



Ethical Issues in Computing

Syllabus and Course Policies
for CS 377, Spring 2026

"Evil comes from a failure to think"
—Hannah Arendt

Photo of Hannah Arendt, Fred Stein Archive

Instructor	Jack Bandy, Ph.D.	Class Meeting	Monday and Wednesday
Email	jxb@uic.edu		CDRLC 2411
Office	CDRLC 3454	Office Hours	Monday and Wednesday 10am-11:30am Please use schedule here

Dr. Bandy's Course Description

What does it mean for Computer Scientists to be socially responsible? Billions of people interact with computational systems every day for communication, amusement, work, and more. Although many interactions appear to happen seamlessly, even the most mundane human-computer interaction often has ethical implications related to privacy, climate, power, inequality, public health, and more. To explore these ethical implications, this course will survey classical perspectives of ethics (i.e. Deontological Ethics, Utilitarian Ethics, Virtue Ethics, Care Ethics) and practice using them to interpret real-world situations involving humans and computers. Students will engage with recent scholarship about ethical issues in algorithmic decision-making, data management, user interface design, software engineering, search engines, algorithmic media feeds, large language models, and chatbots, to name some examples. Class sessions will promote active engagement through peer teaching, small group discussions, games, and more.

Course Catalog Description

Communication skills for computing professionals: presentation organization, visual aides, delivery techniques, argument support. Ethical and societal issues in computing: privacy, intellectual property and ownership, crime.

Schedule

Please see Canvas for this semester's schedule.

Learning Priorities

Students in this course will:

- (1) Develop an understanding of (personal and) professional responsibilities related to ethical, legal, security, and social issues in computing
- (2) Practice describing current events in computing through classical ethical perspectives (i.e. Deontological Ethics, Utilitarian Ethics, Virtue Ethics, Care Ethics)
- (3) Identify recurring ethical challenges in computer science
- (4) Develop a growth mindset for continuing professional development, especially for effective communication with different audiences

Course Texts and Materials

Printed copies of core readings will be provided to you. Although there are no required books for this course, we will draw quite a bit from the following textbook:

- *Computing and Technology Ethics: Engaging through Science Fiction* by Emanuelle Burton, Judy Goldsmith, Nicholas Mattei, Cory Siler, and Sara-Jo Swiatek

Students will also make their own selections of different research papers, case studies, books, and other materials to present and discuss in class.

Potential Topics

Value-sensitive / culturally-sensitive design	Labor displacement and deskilling
Privacy as contextual integrity	Ethics through speculative fiction and sci-fi
Addiction and "dark patterns" in UI design	Methods for measuring fairness and bias
Economic bubbles and hype cycles in tech	Online safety and content moderation
Bias, discrimination in large language models	Digital rights (to repair, to be forgotten, etc.)
Ethics and emotion in data visualization	Microtargeting and behavioral manipulation
Environmental costs of computing	Facial recognition (privacy and discrimination)
Anonymity and security for data analytics	Monopoly power / the politics of "big tech"
Inequality and the "digital divide"	Algorithmic feeds and their implications
Technology's role in peace, conflict, and war	Intellectual property, licensing, open-sourcing

Course Requirements and Grading

This class aims to use principles of student-centered teaching, also referred to as "non-directive teaching," which de-emphasizes quantitative grading. This style focuses on open-ended dialogue, project-based learning, and student curiosity, rather than regurgitation and examinations. Still, in order to provide a final letter grade at the end of the class, I will use the following combination of exercises:

	Proportion of Grade
Out-of-class Exercises	20%
Food in your feed	
Online account biopsy	
Online account scrap doll	
Speculative fiction	
Fairness definition	
Personal ethical commitment	
Read a Book	20%
Book selection	
2-page book report or un-essay	
Peer instruction / book presentation	
Actually reading the book	
In-class Group Exercises	20%
<i>Expect about one per week</i>	
Pre-Class Reflections	20%
<i>Expect about one per week</i>	
Attendance, Participation, Civility	20%

Further details and rubrics for each exercise will be published on Canvas.

