T O W S O N U N I V E R S I T Y

Department of Computer and Information Sciences

### Spring 2024

### COSC 418102-1582: Ethical and Societal Concerns of Computer Scientists

**Meeting Times:**

**Semester: Jan 29-May 20, 2024**

**Mondays 7-9:40 PM On Campus and Online Class**

**Professor:** Dr. Steven A. Evans Sr.

**Office Mailbox:** 7800 York Road

**Phone:** 270-872-3204/410-704-4946/

**Office Location:** 7800 York Road, Room 426

**E-Mail:** [saevans@towson.edu](mailto:saevans@towson.edu)

**Office Hours:** Mondays 9:40-10:00 PM or 2140-2200. BY APPOINTMENT ONLY-

**Course Description:**

This course is designed to help students deal with societal and ethical issues as professional computer scientists or as knowledgeable users. Ethical matters involving the delicate balance of information and technology in our society will be closely examined. Students will become more aware of ethical issues involving computer technology in applied areas as well as those arising from design and development of software. The effect of computer usage on the human condition in society will be discussed, with examples taken from several areas of application. Topics in intellectual property rights will be covered, as well as privacy issues, security issues, computer crimes, and legislation regarding computer technology. Professional activities in computing to be studies include professional and corporate standards, codes of ethics and good practice, and certification and licensing of computing personnel.

Through case studies, homework assignments, and in-class discussions, students will gain valuable skills, such as analytical, problem-solving, drawing reasonable inferences from observation, synthesizes and integrate information and ideas, holistic approach, creative expression and distinguish between fact and opinion.

**Goals:**

1. Students will be able to appreciate the needs of ethics as applied to computer technology.
2. Students will be able to analyze and debate ethical issues regarding computer technology in society using a structured problem-solving approach.
3. Students will be able to evaluate the premises of information and make logical and relevant decisions based upon situations.

**Objectives:**

The methodology used within this course will require students to:

1. Identify ethical issues.
2. Analyze ethical issues using a structured problem-solving approach.
3. Debate their position on ethical issues.
4. Demonstrate their knowledge of ethics using problem solving and critical thinking approaches.

**Prerequisites:** Completion of I.D. (or a higher-level English course); Junior/Senior Standing

**Required Texts:**

1. Tavani, H., T. (2016). *Ethics and technology. Controversies, questions, and strategies*

*for ethical computing* (5th ed.). Danvers, MA: Wiley and Sons

**E&T ISBNs: 9781119239758, 9781119239758, 9781119186595**

2. Spinello, R., A. (2021). *Cybernetics. Morality and Law in Cyberspace* (7th ed.).

Burlington, MA: Jones and Bartlett Learning

**CE ISBNs: 18406-8, 9781284184068, 9781284184075, 1284184072**

**Optional:**

American Psychological Association. (2020). Publication manual of the American Psychological

https://towson.libguides.com/apastyle7

Association (7th ed.). Washington, DC: Author. ISBN:

978-4338-3217-8 (Spiral)

978-4338-3216-1 (Paperback)

978-4338-3215-4 (Hardcover)

**Assignment list:**

1. Lessig Modalities Assignment (Week 1) 32 points.
2. Ethical Theories Decomposition And Barlow Comparison Assignment (Week 3) 32 points.
3. Effective Arguments Assignment (Week 5) 32 Points.
4. From Week 4 Privacy Assessment Due (Week 5) 21 Points
5. Mid Term Professional Certification/Licenses Research Assignment (Week 7) 32 points.
6. Regulating The Internet Assignment (Week 9) 32 points.
7. Intellectual Properties Assignment (Week 11) 32 points.
8. Google and Ascension Discussion (Week 13) 35 points.
9. Final Exam points TBD.

Since the University revised its grading method and grade points per credit/unit in Fall 06, the following grading chart has been revised to indicate this change:

**No grades will be rounded up to the next higher number.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade | **% - Percentage** | **Grade Pts.** | **Grade** | **% - Percentage** | **Grade Pts.** |
| A | 93-100 | 4.00 | C+ | 75-79.99 | 2.33 |
| A- | 90-92.99 | 3.67 | C | 70-74.99 | 2.00 |
| B+ | 87-89.99 | 3.33 | D+ | 65-69.99 | 1.33 |
| B | 83-86.99 | 3.00 | D | 60-64.99 | 1.00 |
| B- | 80-82.99 | 2.67 | F | 59.99 & Below | 0.00 |

Blackboard

Students are automatically enrolled in COSC 418 located in Blackboard. \*\*All assignments are to be submitted through Blackboard unless otherwise indicated by the instructor.

Discussion Questions (if required)

Discussion questions are an important part of the course, and discussion questions help further discuss course content, and gives all participants an opportunity to express and exchange relevant information. It is expected that discussion questions will be completed in the following manner:

1. Initial discussion question posts-answer questions and post by the 4th day of the course week.
2. Subsequent discussions to other should be posted throughout the week and are due at the end of the course week.

