

Information Ethics

University of Maryland, College Park

INST610 Information Ethics, Section ML01, Online

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- Instructor will respond to email inquiries within 24 hours, unless otherwise noted in an “out of office” message
- **Include INST610 in the subject line of all course correspondence**

Phone/Office hours: by appointment

Course Description

Recent advances in the production, use, and management of information present many new opportunities, but also raise ethical challenges that information professionals must confront.

For example:

- Is it wrong to create technologies that replace human labor, leading to unemployment?
- Is it wrong to share music with friends using peer-to-peer networks?
- Is it morally acceptable to use body scanners that violate personal privacy to prevent acts of terrorism?
- Is it morally acceptable to require citizens to vote online when not every citizen has access to or the skills to use the Internet?

This course covers past, current, and future issues in information ethics, and encourages you to develop your own standpoint from which to address the diverse range of ethical challenges facing information professionals today. During the course, you will learn about a wide range of ethical theories, including non-Western and feminist theories, and you will apply these theories to confront critical information ethics issues using case-based learning.

Statement of Goals

Upon successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

- Identify key problems in information ethics and propose solutions to these problems
- Articulate your own values and understand and appreciate the values of others that drive your ethical framing
- Conduct research on specific ethical theorists and develop information ethics cases that focus on one or more contemporary information ethics issues relevant to your interests, experience, and professional trajectory

Course Format

This course is conducted online through ELMS. No onsite meetings are required, although you will meet regularly with a small group via Skype, Google Hangout, or other method that you decide. This course applies discussion-based and case-based learning approaches to information ethics. The case studies and examples presented in the course materials provide opportunities to apply abstract theories and concepts to real-world scenarios, and create a safe

environment for considering and resolving ethical dilemmas. Each week you will be asked to reflect on the course materials for that week in online discussion boards. You are encouraged to draw on personal experiences and external literature and resources to support your commentary. You will also have the opportunity to identify an ethical dilemma of interest to you and develop a case study that considers multiple points of view on that issue for your final assignment.

Course Readings

- Required textbook: Ess, C. (2009). *Digital media ethics*. Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Additional readings will be listed and uploaded to the course site.

Coursework

The course is made up of 5 key components:

1. **Readings & Materials:** The required textbook for this course is Ess's *Digital media ethics*. Materials and readings beyond the required textbook can be found under "Course Materials" on the course site. The course is organized into two-week modules to provide time to read, discuss in groups, and then discuss as a class using the discussion board. Each module begins on a Tuesday.
2. **Group Participation:** During each module, you will meet with a small discussion group to discuss the module's topic and readings. Your groups are pre-assigned and should be visible in ELMS. Please coordinate amongst the group to pick a time when you can meet biweekly for approximately 1 hour. This meeting should take place towards the end of the first week or the beginning of the second week of each module, to allow sufficient time for everyone to read the materials. Use Skype, Google Hangout, or any other virtual presence technology to conduct these meetings. When your group has selected a biweekly time to meet, please let me know. I will occasionally join these meetings. Module discussion questions can be found at the top of the appropriate "Discussion Board" on ELMS. These should serve as launching points for your group discussion.
3. **Discussion Board Participation:** During each module, an individual from your small group should serve as the reporter. This responsibility should rotate among the members of your group; e.g. you will each take responsibility for reporting 2 times. The reporter is responsible for posting a summary of the group's discussion by the second **Wednesday (11:59pm) of each module** (slightly more than one week after the module begins). Draw on the course readings, outside resources, personal experiences of your group, and your group's discussion to frame your arguments/comments. **Cite references accordingly: e.g. (Quinn, 2012, p. 237) and add a brief citation list** to the end of your post following APA citation style if you use citations (as explained here: <http://www2.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/workshop/citapa.htm>). **Title your original post.** For example, if you are talking about an ethical issue related to the Kindle e-reader, title your discussion posting something like "Accessibility and the Kindle".

During each module, each individual should post at least **two replies to other students' posts and comments by the second Monday night (11:59pm) of each module (about 75-150 words for each response)**. Please be respectful and professional when you reply to each other. **Be explicit about ethical perspectives** that you are using to make your claims whenever possible or relevant. A variety of ethical perspective will be covered in Weeks 3, 5, and 6.