You can expect the following correspondence between your percentage grade in the course and your final letter grade, and the "equivalent" description from the registrar.

F	D	C	B	A
59% or below	60-69%	70-79%	80-89%	90-100%
Failure	Poor but passing	Average	Good	Excellent

Attendance

Showing up makes a big difference! As an instructor, I put a lot of effort into planning classes that are meaningful, engaging, and valuable for your learning. As a student enrolled in this course, I expect that you put a similar effort into attending class meetings, arriving on time, and participating.

If you need to miss class due to illness, personal emergencies, religious observances, and/or other unexpected situations, please notify the instructor as soon as possible so it can be recorded as an excused absence.

I will keep attendance on paper via roll call this semester. *If you miss more than 50% of class sessions, you will automatically fail the course.* You are allowed three "free" absences without penalty, which do not have to be explicitly excused. If you miss a fourth class without notifying the instructor, you will be contacted by the instructor.

The spring semester at UIC is fifteen weeks long (not including spring vacation), and we meet Mondays and Wednesdays. With no class on Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Monday, January 19th), we will have 29 total class periods.

Participation

Active participation is one of the most important ways you will learn in this course. I am very aware that participation looks a little different for everyone, and will evaluate your participation accordingly. Still, in general, an engaged student will:

- come to class prepared, for example, by having completed pre-class reflections
- contribute regularly to class activities and discussions
- stay on-task during class
- listen attentively to peers (no side conversations or unnecessary disruptions)
- have an open mind and seek to understand (not judge and make assumptions)
- be gracious and open to change in their ideas, arguments, and positions
- assume goodwill in all interactions, even in disagreement
- complete their work in a timely manner
- reach out to the instructor if they start to fall behind

To promote engagement and alertness in class, we will follow a **no phone, no laptop policy**. I will offer regular reminders to turn off your devices and take notes on paper. I will check in throughout the semester to discuss the effectiveness of this policy and the potential to revise it based on student needs. If you have accessibility concerns, please let me know so we can work something out.

Our Learning Environment

The mission statement at my elementary school¹ was "*to provide a safe learning environment where every child can reach full potential and bring about positive change in our world.*" Lofty as it is, I find it to be a meaningful statement that aligns with UIC's official mission statement: "*to provide the broadest access to the highest levels of educational, research, and clinical excellence.*"

You can help UIC work toward this mission by contributing to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every member of our class. If aspects of this course result in barriers to your inclusion, engagement, accurate assessment, or achievement, please notify me as soon as possible.

There is a balance here. Our classroom provides an open space for a critical and civil exchange of ideas, inclusive of a variety of perspectives and positions. Some readings and other content may expose you to ideas, subjects, or views that may challenge you, cause you discomfort, or recall past negative experiences or traumas. I intend to discuss all subjects with dignity and humanity, as well as with rigor and respect for scholarly inquiry. If you would like me to be aware of a specific topic of concern, please email me or visit me during office hours.

Academic Integrity

My job and my goal in this course is to help you as you learn skills and knowledge that will be valuable to you in your future courses, your career, and other areas of your life. In line with UIC's mission to provide "an environment in which research, learning, and scholarship can flourish and in which all endeavors are guided by academic and professional integrity," the **work you turn in for this class must be your own work.**

This does not mean that you need to complete all work in a bunker. Rather, you are encouraged to discuss your ideas with friends and classmates, and to explore related work (i.e. academic papers, blogs, video essays, forums, etc.). An important part of scholarship is standing on the shoulders of giants,² (after all, we are in the City of the Big Shoulders³) and acknowledging whose shoulders we stand upon. In other words, **cite your sources!**

You are expected to follow the UIC community standards for academic integrity, available at: <https://dos.uic.edu/community-standards/>

¹ This was Wilmore Elementary School in Jessamine County, Kentucky. Our principal Andrea McNeal wrote the mission statement.

² Ironically, while this phrase is often attributed to Isaac Newton in a letter from 1676, it was first recorded in John of Salisbury's book *Metalogicon* from 1159. I learned this from a blog post on [BookBrowse.com](#)

³ Sandburg, Carl. "Chicago." *Poetry* (March 1914).

