General Education Submission Form

A. GE component for which course is being proposed: Understanding Society

B. Submitted by Bruce Wydick, director Westmont in SF

C. Ideally, submissions should be discussed by the entire department prior to submittal.

   [X] ~~Chair has reviewed and approved the course.~~
       (WSF Director)

D. Course being proposed (please attach syllabus):
    21st Century Technology, Christian Faith, and the Meaning of Life

E. This course

   [ ] Has not been modified, but is being submitted to check its suitability

   [ ] Has had its syllabus rewritten to communicate the course's contribution to GE

   [ ] Has had its contents modified to address the relevant GE issues

   [✓] Is a new course designed to fulfill the GE requirement

F. This course is being submitted as

   [ ] ~~A Template.~~ ~~Applicable to courses with multiple sections which require only general~~ training in the discipline. The submission should come from the department chair and should clearly identify what course content and what elements of the syllabus the department has agreed will common to all sections. Upon approval by the GE Committee, any course whose syllabus is determined by the department to meet the specifications of the template is approved to satisfy this area requirement. A copy of each syllabus should be forwarded to the GE Committee for record keeping purposes.

   [✓] ~~An Individual Course.~~ ~~Applicable to courses requiring specialized training in the~~ discipline or are typically offered by a particular instructor. The course should be resubmitted and reassessed in the event of a change in staffing or syllabus.

G. Statement of rationale:
    (Include a list of the area certification criteria (former called GE objectives) and GE Student Learning Outcomes (if applicable). These certification criteria and GE SLOs are listed in the GE Committee Combined document. After each certification criterion and GE SLO, list several course activities (lectures, readings, assignments, etc.) that address it. If it is not completely obvious, explain how the activities relate to the certification criterion or outcome. Please attach a copy of the syllabus which has been annotated to identify the corresponding activities. Electronic annotations are required. Please use the *comment* feature in Word to annotate electronic copies).

WESTMONT

To: General Education Curriculum Committee

From: Bruce Wydick, Professor of Economics and Director of Westmont in San Francisco

Subject: New GE Course Proposal: "21st Century Technology, Christian Faith, and the Meaning of Life"

Date: September 13, 2019

The new course that will be offered at Westmont in San Francisco, "21st Century Technology, Christian Faith, and the Meaning of Life" we believe will be an exceedingly popular course with students at Westmont who choose to come for a semester to the SF campus. The 3-unit Interdisciplinary Studies course combines a biblical reflection on technological change with a cogent examinations of its impacts on individual lives and on society. It is an exceptionally timely course, with mounting evidence of the vast impacts of digital technology on society and on each of our personal everyday lives. Some of these impacts are positive, but others are negative, including economic (increasing inequality), social (impacts on relationships via texting, Instagram, and social media), political (increased polarization), psychological (increased depression reported in young adults), and perhaps even spiritual. We believe in the importance of students understanding the myriad impacts of digital technology as they begin their adult lives where digital technology will affect most facets of their work, personal lives, and relationship to society in general. The following describes how the course will meet the GE criteria for the Understanding Society:

Certification Criteria for Understanding Society:

Students will be able to

1. identify foundational theories that offer explanations of social, political, economic, and/or cultural phenomena;
   Digital technology has had an enormous effect in each of these areas. The course will begin to look at the biblical foundations of technology and then delve into impacts on our discourse as human beings, economic effects as well as effects on human relationships

2. apply foundational theories to analyze contemporary problems or controversies;
   Even with the near uniform adoption of smart phones and digital media today, there is a tremendous debate about the potentially negative effects of technology on our lives. This class enters straight into this debate by first looking at technology in light of Creation and other themes in scripture, and then by understanding what new evidence highlights as its impact on personal lives and on society as a whole today.

3. make personal and social application of various theories—informed by a biblical perspective.

One of the most powerful outcomes we believe from this class will to create a biblical framework in students' minds about their own use of digital technology, how to use it in was that are conducive to their own human flourishing, but also that of their relationships with others, and society in general.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will apply appropriate foundational theories to analyze social, political, economic, and/or cultural phenomena.

These are given in the syllabus below and they are the following:

Learning Outcomes: This course aims to educate and equip students as Christian leaders by providing the resources and tools for a continued engagement with ethical and theological questions raised by the proliferation of digital technologies. By the end of this course, the successful student will

- Gain an understanding of the key areas of conversation between society's increasing use and dependence on digital technology and its relationship to Christian faith and practice, human flourishing broadly defined, and key transformations that are taking place in society from technological change.
- Develop and use critical methodologies to construct interdisciplinary dialogue, constructively use methods in interdisciplinary study and research to explore issues of the impacts of digital technology on society.
- Learn how to effectively and relevantly engage digital technologies within the context of their vocations and lives in ways that promote their own well-being and those of others in society.