***It is strongly recommended that you draft your posts in a word or text document before you post it to ELMS to check for spelling errors and ensure you have met the word count requirement.

The schedule of modules, posts, and discussion will look like this:

- 1st Tuesday** – a new module begins
- 1st Wednesday – 2nd Tuesday** – readings and group discussions
- 2nd Wednesday** – group posts (by the team recorder) go up
- 2nd Thursday – 2nd Monday** – respond to group posts and your classmates posts and get a jump on reading for the next module

Your discussion participation will be graded using the following rubric:

Response	Evaluation
Is insightful about reading material	20 pts
Backs conclusions with evidence	20 pts
Introduces own ideas	20 pts
Responds thoughtfully to others	20 pts
Presentation	
Uses correct grammar and punctuation	10 pts
Writes in clear, concise sentences	10 pts
Total	100 pts

4. **Midterm Assignment – Ethical Theorists:** Select **two ethical theorists** and write brief reports on their **key ethical stances and how those stances might apply to contemporary information ethics issues**. An ethical theorist is anyone who had or has ethical stances that they are/were explicit about (e.g. Friedrich Nietzsche, Socrates, Mahatma Gandhi, etc.). If you need help identifying ethical theorists, visit the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html>. The Stanford Encyclopedia is not exhaustive, however. If you have any questions about whether or not someone could be considered an ethical theorist, please email the course instructor for approval no later than 10 days *before* the mid-term due date.

Each report on each ethical theorist will be 400-500 words in length and should cite at least three sources. The overall assignment that you turn in on ELMS should total **800-1,000 words** and cite at least **six references** following APA style (as explained here: <http://www2.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/workshop/citapa.htm>).

Your midterm assignment will be graded based on the appropriateness of your selected ethical theorist, your description of the key ethical stances of the theorist, your application of the ethical theorists' stances to contemporary information ethics issues, your adherence to the length requirement, and your adherence to the requirement to cite references appropriately.

- Final Assignment – Information Ethics Case:** You will select a specific contemporary information ethics dilemma of relevance to your professional or educational background, experiences, and interests, and use this dilemma to build a case study involving multiple stakeholder perspectives. Examples will be provided to you in the second half of the course.

Each case must involve **1) a case description, 2) three stakeholder roles with role descriptions, 3) a scenario description for each role, and 4) sequential binary decisions for each role**. A case that adequately addresses each of these pieces will be approximately **1,500-2,000 words** in length.

Your final assignment will be graded based on creativity and evidence of critical thinking, appropriateness, clarity of writing, and adherence to length and component requirements. Both written assignments will be graded according to the following rubric:

Response	Evaluation
Comprehension of material	20 pts
Makes a persuasive argument	10 pts
Backs conclusions with evidence	20 pts
Introduces own ideas	10 pts
Organizes argument logically	10 pts
Presentation	
Uses correct grammar and punctuation	10 pts
Writes in clear, concise sentences	10 pts
Uses clear word choice and professional vocabulary	10 pts
Total	100 pts

Submit all assignments through ELMS, unless otherwise specified. If you have any issues with ELMS contact the Help Desk immediately:

301-405-1400; https://elms.umd.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab_id=300_1

Grading

Your work in this course will be evaluated via your group and Discussion Board participation, your midterm assignment, and your final assignment. The weighted percentages for each component are listed below.

Evaluated Components	Due Date	Weight
Discussion board	End of each module	40%
Mid-term assignment	10/22/2013	25%
Final assignment	12/17/2013	35%

Letter Grades:

A+ 97-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69
A 93-96	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66
A- 90-92	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62
			F 0-59

Checking Grades

You will receive grades for your discussion board contributions within one week of the submission due date. You will receive grades for your midterm and final assignments within two weeks of the submission due date. The instructor will provide comments and feedback to accompany the numerical grade.