Please ask the instructor if you need any clarity about academic integrity for specific assignments or exercises. When in doubt, it is always better to check with the instructor before proceeding.

I will reach out to you personally before submitting a report of academic misconduct.

I'm Relatively New Here

This is my second semester at UIC, and I still have a lot to learn in order to do my job effectively. There will be structured opportunities for feedback throughout the course, but please do reach out directly with any additional feedback or suggestions about how I might improve the course.

Visitors

This class may welcome visitors (i.e. prospective students, guest speakers, etc.) during the semester. When possible, students will be notified in advance of guest attendance.

FERPA

Federal law (FERPA) prohibits me from disclosing or discussing your grades over e-mail. Please come see me during office hours if you want to talk about your work.

Support for Parenting Students

UIC supports parenting students by providing affordable, high-quality childcare for infants, toddlers, and young children, along with a comprehensive wraparound care system, study-play areas across campus, accessible lactation rooms, year-round family events, and more. For more information, contact Melinda Young (mmcghe2@uic.edu) or visit the Little Sparks website: <https://littlesparks.uic.edu>

Tests

There will be no tests or examinations in this class. I agree with Carl Rogers⁴ that life itself offers enough examinations, and I hope the resources from this class help you meet life's tests with more confidence and satisfaction. See above for details regarding your final grade in the class.

⁴ *On Becoming a Person*, Chapter 14

Student Wellbeing

As a student at UIC, I hope you have come to enjoy the learning process and the life of the mind, and I hope you enjoy this particular course. I also understand that life as a college student can sometimes become distressing and overwhelming, which can make it difficult to engage in class.

So, to help you succeed in this course (and in life), I encourage you to proactively care for your body and mind. If you are struggling or anticipate any trouble attending class or turning in assignments on time, please let me know as early as possible and I will do whatever I can to help you prioritize your wellbeing.

Below are some of the many support services and resources available to all UIC students:

- [Current Student Resources](#) – a one-stop shop for links to resources in the following categories: General, Academic, Student Support, Student Life, Technology, Health and Safety, and Getting Around Campus
- [UIC Tutoring Resources](#)
- UIC College of Engineering [Tutoring Program](#)
- The [First-at-LAS academic success program](#) for first-generation students
- Programs and initiatives supporting the UIC undergraduate experience and academic programs through the [Student Success Initiative](#)
- If you are experiencing personal hardships (e.g. personal and family emergencies, academics, interpersonal conflicts, personal safety, physical and mental health concerns, food or housing insecurity) and need resources and assistance, please reach out to the [Student Assistance](#) division
- [Student Guide for Information Technology](#) – a comprehensive resource for UIC students describing the most commonly used IT services and tools supporting your success
- [Navigating Health Resources at UIC](#) – explore the many resources that are on campus to support students' health and wellbeing and learn about how you can access them.

Importantly, if you are in immediate distress, please know the UIC Counseling Center has crisis intervention services available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can walk into the Counseling Center during business hours to request to talk to a crisis counselor, or you can call the Counseling Center main line at (312) 996-3490. If you are calling outside of business hours, select “2” during the automated greeting to be connected to a crisis counselor. You can find additional mental health resources and services on [the Counseling Center Website](#) and the [Student's Guide to Accessing Behavioral Health Services at UIC](#).

For immediate crisis support outside of UIC, call or text “9-8-8” any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Dialing 988 will connect you to a trained crisis professional. 988 offers services in Spanish, American Sign Language, and over 240 languages through tele-interpretation services. [The 988 website](#) has an online chat feature, too.

Additional Resources

These are mostly boilerplate blurbs from our Academic Center for Excellence (ACE).⁵

The Writing Center offers friendly and supportive tutors who can help you with reading and writing in any of your courses, not just English. Tutors are ready to help with other writing as well, such as job applications, personal statements, and resumes. The tutor and you will work together to decide how to improve your writing. If you have not started your assignment, that is OK. A tutor can help you brainstorm or make an outline. Tutors understand that you might be using the Writing Center for the first time. They are ready to guide you through your first session. You can choose to work with a tutor in person or in real time over the internet using video, audio, or chat and a whiteboard. For more information and to schedule an [appointment](#), visit [the Writing Center website](#).