21st Century Technology, Christian Faith, and the Meaning of Life
Dr. Joshua M. Moritz

Description: According to theologian Brent Waters, technology, "is the way we live and move and have our being in today's age." How does our deep immersion in technology impact our Christian faith? What ways of wisdom and righteousness should guide our daily engagement with multi-media? How can we navigate a course so that the devices that we possess do not in turn come to possess us? How can we use the gifts and blessings of technology to nurture and transform deeper Christ-centered community while avoiding the deepest pitfalls of technologies temptations? In this 3-unit Interdisciplinary Studies class we will explore how our immersion within digital technologies impacts the meaning of our own lives and how we live out our Christian faith. We will examine various theories regarding the nature of technology and how those theories contribute to our understanding of what it means to be human. Considering a number of theological perspectives and themes as they relate to digital technologies we will also examine the ethical challenges that various technologies raise as they hinder or enrich human flourishing. This course is intended to fulfill the Understanding Society component of at Westmont's General Education Curriculum.

Learning Outcomes: This course aims to educate and equip students as Christian leaders by providing the resources and tools for a continued engagement with ethical and theological questions raised by the proliferation of digital technologies. By the end of this course, the successful student will

- Gain an understanding of the key areas of conversation between society's increasing use and dependence on digital technology and its relationship to Christian faith and practice, human flourishing broadly defined, and key transformations that are taking place in society from technological change.
- Develop and use critical methodologies to construct interdisciplinary dialogue, constructively use methods in interdisciplinary study and research to explore issues of the impacts of digital technology on society.
- Learn how to effectively and relevantly engage digital technologies within the context of their vocations and lives in ways that promote their own well-being and those of others in society.

Texts:
1. John Dyer, 2011. *From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology*, (Kregel Publications, 2011)
2. Tim Challies, *The Next Story: Life and Faith after the Digital Explosion* (Zondervan, 2011)
3. Alan Lightman, *In Praise of Wasting Time* (Simon and Schuster, 2018)
4. Other Readings: provided by Professor Moritz

Grading/Evaluation:

Class Participation (25%): All students taking the course for a letter grade or pass/fail must demonstrate their in-depth reading of the assignments through class participation.

Weekly Reflections and Questions on Readings (25%): In order to better facilitate discussion and preparation, students will be expected to e-mail me either (1) a short (about 1 or 2 paragraphs) reflection on some aspect of the readings for that week, or (2) a series of a few questions pertaining to the readings.

These must be e-mailed to me 24 hours before class. To adequately satisfy this criteria you must respond to at least 10 class sessions.

Three Reflection Papers (50%): Each paper should be 2000-3000 words in length (not counting references and notes).
Paper 1: Your Digital Autobiography: In this paper you will reflect on your own journey with digital technology and the role it has played in your life. What was your first computer and what do you remember about it? What role did it play in your life? What was the first interactive computer or robotic companion that responded to you through either talk or play? Did it know your name? How did this make you feel? What computers came after that? What was the first computer technology that you bought for yourself? Why did you want this technology, what did you want it for? (curiosity, education, because no pets were allowed, etc.?); What are the most recent computers and AI entities in your life (Alexa, Siri)?
Paper 2: Considering Your Struggles with Technology: In what ways have digital technologies made your walk with God more difficult?
Paper 3: Envisioning and Redeeming Your Future with Technology:

Course Reading Schedule

Class 1: Introduction and Overview:
Readings: "New Technology and Christianity" Michael J. Sleasman

Part I: Technology and Creation
Class 2: Human nature and technology
Readings: Genesis Ch 1 and 2; Joshua Moritz "Animals and the Image of God in the Bible and Beyond";
    Moritz S&R, Ch 7 "From Consciousness to New Creation: The Nature and Destiny of Humanity"
Class 3: God as Technologist and the Goodness of Technology
Readings: Genesis 3:21; Revelation 21-22

Class 4: Technology, community, and knowledge. How does technology affect economic and social relationships?
Readings:

Class 5: Christian Views of Technology: A Historical Perspective
Readings: Brian Patrick Green, "The Church and Technological Progress: Past, Present, and Future"

Part II: Technology and Fall
Class 6: The Works of the Flesh: Digital technology as an amplifier of sin
Readings: Galatians; Digital entertainment, gaming, violence, desensitizing addiction;
    Chapter from Flickr
Class 7: Techno-Idolatry and The Tower of Babel
Readings: Psalm 115; Ted Peters, "Should CRISPR Scientists Play God?";
    Brian Patrick Green, "Ethical Reflections on Artificial Intelligence";
Class 8: Estrangement, Broken Relationships, and Isolation
Readings: Robots as partners Turkle;
    Michael Spezio, "Human or Vulcan? Theological Consideration of Emotional Control Enhancement"

Class 9: Mindless Slaves of Technology
Readings: Carr and Lightman (In Praise of Wasting Time) less time

Class 10: False Messiahs (technological messianism, and techno-utopians)
Readings: Matthew 7:15; Ted Peters "Progress and Provolution: Will Transhumanism Leave Sin Behind?"

Part III: Technology and Redemption
Class 11: Renewing Our Minds
Readings: Romans ; The value of unstructured thought

Class 12: The restorative power of created nature
Readings: George MacDonald "On nature"

Class 13: The Value of Prayerful Solitude (vs Loneliness)
Readings: "Solitude: A Return to the Self"

Class 14: The Fruits of the Spirit
Readings:

Class 15: The Kingdom of God
Readings: