Comput Biol. 2019 Jan 18; doi: 10.1371/journal.pcbi.1006708 6. Magness, S. (2022). <i>Do Hard Things. Why We Get Resilience Wrong and the Surprising Science of Real Toughness</i>, HarperOne 7. Ortega y Gasset, J. (1930; 1994). <i>The Revolt of the Masses</i>, W. W. Norton & Company. 8. Suler, J. (1998). <i>The Basic Psychological Features of Cyberspace</i>, online: http://www-usr.rider.edu/~suler/psycyber/basicfeat.html [accessed 18.11.2022] 9. Suler, J. (1998). <i>The Online Disinhibition Effect</i>, online: http://www-usr.rider.edu/~suler/psycyber/disinhibit.html [accessed 18.11.2022] 10. de Waal, F. (2016). <i>Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved</i>, Princeton University Press <p><i>Note: excerpts from the source books will be provided to students in electronic form when possible. Resources available online are expected to be accessed individually by course participants.</i></p>
<p>Teaching and learning methods</p>	<p>Interactive lecturing Case study analysis Source material analysis and interpretation (with discussion)</p>