The Math and Science Learning Center, located in the Science and Engineering South Building (SES) at 845 W. Taylor St. 3rd Floor, Room 247, is a meeting place for students in Math, Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Earth and Environmental Sciences, and Physics. At the MSLC, students can meet with graduate teaching assistants for tutoring in 100-level courses, attend informal group study sessions with other students, or meet up with friends to attend one of the workshops, seminars, or other activities sponsored by the MSLC during the semester. Visit the [MSLC website](#), call 312-355-4900, or email at mslc@uic.edu.

The UIC Library is located both on east and west campus, provides access to resources, study rooms, and research support both online via chat and in person. At Daley Library on the east side of campus, stop by the reference desk in the IDEA Commons, or make an appointment for research help on either side of campus. Learn more about [library services and resources](#), and to find research materials in specific subject areas view [the Research Guides](#).

The Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) can help if you feel you need more individualized instruction in reading and/or writing, study skills, time management, etc. Please call (312) 413-0031 or visit the [Academic Center for Excellence \(ACE\)](#) website for more information.

The UIC Counseling Center offers services for UIC students who pay the student health services fee. You may seek a free and confidential intake with a trained therapist from the Counseling Center, who will work with you to create a clinically appropriate treatment plan. Treatment options may include Brief Individual Therapy or Group Therapy at the Counseling Center, referral to Psychiatry services, or Care Coordination to be connected to a community provider who meets your clinical needs. The Counseling Center is located in the Student Services Building. You may contact them at (312) 996-3490 during business hours to learn more about services, set up an intake, or for crisis intervention. Crisis intervention services are available 24/7 by walking into

⁵ <https://teaching.uic.edu/cate-teaching-guides/syllabus-course-design/syllabus/>

the Counseling Center during business hours or by calling. If you are calling after business hours, please select “2” when the automated voice message begins. For more information about [the Counseling Center](#) or accessing the Counseling Center and other mental and emotional health services on campus, check out the [Student’s Guide to Accessing Behavioral Health Services at UIC](#). For more information about services in the community, check out our [Community Provider Database](#).

The Campus Advocacy Network provides information and offers resources to all UIC students, faculty, and staff. Under the Title IX law, you have the right to an education that is free from any form of gender-based violence and discrimination. Crimes of sexual assault, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and stalking are against the law and can be prevented. For more information or for confidential victim services and advocacy, contact [UIC’s Campus Advocacy Network](#) at 312-413-8206. To make a report to UIC’s Title IX office, email TitleIX@uic.edu or call (312) 996-8670.

UIC Safety Tips and Resources are available in a [variety of places](#). At UIC, we are strongly committed to our public safety programs, and we encourage students to be proactive in learning what programs and services are available in case of an emergency. You are discouraged from staying in university buildings alone, including lab rooms, after hours and are encouraged to use the [Walking Safety Escort](#) and/or [Night Ride](#) if you are uncomfortable traveling anywhere on campus. Also, you can download [the UIC SAFE app](#), a free personal security tool for students, faculty, and staff. It allows you easy contact with dispatchers and first responders in case of an emergency. Finally, by dialing 5-5555 from a campus phone, you can summon Police or Fire for any on-campus emergency. You may also program the complete number, 312-355-5555, on speed dial on your phone.

Emergency response guides can be found at the [Office of Preparedness and Response](#). Please review and acquaint yourself with the guide and recommendations for various emergency situations.

Student Health Services are available if you get sick during the semester. The Family Medicine Center is committed to providing high-quality, student centered care and services. It has attending physicians, residents, and nurse practitioners on staff to provide the full range of primary health care services. The Family Medicine Center also offers a limited set of health services at no additional cost to students who pay the Student Health Service Fee (SHSF). Services include caring for an acute or urgent illness (e.g., cold, strep throat, asthma attack, flu) or an injury. More information can be found on the [Family Medicine Center’s Student Health](#) webpage.