Late Submissions Policy (Assignment & Discussion Board Postings)

Late assignments will be automatically **marked down 10% for each day** past the due date. Discussion boards will be closed at the end of each module on Monday at 11:59 PM. **If you did not post responses to the Discussion Board by then, you will receive zero discussion points for that week.** Discussion boards will be made available in advance of each week to give you plenty of time to contribute to the Discussion board within the confines of your personal schedule.

Academic Integrity

Students are reminded that the University of Maryland has absolute expectations for academic integrity from every student. The Code of Academic Integrity strictly prohibits students from cheating on assignments, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. Instances of any suspected academic dishonesty will be reported and handled according to University policy and procedures. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit <http://www.shc.umd.edu>. For a more detailed description of the University's definition of academic dishonesty, visit <http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/integrity.html>.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University is committed to providing appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. In order to ascertain what accommodations should be provided to facilitate your learning experience, please be sure to inform the instructor of your needs at the beginning of the semester. The instructor will then contact relevant parties such as the University's Disability Support Services, who will make arrangements with you to determine and implement appropriate academic accommodations. For more information on the University's policies, see <http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/disabilities.html>.

CourseEvalUM

Your participation in the evaluation of courses through CourseEvalUM is a responsibility you hold as a student member of our academic community. Your feedback is confidential and important to the improvement of teaching and learning at the University as well as to the tenure and promotion process. Please go directly to the website (<http://www.courseevalum.umd.edu>) to complete your evaluations at the end of the semester.

Three Keys to Success

Information Ethics is a challenging topic. Rarely are there straight forward answers to how one should address an ethical dilemma. Personal values shape the ethical approaches we take when solving information dilemmas in our everyday lives. As a result, open-mindedness and respect are critical to engaging in collegial dialog in an Information Ethics course. With this in mind, here are some tips for ensuring your success in this course:

1. **Be courteous and respectful.** The Discussion Board is a place to bring out healthy debates, but those debates should remain collegial and academic at all times – never personal.
2. **Be timely.** Posting to the Discussion Boards and submitting your mid-term and final assignments via ELMS on time show respect for your fellow cohort members, and your instructor, and are crucial to your success in this course.
3. **Be open-minded.** Information ethics is a course that allows you to explore issues from a variety of ethical perspectives. Engaging in critical thinking while reading the course materials and developing your assignments will help you gain the most from this course and will ensure a high grade in the class. Don't be afraid to "think from" new perspectives and challenge yourself.

Syllabus Change Policy

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

A detailed course schedule follows on the remaining pages.

Course Schedule

Module	Dates	Topics Covered	Readings	Assignments & Due Dates
1	9/03-9/16	Course Overview, Defining Values & Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ess, Preface and Chapter 1 • Baase, S. (2013). A gift of fire: social, legal, and ethical issues for computing technology. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. Chapter 1. • Dole, W. V., & Hurych, J. M. (2001). Values for Librarians in the Information Age. <i>Journal of Information Ethics</i>, Fall, pp. 38-50. • ALA Core Values of Librarianship http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statement_spols/corevaluesstatement/corevalues.cfm • ALA Code of Ethics http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statement_spols/codeofethics/codeethics.cfm 	<p>Group Discussion Post due 9/11</p> <p>Response posts due 9/16</p>
2	9/17-9/30	Western ethical approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ess, Chapter 6, read pp. 167-199. • Quinn, M. J. (2013). <i>Ethics for the information age</i>. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education/Addison-Wesley. Chapter 2. • Miller, D. (1998). Political philosophy. In (E. Craig, Ed.) <i>Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>. London: Routledge. Retrieved from http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/S099 	<p>Group Discussion Post due 9/25</p> <p>Response posts due 9/30</p>
3	10/01-10/14	Non-western ethical approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ess, Chapter 6, read pp. 199-220. • Bilimoria, P. (1993). Indian ethics. In P. Singer (Ed.), <i>A companion to ethics</i> (pp. 43-57). Oxford, UK: Blackwell. • Nanji, A. (1993). Islamic ethics. In P. Singer (Ed.), <i>A companion to ethics</i> (pp. 106-118). Oxford, UK: 	<p>Group Discussion Post due 10/09</p> <p>Response posts due 10/14</p>

