



Philosophy 2550F (670)
Sex and Gender in the Digital Age
Summer 2026

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan Marsh

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Course Information

Calendar Description:

Digital technologies, including the Internet, have transformed almost every area of contemporary life. This class will discuss their relation to sex and gender.

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Course Weight: 0.50

Breadth: Category B

Subject Code: PHILOSOP

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.



Special Topics in Philosophy: Sex & Gender in the Digital Age
PHIL 2550F | Section 670 | Distance Studies /Online | 2026 (May 04-June 12)

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan P. Marsh

Office: Virtual

Email: jmarsh26@uwo.ca

Virtual Office Hour: TBA

Class Times and Location(s): A fully online course with occasional (optional) Zoom tutorials (see p. 2 below for details).

Description

Digital technologies, including the Internet, have transformed almost every area of contemporary life. This class will discuss their relation to sex and gender.

Sample topics include: digital sex work, online dating, sexting, virtual harm, avatars, and online gender equality. We'll discuss ethical and metaphysical dimensions of these topics, as well as their meaning for us in today's world.

Methods

Teaching methods include interactive slides with voice recordings, online tutorials, videos, film analysis, crowdsourcing, and online forums.

Course Related Expenses

All readings will be made available via OWL Brightspace. There are no anticipated costs for those, though, a small rental fee may be required for an assigned film (title[s] TBA), through a seller of your choice, assuming it's not accessible via the UWO library.

Privacy

To respect the privacy and confidentiality of all members of PHIL 2550F, videos, pictures, or voice recordings, outside of voluntary podcast recordings, are strictly prohibited without an approved accommodation and the written permission of the instructor.

Technical Requirements

Internet connection

Laptop or desktop

(Note: to access your instructor's voice recordings, on PowerPoint slides, something other than Chromebook is strongly recommended.)

About this course

Welcome to PHIL 2550F! This is a distance/online course. You never have to come to campus. It's also "asynchronous", meaning we will not have a regular, mandatory time when the entire class must be online. However, there will be some synchronous activities including (i) group work (podcast recordings), which you will schedule, (ii) office hours, (iii) optional Zoom tutorials (which will be summarized for those who are absent) and (iv) a final exam (online). Throughout the course you are expected to keep up by reading your weekly checklist on our course website. This is how you will know what to do each week.

Aims

By the end of term, every committed PHIL 2550F student will

- A1) have carefully reflected on how digital technologies (e.g., the Internet, augmented reality, and multi-user online games) create exciting new capabilities and modes of human existence, on the one hand, and yet raise ethical questions and practical challenges, on the other (reflection),
- A2) be acquainted with how recent work on gender, sex and digital tech intersects with traditional philosophical controversies and questions, e.g., re: rights, benefits, and harms, as well as meaning, self-knowledge, and identity (integrative understanding),
- A3) have presented and defended a sustained argument that creatively engages and advances the professional literature on a course topic (creativity & personal development),
- A4) have cultivated intellectual virtues pertaining to argumentation, dialogue, interpretation, research, and clear writing (to help with outcomes 1-3) (skills).

Evaluative Requirements

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Values</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Aims (see above)</u>
1. Tutorial Participation (Zoom) & A4	15%	Optional - see below	A1, A2
2. Digital Ethics Podcast & A4	25%	May 26 [online group work - see below]	A1, A2
3. Paper & A4	30%	June 9	A3
4. "Take-Home" Exam & A2	30%	June 15	A1

1. Tutorial Participation (Optional) (15% = 7.5 % x 2 tutorials): Zoom tutorials (optional – choose 0 or 1 or 2) will run for approx. 60 minutes. Dates will be announced. Each tutorial will incorporate class discussions, small breakout rooms and very brief written exercises; students must submit those when prompted (no late submissions will be accepted). A successful tutorial grade requires taking active measures to advance the discussion. These include:

- (i) knowing and thoughtfully engaging the relevant materials (viz., the readings and/or prep slides listed on your weekly checklist),
- (ii) applying the tools and virtues associated with critical thinking, and
- (iii) respecting the College's conduct rules and any course-specific policies, including our strict no recording policy (which helps protect student privacy and confidentiality).

Can't make either Zoom session? Fear not: your remaining assessments will automatically be evenly reweighed. So, for instance, if you score a total of 68/85 (80%) on your remaining assessments, your final grade will automatically become 80/100 (80%). Available, but hesitant or worried about your grade? Again, fear not: your tutorial performance *may* raise, but will *never* lower, your final grade – if it does, I will simply eliminate the tutorial grade before final grades are submitted. Also, tutorials are designed to be stress-free, informal and fun.

2. "Digital Ethics" Podcast (group work) (25%): For this assignment, you will work, virtually (i.e., online), in small groups of approx. 4 students, including a moderator. Each group will record a video (or audio) podcast, over Zoom, after collectively deciding on a recording date and time; one member will then submit the podcast on behalf of the group by the due date. Advanced planning is strongly recommended. To make this possible, you will receive a list of your group members and instructions once the class population stabilizes.

3. Research Paper (30%): Due June 9, 2026. I will provide instructions, with options and paper topics, but each student must come up with their own project and thesis statement.

4. Online Exam (30%) Due by June 15, 2026, at 2 p.m.): The exam is both online and, in a limited sense, “open book” in the sense that students may draw on class materials (no online searches). The exam window will open on June 15, 2026 (at 2 p.m. Eastern Time Zone). You will have exactly 2 hours to complete it, unless you have preregistered accommodations for extra time. Any course material is admissible and hence a fitting object of study (unless I explicitly state otherwise in writing via Brightspace). Advanced preparation is, accordingly, strongly recommended. To prepare, please regularly follow your weekly checklists, as they are posted. Don’t wait until the end.

Grading Information and Explanation of Grades

All assignments will be accompanied by grading criteria and clear directions. Students will be evaluated in accordance with how well they follow them. What follows is a university wide grade explanation.

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

As the above scale implies, the intellectual skills (e.g., clarity of writing) and cognitive goods (e.g., understanding) come in degrees. This scale helps clarify those degrees.

Considerations: Students are permitted one (1) academic consideration per 0.5 course without formal supporting documentation. However, this cannot be applied to

- Final exams: Considerations for final exams always require a formal recommendation from your advisor.
- Missed Zoom tutorials: As these are optional, they do not qualify for academic consideration.

Rather, any informal considerations must, if granted, be applied toward podcast assignments. If approved, these will automatically result in a grade transfer to (or a reweighting of) the final exam. Please note that considerations for a missed term paper must be formal.

Class-specific policy on AI (e.g. Chat GPT) use: Use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, co-pilot, translation tools, and grammar-checking tools, including Grammarly) is not permitted for written work submitted for evaluation. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline.

King's University College

General Course Policies

2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at [here](#).

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course. Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course. For further information, please see:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/exams/index.html.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/personal-counselling>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King’s University College:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>

GBSV Support:

King’s is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/campus-safety-and-reporting/gender-and-sexual-violence>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western’s Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/campus-safety-and-reporting/student-code-of-conduct>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at [here](#).

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with you instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/OriginalityReports-TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member.

Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.