COMM 4374

Studies in Communication Arts: Cyberethics

Course description and course objectives

This independent study will present an intensive examination of the presentation of public issues in political and entertainment forms. Specifically, the focus on cyberethics will allow us to explore contemporary ethical and legal issues that have emerged as a result of the internet and other new communication technologies. In doing so we will examine selected philosophical theories and decision-making models that deal with morals and ethics and apply them to problems in cyberspace.

We will also discuss how ethical and legal problems intersect, and how new communication technologies require that we consider the global implications of ethical and legal issues.

In general, the goal of this course is to provide you with decision-making and critical thinking tools to guide you in your everyday interactions with technology.

By the end of this course:

• You will be able to identify and critically discuss the major ethical issues raised by the convergence of old and new media technologies.

• You will be able to outline the philosophical tenets of the major thinkers in moral reasoning and apply these philosophies to common problems in mass media/technology.

• You will be able to articulate the impact of legal considerations on ethical decision making.

• You will demonstrate an understanding of the differences between popular and scholarly information as well as the differences among primary, secondary, and tertiary sources.

Inside this syllabus

Assignments

This class stresses the application of philosophical reasoning to contemporary ethical problems in cyberspace. Your evaluation will be based on your ability to analyze relevant problems, apply critical thinking skills, and synthesize information into coherent arguments.

You will write one major research paper, the final paper, in which you will pursue a research question on a topic in ethics and media/technology. You will discuss an ethical problem, including the history, a review of scholarly literature on the topic, and then present an argument for a proposed solution or ethical decision-making model to guide the relevant stakeholders in the future. The midterm paper serves as a proposal for the final paper. The midterm paper will be 1000-1500 words, and the final paper will be 3000 words in length. It is expected that you will revise your midterm paper and incorporate it into your final paper.

In addition to the midterm and final papers you will write three 500-700 word reflection essays covering the recent class readings over the course of the semester.

Finally, you will be asked to engage with me and the general public through a series of weekly blog posts. Your blog posts should respond to specific prompts which will be made available one week in advance on eCourseware. Members of the internet research and general interested public will be invited to comment on the blog, and you will be graded on your ability to demonstrate that you have read and understood the assigned materials and on your ability to engage thoughtfully with the commenters to the blog. Blog posts should be approximately 300 words in length.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Reflection Essays (3 @ 10% each) =	30%
Midterm Paper =	10%
Final Paper =	35%
Blog Entries =	25%
TOTAL	100%

Breakdown of Letter Grades (in %)

A = 94-100	A- = 90-93	
B+ = 87-89	B = 84-86	B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79	C = 74-76	C- = 70-73
D+ = 66-69	D = 60-65	F = 0-59

Making the Grade:

An explanation of the standards for evaluation in this class

A = Outstanding Achievement
Should be understood as truly excellent work that integrates concepts and theories and presents them in a well-argued manner. The written work is generally error-free in spelling and grammatical errors. To earn an "A" on an assignment, you will need to be extremely proficient at explaining, applying, evaluating, and synthesizing the concepts, models, and theories covered in this class.

B = Good Achievement
Should be understood as good work that demonstrates a firm grasp of concepts and theories and presents them in a solid manner. The written work has a minimal number of spelling and grammatical errors and is structured with an appropriate introduction and conclusion.

C = Satisfactory Achievement
Should be understood as passable work that fulfills the requirements of the assignment in a basic way. It may have some organizational flaws but demonstrates an understanding of the key concepts. The written work has a moderate number of spelling and grammatical errors. An assignment that meets, but does not exceed the basic requirements will receive a grade somewhere in the "C" range.

D = Poor Achievement
Should be understood as not acceptable work that demonstrates competence in less than half of the concepts and theories. It may have major organizational difficulties or writing errors, which hamper the interpretation of the work.

F = Unsatisfactory
Should be understood as work that does not address the criteria of the assignment and does not indicate an understanding of the concepts or theories. It may have severe problems in expression, organization and writing.

POLICY ON LATE WORK

All assignments, including all reading summaries and any homework, are due at the start of class on the date specified by the instructor. Late homework assignments will not be counted towards your grade. All papers are due on the date/time specified in the syllabus unless otherwise indicated by the instructor.

Late papers will be penalized with a 10-point deduction for each day the paper is late, including weekends. Papers more than 7 days late will not be accepted.