			Blackwell.	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De Silva, P. (1993). Buddhist ethics. In P. Singer (Ed.), <i>A companion to ethics</i> (pp. 58-68). Oxford, UK: Blackwell. 	
4	10/15-10/28	Information Ethics Issues: Networked Communication, Networked Societies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ess, Chapters 3 and 4. • Dyson, Freeman. "Technology and Social Justice." In Johnson, D. G., & Wetmore, J. M. (Eds.). (2008). <i>Technology and Society: Building Our Sociotechnical Future</i>. Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press. • Chapman, Gary. "Shaping Technology for the 'Good Lie': The Technological Imperative versus the Social Imperative." In Johnson, D. G., & Wetmore, J. M. (Eds.). (2008). <i>Technology and Society: Building Our Sociotechnical Future</i>. Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press. • Zuckerman, E. (2012, April 20). The tweetbomb and the ethics of attention. ...<i>My Heart's in Accra</i>. Blog. Retrieved from http://www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/2012/04/20/the-tweetbomb-and-the-ethics-of-attention/ • Finn, P. (2011, September 20). A future for drones: Automated killing. The Washington Post. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/national-security/a-future-for-drones-automated-killing/2011/09/15/gIQAyV9mgK_story.html • Activity: Browse the <i>Recoding Innovation</i> website, and watch both videos: http://recodinginnovation.org/ 	<p>MID TERM DUE 10/22</p> <p>Group Discussion Post due 10/23</p> <p>Response posts due 10/28</p>
5	10/29-11/11	Information Ethics Issues: Information Privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ess, Chapter 2. • Cohen, J. E. (2012). <i>Configuring the Networked Self: Law, Code, and the Play of Everyday Practice</i>. New 	<p>Group Discussion Post due 11/06</p> <p>Response posts due 11/11</p>

Haven & London: Yale University Press. Chapter 5.

- Ingram, M. (2013, August 7). Snooping on your kids: If the NSA's tools were available, I probably would have used them. GigaOM.
- Maycock, A. (n.d.). Privacy, libraries, and engaging the public: ALA's Choose Privacy Week initiative. *Indiana Libraries*, 32(1), 34–36.
- Elliott, J. (2013, June 17). Remember When the Patriot Act Debate Was All About Library Records? ProPublica. Retrieved from <http://www.propublica.org/article/remember-when-the-patriot-act-debate-was-about-library-records>
- Activity: Play Data Dealer: <http://datadealer.com/>

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11/12-11/25 Information Ethics Issues: Work & Wealth

- Quinn, M. J. (2013). *Ethics for the information age*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education/Addison-Wesley. Chapter 10.
- Bertot, J. C., Jaeger, P. T., & Sarin, L. C. (2012). Forbes folly: Demonstrating the real net worth of a library degree. *American Libraries*, (September/October). Retrieved from <http://www.americanlibrariesmagazine.org/article/forbes-folly>
- Packer, G. (2013, May 27). Change the World. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2013/05/27/130527fa_fact_packer
- Johnson, J. (2011, February 28). 1 Million Workers. 90 Million iPhones. 17 Suicides. Who's to Blame? *Wired Magazine*, 19(3). Retrieved from http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/02/ff_joelinchi

Group Discussion Post due 11/20
Response posts due 11/25

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7	11/26-12/09	Practicing What We Preach: Professional Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baase, S. (2013). A gift of fire: social, legal, and ethical issues for computing technology. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. Chapter 9.• Koehler, W. (2003). Professional Values and Ethics as Defined by "The LIS Discipline." <i>Journal of Education for Library and Information Science</i>, 44(2), 99–199.• Shilton, K. (2013). Values levers: building ethics into design. <i>Science, Technology & Human Values</i>, 38(3), 374 – 397.• Professional Standards for Evaluation in Cultural Heritage Institutions: http://www.care-aam.org/Resources/Professional+Standards+/default.aspx• Schwandt, T. A. (2007). Expanding the conversation on evaluation ethics. <i>Evaluation and Program Planning</i> 30, 400-403.	Group Discussion Post due 12/04 Response posts due 12/09
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8 12/10

No Class - Exam period

FINAL ASSIGNMENT DUE 12/17