

WHAT IS REAL? PHILOSOPHY AND VIRTUAL REALITY

Dr. Noa Gedi

Fall Semester

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Office Hours: Tuesday & Wednesday by appointment

Short description:

In a famous scene from the first Matrix (1999), after (supposedly) having released Neo from “the prison of his mind,” Morpheus confronts him with the oldest philosophical question about the nature of reality. This fundamental question seems to haunt us evermore since the introduction of virtual reality (VR) technology. The course will explore the concepts of reality and virtuality, their interrelation, their affinity with other defining concepts of human existence and human cognition (like “truth,” “meaning,” “causality,” “free will,” and “personal identity”). Specifically, we shall examine the challenge that digital technology poses to our conception of reality, to the very differentiation between the real and the virtual, and consequently also to our moral predicament.

The course will combine conceptual analysis of the above mentioned notions and a philosophical analysis of chosen themes from various films and TV series.

Assessment:

Midterm (20%): Round of short Oral Presentations as a basis for class debate.

Mandatory (80%): Written Essay (on one of the course-themes or presentation-topic, according to pre-given instructions).

Participation: Active and informed participation in class discussions is a factor in the final evaluation

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. Students are permitted a maximum of three absences without penalty. Any additional absences will affect the final grade and may result in failure of the course.

Academic conduct:

Plagiarism is taken extremely seriously. Any instance of academic misconduct which includes: submitting someone else’s work as your own; failure to accurately cite sources; taking words from another source without using quotation marks; submission of work for which you have previously received credit; working in a group for individual assignments; using unauthorized materials in an exam and sharing your work with other students, will result in failure of the assignment and will likely lead to further disciplinary measures.

Additional requirements:

Students are requested to keep phones turned-off while in class.