

INQ120D

Living an Examined Life

Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Durell Bouchard

Office Hours: MWF: 2:10-3:10, TTH: 2:40-3:40, also by appointment or open door **Office:**
Trexler 365-C

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Course Objectives

Today there are autonomous self-driving cars on our roads. There are artificial intelligence programs that buy and sell billions of dollars of stocks every day. There are robots that vacuum our floors and mow our lawns. As we develop robots with greater capabilities, we are creating robots that are more free of human oversight. Is it possible to create robots with the ability to recognize right and wrong and to choose actions that will not harm people and themselves? In the not-so-distant future there will be robots that are behaviorally indistinguishable from humans. What rights should these synthetic intelligences be afforded? In this course students will answer these questions by exploring the ethical and moral issues of the robots we have and the robots that will be.

Intended Learning Outcomes: At the end of the course the successful student will be able to

1. formulate and evaluate arguments about ethical positions.
2. describe connections between the course topic and broader traditions of critical reflections on the good life.
3. give an effective oral presentation.
4. write a paper with a clear thesis, cogent argumentation, effective organization, and a minimum of sentence-level errors.

Course Content

Texts:

Love and Sex with Robots: The Evolution of Human-Robot Relationships, by David Levy, Harper Perennial, 2008.

Rise of the Robots: Technology and the Threat of a Jobless Future, by Martin Ford, Basic Books, 2016.

Our Final Invention: Artificial Intelligence and the End of the Human Era, by James Barrat, St. Martin's Griffin, 2015.

A Writer's Reference (8th Edition) with Writing in the Disciplines (Roanoke College Edition), by Diana Hacker, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010.

Oral Presentations: Students will learn how to prepare and will deliver two formal oral presentations with slides. The midterm presentation will connect the topics of robots and ethics to a student selected fictional robot. The final presentation will be a presentation of the student's final project. Presentations will be evaluated by peers for content and clarity.

Project: Students will have a project where they will create a fictional ethical conundrum for a robot and write a paper that analyzes the implied ethical positions. The paper for the final project will have two drafts; the first of which will be evaluated by peers for content and clarity.

Participation: Students are expected to attend class, participate in group activities, and engage in class discussions.

Assignments: In addition to regular reading assignments, students will also have short reading reflection assignments both to ensure students are keeping up with the assigned reading and to facilitate discussion during class. The reading reflection assignments are due before class. Late assignments will receive no credit.

Grading: Course grades are assigned based on the following weights and scale:

Grade Weights: participation.....15%	midterm presentation....20%	final project....20%
assignments.....25%	final presentation.....20%	

Grade Scale: 93-100....A	83-86.....B	73-76.....C	63-66.....D
90-92.....A-	80-82.....B-	70-72.....C-	60-62.....D-
87-89.....B+	77-79.....C+	67-69.....D+	0-60.....F

Course Policies

Attendance Policy: Class attendance is vital to your success in this course; material covered during missed sessions is the responsibility of the student. Conversations held in class illuminate the published class materials and are subject to evaluation on quizzes. Moreover quizzes and in-class activities are not available for make-up. Students with excused absences will not be penalized for missing quizzes or in-class activities. Students with unexcused absences will receive no credit for missed quizzes and inclass activities.

Late Assignment Policy: Assignments are to be submitted before the specified time on the due date. Oral presentations are to be given in class on the specified day. If you anticipate being unable to meet a deadline, talk to me at least 24 hours before the deadline. In extenuating circumstances we may be able to make special arrangements. Please note that this must be discussed – just sending an email does not automatically grant you extra time. Unexcused late work will receive no credit. Electronic “glitches” do not waive your responsibility to submit your work in a timely manner.

Academic Integrity: It is accepted that you have read and understood the standards for academic integrity at Roanoke College. All papers, presentations, and quizzes are to be the work of the individual student. You are encouraged to work collaboratively on in-class activities. However, unless specifically stated otherwise, all work outside of class must be completed individually. Copying someone else's work or turning in someone else's work is NEVER allowed. Using someone else's work or ideas as your own is plagiarism and an academic integrity offense.

Electronic Devices: All cell phones and pagers must be turned off prior to entering the classroom. The use of any electronic device during a quiz is prohibited. This includes cell phones, personal media players, personal digital assistants, and laptops. Any use of such a device during a test or quiz will be considered a breach of academic integrity.

Writing Center: The Writing Center @ Roanoke College, located on the Lower Level of Fintel Library, offers writing tutorials focused on written and oral communication for students working on writing assignments/projects in any field. Writers at all levels of competence may visit the Writing Center at any point in their process, from brainstorming to drafting to editing, to talk with trained peer tutors in informal, one-on-one sessions. The Writing Center is open Sunday through Thursday from 4 to 9 pm. Simply stop in, or schedule an appointment by going to www.roanoke.edu/writingcenter (<http://libguides.roanoke.edu/writingcenter>), where our schedule of writing workshops and creative writing playshops is also posted. Questions? Email writingcenter@roanoke.edu or call 375-4949. Like our Facebook page for updates!

Disability Support Services: The Office of Disability Support Services (DSS), is located in the Goode-Pasfield Center for Learning and Teaching in Fintel Library. DSS provides reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. To register for Disability Support Services, students must self-identify to the Office of Disability Support Services, complete the registration process, and provide current documentation of a disability along with recommendations from the qualified specialist. Please contact JoAnn Stephens-Forrest, MSW, Coordinator of Disability Support Services, at 540-375-2247 or e-mail her at: stephens@roanoke.edu (<mailto:stephens@roanoke.edu>) to schedule an appointment. If you have registered with DSS in the past, and would like to receive academic accommodations for this semester, please contact Ms. Stephens-Forrest at your earliest convenience, to schedule an appointment.

Schedule

This course expects you to spend at least 12 hours of work each week inside and outside of class.

Dates	Topic
Jan 16 – Jan 23	Robot Ethics
Jan 25 – Feb 1	Programming Ethics
Feb 3 – Feb 6	Presentation Skills
Feb 8 – Feb 24	Robot Relationships
Feb 27 – Mar 3	My Robot Presentations
Mar 6 – Mar 31	Spring Break
Mar 13 – Mar 29	The Future of Work
Mar 31 – Apr 17	Robot Apocalypse
Apr 19 – Apr 24	Perverse Instantiation Presentations