As a general rule I do not grant extensions, so it is your responsibility to make sure to keep track of deadlines and turn all assignments in on time. Any exceptions to this will be granted at the sole discretion of the instructor.

POLICY ON WRITTEN WORK

All formal written work (essays, papers) must be computer-generated, double-spaced, with proper margins. Please adhere to the word limits established for each assignment, as points will be deducted for papers that are egregiously under or over the limits. All papers must be accurately and completely documented using APA 5th or 6th edition style. Papers must be turned in electronically through the eCourseware site.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND STUDENT CONDUCT

I use Turnitin to evaluate the originality of your assignments submitted for class. As part of this process, you will be required to submit electronic copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. According to the U of M's Office of Legal Counsel (10/17/2005) by taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.

According to the University of Memphis Student Handbook, your assignments must reflect your own effort (or a group effort for team assignments). When using outside sources – those written by other individuals - you must acknowledge your sources and add your own analysis. Otherwise, it is plagiarism. **If you plagiarize or cheat, the minimum penalty is an F on the assignment**; other penalties could include an F for the course and/or suspension.

All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs. Expectations for academic integrity and student conduct are described in detail on the website of the Office of Student Judicial and Ethical Affairs:
http://saweb.memphis.edu/judicialaffairs/dishonesty/definitions.htm

GRADE DISPUTES & QUESTIONS

Assignments are developed to achieve a variety of academic and assessment goals and I always attempt to describe exactly what is required. However, if you have a question about the assignment—it's content, format, etc., do not hesitate to ask. I usually respond to email within 24 hours during the work week and 48 hours over the weekend.

As a general rule I will return graded assignments within two weeks. All grades will be posted on eCourseware, giving you a running total of your grade in the course. If you have additional questions about your progress you may check with me at any time throughout the semester. To do this, schedule a meeting time with me and bring specific questions. If you would like to discuss any assignment after receiving feedback/grades, please wait 24 hours to "catch your breath" and collect your thoughts; again, be sure you bring specific questions to our discussion. I hope you will approach the grading philosophy as a challenge, not as an obstacle :-)

Required Materials

Ess, C. (2009). *Digital Media Ethics*. Malden, MA: Polity.
Lessig, L. (2008). *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*. London: Bloomsbury (this book is available for free online as a PDF or you may choose to purchase a hard copy)
Additional required readings will be made available on eCourseware.

--Schedule --*Week begins on Wednesday. Blog entries due following Tuesday by 6pm*-- All times Central time zone		
Date	Topics	Readings to be discussed/Assignments due
8/29	Introduction to cyberethics	Digital Media Ethics (DME) pp. 6-26
9/5	Intro to cyberethics, law & technology	DME pp. 168-181; Spinello (2006) ch. 1 [online]
9/12	Privacy	DME pp. 31-59; Spinello (2006) ch. 5 [online]
9/19	Privacy	Lepper (2011); Clark & Roberts (2010) **Reflection Essay #1 DUE 9/25 by 10pm**
9/26	Ethics of anonymity	boyd (2011); Bosker (2011); WoW/Blizzard case study materials
10/3	Video games & virtue ethics	DME pp. 155-163; 207-213; McCormick (2001) Warner & Raiter (2005); Super Columbine Massacre RPG information **Reflection Essay # 2 DUE 10/9 by 10pm**
10/10-10/16 FALL BREAK NO Assignments		
10/17	Meta-ethics, Feminist ethics & digital sex	DME 183-205; 134-155; Lunceford (2011) **MIDTERM PAPER DUE 10/19 by 10PM**
10/24	Copyright & remix culture intro	DME pp. 214-217; 64-81; Remix Preface, Introduction, & chs. 1-2
10/31	Copyright & remix culture	Watch *Copyright Criminals* (available on Netflix or from instructor); Remix chs. 3-5
11/7	Copyright: Ethics, meta-ethics & law	Remix chs. 9-10; DME pp. 81-99 **Reflection Essay #3 DUE 11/13 by 10pm**
11/14	Googlization of everything & ethics of search	Vaidhyanathan (2011); Halavais (2009); Blanke (2005)
11/21	Filtering & access	Simpson (2008); Wold (2010)
11/28	Academic integrity & the internet	Hinman (2005); Laura K. Krishna saga
12/5	Course summary	**Final paper due by 6pm**