Assignments

Students will be required to work on several written papers or presentations throughout the course. These assignments will allow the students to explore relevant ethical concepts, problems, and opportunities from a cyber, business and technology perspective. Each Assignment will be evaluated in terms of a submitted paper or individual presentations in front of the class and submitted presentation. Written papers will be structured using the APA formatting. An APA Template is located on the Getting Started Section.

Final Exam Case Study Paper

The Final Exam Case Study Paper will be comprehensive and content rich. The minimum content for the Final Exam Paper will be based upon answering the required question in each section. Students will focus on detailed and substantive and relevant research to evaluate researched materials, apply ethical theories, answer questions, and take various ethical positions throughout the Final Exam. This paper will appraise the student’s knowledge and comprehension of ethical concepts within the context of computer technology, and to evaluate the student’s ability to apply critical thinking and measure the results within written context.

All Papers will be submitted to plagiarism software (i.e., Turnitin). This software scans and detects documents for plagiarism. Students must submit original content for all turned in assignments.

Expectations

This course requires researching relevant content, expressing critical thinking in a classroom environment, having active and substantive discussions with the professor and fellow students, reading textbooks, individual or group presentations in front of the class, classroom participation in discussion writing and in class graded assignments. Students are expected to bring computers or other electronic devices to class or other materials to create notes and can complete and turn in assigns in class. During this course, students will fully utilize the extensive resources of Cook Library, other library facilities and the World Wide Web. It is expected that students have basic knowledge in several application software skills, (such as, word processing, presentation, and spreadsheet software). Students can use the Student Computing Services Center to learn these skills. Also, it is beneficial to students to acquire an e-mail account. All assignments, case studies, and final papers will be submitted through the digital drop box using Blackboard. Writing is a major part of the coursework. It is expected that students have completed some level of an English composition course. If students required assistance in this area, contact the TU English (writing lab).

1. During each class session I will cover the current week objects, lectures, assignments and will do the same for the previous and upcoming week. It is imperative that you understand this information, if you have questions, please ask at that time, or email me. I want each of you to succeed, your performance and grade in the course will be based upon your work ethic and resulting artifacts submitted throughout the course.
2. I will provide substantive feedback. You must review the feedback from graded submissions and make the appropriate adjustments in your future submissions.

Online & In-Class Discussions

The majority of class time involves discussing relative ethical issues and concerns focused with technology. The discussions revolve around assessing these factors from assigned readings, in class assignments, homework assignments, and take-home assignments. Students should participate in class fully by attending all classes and contributing to the online discussions. The value of learning and sharing experiences in a colloquial environment can be invaluable, put in the effort and be open to new and different ethical and technical theories, approaches and methodologies. More information on Grading In-Class Discussion is found under “Getting Started” in Blackboard.

Homework/Bibliographies/Individual Presentation/Final Paper Assignments

All assignments are expected to be submitted to Blackboard on the posted due date. Plan your work schedule to ensure assignments are turned in on time. Avoid turning is late assignments, late assignments will be assessed points deductions. Multiple late submissions will not be accepted. Assignments will not be accepted after 3 days past the due date, final exams, and assignments due right before the end of the course will not be accepted after the course ends.

There can be extenuating circumstances and these situations will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Communication is key in these situations, let me know what is going on so I can help you, silence leaves me no choice but to assign a grade.

Cheating Policy

There are NO collaborations that students can and should do on any assignments in this class; ON ALL ASSIGNMENTS (i.e., homework, online, Concepts Template, and final paper), students are expected to submit their own work. Incidents of plagiarism and cheating will result in a grade of ‘F’ and possible dismissal from the course. Details for the Plagiarism Policy of Towson can be found at Towson’s website.

* Turned in assignments must be original; originality means that this assignment was not turned in before in another class or derived through other means. Students must write original work, conduct relevant and appropriate research and work towards improving upon previous submitted assignments, using the feedback provided, and continuous learning and application of materials throughout the course.
* Cite and reference information from others. If using information from others, it must be cited and referenced throughout your submission.

Attendance Policy

Attendance will be taken in every class session-online. Students are expected to Check-in prior, or at the end of each class session. I will make an announcement to check in each class session. Students are expected to attend all sessions of this course. Each class session has points associated with attendance. If students do not attend class, points will not be awarded for attendance. There are no excused absences for attendance points, either students are in class or not. Failure to attend classes regularly will result in reduction of points toward the final grade. There are extenuating circumstances that occur, students must notify the instructor as soon as these situations occur or are likely to occur to avoid any issues with grading.

Students who fail to participate in the class discussions, and in Online Assignments will receive significant points reduction to their final grade (i.e., a whole letter grade deducted.). During class sessions, I call on students to provide commentary reference various discussions. Your participation is welcomed and helps facilitate empirical discussion and collaboration.

Students must get proper notification from Disability Support Services to verify any disabilities and requirements for special consideration. This notification has to be presented to the Professor during the first two weeks of the semester.

Students must get proper notification from the Athletics Department to verify sports membership AND participation in games, which will lead to absences in class in order to make up any assigned work or exams.