

Information Ethics

University of Maryland, College Park

INST610 Information Ethics, Online

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- Instructor will respond to email inquiries within 24 hours, unless otherwise noted in an “out of office” message

Phone/Skype 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 right 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 technologies 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. During each two-week module

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 write a paper on an ethical dilemma of interest to you.

Course Readings

- Required textbook: Ess, C. (2013). *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 these 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.
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. 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 at least once (and two group members will go twice). The reporter is responsible for posting a summary of the group's discussion by the second **Tuesday (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>).

During each module, each individual should post at least **two replies to other students' posts and comments by the second Sunday (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.

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

1st Monday – a new module begins

Week 1 – primarily devoted to reading the course materials

Module midpoint – small group discussions

2nd Tuesday – group posts (by the team recorder) go up (at the latest)

Week 2 – primarily devoted to reading your classmates’ responses and participating in the discussion

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. **Reflections:** Choose two units from modules 2-7 and write a reflection on how the values and topics we’re studying in that module relate to your professional career. You should complete **two** over the course of the semester, and you may choose the modules with cases (or perspectives) that appeal to you most (modules 2-7 only). Reflections should be about 500 words. Reflections will be due at the close of the chosen module.

Reflections should: 1) explore how the topic of the module might present itself in your information career, and 2) make an argument about the *right* way to respond to a hard issue raised by the topic as an information professional. Reflections 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

5. Mobile development simulation:

Your team will participate in a mobile development simulation designed to teach mobile developers about privacy. As information ethics students and budding ethics experts, your feedback on the simulation will help improve it for use with computer science students and professional developers. More information will be provided on how to participate in the simulation closer to the date.

After completing the simulation with your group, write a 250-500 word review of the simulation. What worked well, what needs improvement, what did you learn, and how might such a simulation fit into future ethics education?

Simulation participation and your review will be graded on a credit/no credit basis.

6. Final Assignment – Information Ethics Choose-Your-Own-Adventure: Select a specific contemporary information ethics dilemma of relevance to your professional or educational background, experiences, and interests. Use this dilemma to create a choose-your-own-adventure-style case study involving multiple stakeholder perspectives.

Your final should have five parts: **1) an initial short description of the issue, 2) an initial stakeholder faced with two different decisions; 3) The impacts of each decision on a second stakeholder, with two new decisions per scenario for the second stakeholder to make (four outcomes total); 4) the sequential impacts of each of those decisions on a third stakeholder, with two new decisions per scenario for the third stakeholder to make (8 outcomes total); 5) a short description of which of the 8 potential outcomes you believe is the *best* ethical outcome, and why.** A case that adequately addresses each of these pieces will be approximately **2,000-2500 words** in length.

You may submit your assignment in one of two formats: a Word or Powerpoint document outlining each decision (examples are provided in the final ELMS module), or a choose-your-own-adventure web game (in html format) using the easy-to-use, open source Twine tool: <http://twinery.org/>.

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

Response	Evaluation
Clarity of scenario	20 pts

Identifies clear ethical dilemmas and outcomes	20 pts
Uses comprehensive roles and choices	10 pts
Introduces own ideas	10 pts
Organizes cases 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 reading reflections, and your final assignment. The weighted percentages for each component are listed below.

Evaluated Components	Due Date	Weight
Discussion boards	End of each module	30%
Reading reflections	End of the relevant module	40%
Simulation review	12/4/16	10%
Final assignment	12/18/16	20%

Late Submissions Policy (Assignment & Discussion Board Postings)

Late assignments will be automatically **marked down ½ grade (5 points) for each day** past the due date. 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	8/29/16 - 9/11/16 (2 weeks)	Defining Values, Ethics & Professional Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ess, Preface and Chapter 1 • Baase, S. (2013). <i>A gift of fire: social, legal, and ethical issues for computing technology</i>. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. Chapter 1 and Chapter 9. • 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 • 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. • Bernoff, J. (n.d.). 10 top writing tips and the psychology behind them. Retrieved from http://withoutbullshit.com/blog/10-top-writing-tips-psychology/ 	<p>Group board posts due 9/6/16</p> <p>Individual board posts due 9/11/16</p>
2	9/12/16 - 9/25/16 (2 weeks)	Information, prosperity, and social responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quinn, M. J. (2013). <i>Ethics for the information age</i>. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education/Addison-Wesley. Chapter 10. • Smith, A. (2016). Public Predictions for the Future of Workforce Automation. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/03/10/public- 	<p>Group board post due 9/20/16</p> <p>Individual board posts due 9/25/16</p> <p>Reading reflection (if applicable) due 9/25/16</p>

[predictions-for-the-future-of-workforce-automation/](#)

- 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
- Brusoni, S., & Vaccaro, A. (2016). Ethics, Technology and Organizational Innovation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 1–4.

