information, property, and privacy
phi 365–c301/leh 300–01
chris alen sula, spring 2010

“To live effectively is to live with adequate information. Thus, communication and control belong to the essence of man’s inner life, even as they belong to his life in society”

–Norbert Wiener, God & Golem, Inc.

course overview
This course will examine philosophical, legal, political, social and economic issues surrounding digital information and media. We will begin by surveying the current state of digital technology, including its potential effects on communication, creativity, and social/political arrangements. With this context in place, we will then examine the philosophical origins of our notion of property and how they might impact and be impacted by emerging technologies. This will lead us into a discussion of the ethical consequences of these new technologies, particularly the pressure they place on familiar notions of privacy and rights. We will conclude by considering issues of access to information and technology, especially as they relate to social justice and political participation. Along the way, we will consider issues of ownership, creativity, the open source movement, hacker culture, national (digital) security, privacy rights, (bio)technological enhancement, civic responsibility, and the role of technology in education.

required texts
Jeroen van den Hoven and John Weckert (eds.), Information Technology and Moral Philosophy (Cambridge, 2008)

assignments
This course will be writing intensive. Students will prepare weekly questions on the readings, write three response papers (1,000 words), and complete a final paper (2,000 words) on a topic of their choice, with a thesis and annotated bibliography submitted in advance for approval.

for more information
Please contact christopher.sula@lehman.cuny.edu with any questions.