



# Short Syllabus

| Course Title  | Credits |
|---|---------|
| <b>WHAT IS REAL? PHILOSOPHY AND VIRTUAL REALITY</b>   | 2       |
| <b>Lecturer</b>   |         |
| Dr. Noa Gedi  |         |
| <b>Contact details</b>  |         |
| <a href="mailto:dea30th@tauex.tau.ac.il">dea30th@tauex.tau.ac.il</a> , office hours by appointment  |         |
| <b>Semester</b>   |         |
| Spring  |         |
| <b>Short Description</b>  |         |
| <p>In a famous scene from the first Matrix (1999), after supposedly having released Neo from “the prison of his mind,” Morpheus confronts him with one of the oldest philosophical questions: ‘What is Real?’ This basic query about the nature of reality seems to haunt us evermore since the introduction of Virtual Reality (VR) technologies and their growing impact on major aspects of our lives, on the way that we do science, business, or art, on the way that we socialize and communicate, on the way that we experience the world and ourselves in it. Virtual Reality both challenges and transforms our sense of reality and our relation to it. The course will explore the concepts of reality and virtuality, their interrelation, as well as their affinity with other defining concepts of human existence and human cognition such as “truth,” “meaning,” “causality,” “free will,” and “personal identity”. We shall deliberate about the challenge (even threat) that VR poses not only to the distinction between the real and the virtual but also to the meaning of our existence and our morality. In that respect we shall consider VR not only as a certain kind of technology but also as a mind-set, using various illustrations from film and television.</p> |         |
| <b>Final grade components</b>   |         |
| <p><b>Midterm:</b><br/>In-class short presentation (permissible in couples) or alternatively a short written essay about your choice of VR dilemma – 19% of the final grade.</p> <p><b>Final requirement:</b><br/>A paper uploaded to Moodle – 81% of the final grade. Submission dates are set by the university and the Liberal Arts program and extension requests can only be granted by the program’s academic committee.</p>  |         |
| <b>Attendance</b>   |         |
| <p>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.</p>  |         |



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## 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 will be encouraged to take an active and preferably creative part in tackling philosophical and existential dilemmas that arise in connection to VR both as a technology and as a mind-set.