3 9/26/16 Information privacy
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10/9/16
(2 weeks)

- Ess, Chapter 2.
- boyd, danah. (2015). Chapter 2: Privacy. *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. Yale University Press.
- Carpenter, Z. (2015, May 6). Librarians Versus the NSA. *The Nation*. Retrieved from <http://www.thenation.com/article/206561/librarians-versus-nsa>
- Gilliom, J., & Monahan, T. (2013). Chapter 3. *SuperVision: an introduction to the surveillance society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Rubel, A., & Zhang, M. (2015). Four Facets of Privacy and Intellectual Freedom in Licensing Contracts for Electronic Journals. *College & Research Libraries*, 76(4), 427–449. <http://doi.org/10.5860/crl.76.4.427>
- Video: *Black Mirror: The Entire History of You*

Group board post due 10/4/16
Individual board posts due 10/9/16
Reading reflection (if applicable) due 10/9/16

4	10/10/16 - 10/23/16 (2 weeks)	Information and global perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lor, P. J., & Britz, J. j. (2012). An ethical perspective on political-economic issues in the long-term preservation of digital heritage. <i>Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology</i>, 63(11), 2153–2164. • Appadurai, A. (2003). Archive and aspiration. In <i>Information is Alive</i> (pp. 14–25). Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/NAI Publishers. • Ames, M. G. (2016). Learning consumption: Media, literacy, and the legacy of One Laptop per Child. <i>The Information Society</i>, 32(2), 85–97. • Burrell, J. (2012). Technology hype versus enduring uses: a longitudinal study of Internet use among early adopters in an African city. <i>First Monday</i>, 17(6). http://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/viewArticle/3964/3263 	Group board post due 10/18/16 Individual board posts due 10/23/16 Reading reflection (if applicable) due 10/23/16
5	10/24/16 - 11/6/16 (2 weeks)	Virtue & networked participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benkler, Y., & Nissenbaum, H. (2006). Commons-based Peer Production and Virtue*. <i>Journal of Political Philosophy</i>, 14(4), 394–419. • Citron, D. K. (2014). Chapter 2: How the Internet’s Virtues Fuel Its Vices. <i>Hate Crimes in Cyberspace</i>. Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London, England: Harvard University Press. • Chapter 4: Participation. In James, C. (2014). <i>Disconnected: Youth, New Media, and the Ethics Gap</i>. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. • Video: John Oliver, <i>Last Week Tonight</i>, Online Harassment https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PuNIwYsz7PI&feature=youtu.be 	Group board post due 11/1/16 Individual board posts due 11/6/16 Reading reflection (if applicable) due 11/6/16

<p>6</p>	<p>11/7/16 - 11/20/16 (2 weeks)</p>	<p>Classification & fairness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olson, H. (2001). The power to name: representation in library catalogs. <i>Signs</i>, 26(3), 639–669. • Sweeney, L. (2013). Discrimination in Online Ad Delivery. <i>Queue</i>, 11(3), 10:10–10:29. • Bowker, G. C., & Star, S. L. (2000). Chapter 2: The Kindness of Strangers: Kinds and Politics in Classification Systems. <i>Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences</i>. Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press. • Dwork, C., & Mulligan, D. K. (2013). It's not privacy, and it's not fair. <i>Stanford Law Review Online</i>, 66(35). Retrieved from http://www.stanfordlawreview.org/online/privacy-and-big-data/its--its-not-fair • Crawford, K. (2016, June 25). Artificial Intelligence's White Guy Problem. <i>The New York Times</i>. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/26/opinion/sunday/artificial-intelligences-white-guy-problem.html 	<p>Group board post due 11/15/16 Individual board posts due 11/20/16 Reading reflection (if applicable) due 11/20/16</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>11/21/16 - 12/4/16</p>	<p>Values in Design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knobel, C. P., & Bowker, G. C. (2011, July). Values in design. <i>Communications of the ACM</i>, 54(7), 26–28. • Harris, T. (2016, May 18). How Technology Hijacks People's Minds — from a Magician and Google's Design Ethicist: Retrieved May 25, 2016, from https://medium.com/@tristanharris/how-technology-hijacks-peoples-minds-from-a-magician-and-google-s-design-ethicist-56d62ef5edf3#tvr5o87pg • Schüll, N. D. (2014). <i>Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas</i> (Reprint edition). Princeton University Press. • Huff, C., Barnard, L., & Frey, W. (2008). Good 	<p>Group board post due 11/29/16 Individual board posts due 12/4/16 Reading reflection (if applicable) due 12/4/16 Simulation review due 12/4/16</p>

computing: a pedagogically focused model of virtue in the practice of computing (part 1). *Journal of Information, Communication & Ethics in Society*, 6(3), 2008.

- Mobile development simulation

8	12/5/16 - 12/11/16 (1 week)	Ethical Frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ess, Chapter 6.• Quinn, M. J. (2013). <i>Ethics for the information age</i>. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education/Addison-Wesley. Chapter 2.	Individual board posts due 12/11/16
12/18/16		Final Assignment	FINAL ASSIGNMENT DUE 12/18/16	