Computer Science/Philosophy 324-01W: Computer Ethics
Fall 2018: M 7:35-10:05, MO 8

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Hours: MW 1:05-1:55, M 6:00pm- 7:30, W 3:20-4:10, F 10:00-11:00, and by appointment

Course Objectives: The aim of this course is to help students to think clearly about moral matters, especially with respect to the ethical use and design of computer technologies. Along the way, we will develop critical thinking skills which are applicable to any field of inquiry. This will involve the careful and critical reading and analysis of relevant essays, followed by informed discussion and debate. Students will be expected to think for themselves and to respect the requirements of intellectual honesty and integrity. The aim of this course is *not* to proselytize students into adopting a certain set of positions on these issues. For first-time students of philosophy, the most important and difficult point to grasp is that the *reasons* for one's beliefs are more philosophically important than the content of those beliefs. In philosophy, it is better to be wrong for the right reasons than right for the wrong reasons. We are interested in understanding what makes for good thinking, rather than instilling students with good thoughts. This interest is justified on the grounds that, though not infallible, good thinking is our best guide to the truth. But truth is elusive, and is reliably uncovered only through slow, deliberate effort. Consequently, all views are subject to question. By the end of this semester, students should come to appreciate the complexity of careful moral reasoning, and it is hoped that this appreciation will lead students to a critical tolerance of the moral views of others, and to a reexamination of their own moral views.

Final grades will be assigned in accordance with students' performance on 3 short response papers (2-3 pages each), two papers (about 4-5 pages each), and the final exam (about 5 pages). Furthermore, intelligent and thoughtful contributions to discussion will boost your grade. Grades will be determined according to the following weights: Final Exam--20%, Response papers--30%, Papers--50%

This is a designated writing intensive course. You will be asked to write several concise, clear, and coherent essays. Grades will be assigned according to how concise, clear, and coherent your writing is. A series of unconnected sentences does not constitute a concise, clear, or coherent essay. To the contrary, a good essay coheres around a single focus, specified in a clear and audience-appropriate thesis statement. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling are also important components in evaluating essays. Essays that are unacceptable along any of these dimensions must be rewritten and resubmitted in a timely manner. Unless excused, late papers and missed exams will be penalized one half a letter grade per class day late. If you cannot meet a deadline, be sure to make arrangements to avoid this penalty.

Reading philosophy is very difficult. If you don't understand a reading right away, don't be discouraged. Texts will be amplified and clarified in the course of our discussions in class. Furthermore, you will be responsible for a great deal of information that is not directly in the readings. **It is very important that you not miss class!**

Academic integrity is absolutely required. Students are encouraged to study together, but all assignments and exams must be written separately. Plagiarism, copying, or any other form of cheating will result in a failing grade. At the discretion of the Professor, students suspected of plagiarism may be asked to rewrite the assignment. Academic misconduct will be reported to the Dean for possible further action.

Readings are available zipped into a file available from the Blackboard site for this course.

Week of	Schedule of Readings and Assignments
9-10	**General Introduction**—What is philosophy? What distinguishes good from bad reasoning?
9-17	**Moral Theories and Frameworks—**What is Computer Ethics? (R1 draft due) Read: Volkman, "An Introduction to Thinking Clearly" Brown, "Moral Theories Moor, "What is Computer Ethics?"
9-24	Conference Week—Group work on R2 instead of class.
10-1	**Professional Ethics**–What is a computer professional? (R2 draft due) Read: Gotterbarn, "Responsibility Regained" Gotterbarn, "Software Engineering: A New Professionalism"
10-8	**Professional Ethics**–What is a good computer professional? (R1 Final Due) Davis, "Thinking Like an Engineer" Volkman, "Being a Good Computer Professional" ACM/IEEE, Software Engineering Code of Ethics and Professional Practice
10-15	**Politics and Policy—**Free Speech and Censorship in the Information Age (R2 final due) Read: Mill, *All Minus One* Benn, "Freedom of Expression and the Flight from Reason" Epstein, "Could America's Big Tech Industry Create Free Speech Problems?" Robbins, "Social media companies are the real 'enemies of the people" Harsanyi, "Social Media Giants Shouldn't Be Arbiters of Appropriate Speech"
10-22	**Politics and Policy—**Social Media and Tribalism Read: Alexander, "I Can Tolerate Anything Except the Outgroup" Taub and Fisher, "Facebook Fueled Anti-Refugee Attacks" Nagle, "The Lost Boys" Singal, "Social Media is Making Us Dumber. Here's Exhibit A." Stevens, on "The Polarizing Effects of Online Partisan Criticism"
10-29	Blade-Runner (Movie will be shown during class period in University Student Center Theater) (P1 draft due)
11-5	**More Human Than Human**—Discuss the movie as Promethean tragedy (R3 draft due) Read: Frankenstein: The Modern Prometheus Hauskeller, "Prometheus Unbound…"
11-12	**More Human Than Human**—Transhumanism is a humanism? (P1 final due) Read: Bailey, "The Case for Enhancing People" Storey, "Liberation Biology, Lost in the Cosmos" More, "Principles of Extropy"
11-19	**Digital Culture—**What does the Information Age do to culture? (R3 final due) Read: Gorniak-Kocikowska, "…The Problem of Global Ethics" Postman, "Informing Ourselves to Death" Carr, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?"
11-26	**Digital Culture—**Self and Society by Spontaneous Order Read: Ridley, "Cheer Up: Life Only Gets Better" Ridley, "Why Humans Triumphed" Lanier, "Digital Maoism" Thierer, "The Case for Internet Optimism"
12-3	**Review/Catch-Up** (P2 due)
	Final Exam 7:30-9:30, Monday, December 10

Learning Outcomes

Along with the other goals embedded in the description above, this course will also achieve the following learning outcomes:

Understand Local Societal Impact of Computing:
Students will be able to:

a) Articulate the sources and significance of social transformation and the consequent policy vacuums that result from the computer revolution
b) Analyze and defend a solution to some specific policy vacuum resulting from the computer revolution (e.g., policy questions relating to privacy, intellectual property, or free speech)

Understand Global Societal Impact of Computing:
Students will be able to:

a) Articulate the role of technology in shaping culture and the emergence of a Global Information Ethics
b) Critically assess the impact of technology on culture and our conceptions of ourselves

Awareness of Professional Responsibility:
Students will be able to:

a) Demonstrate knowledge of professional codes of ethics and their relation to computing as a profession
b) Evaluate conduct and character in light of what it means to be a good computer professional and explain how this relates to professional and personal success

Awareness of Ethical Responsibility:
Students will be able to:

a) Articulate knowledge of at least one ethical issue related to computer technologies.
b) Critically reflect on the relation between the good life and ethical conduct
c) Manifest critical tolerance of the moral views of others
d) Critically examine their own moral views

Awareness of Social Responsibility:
Students will be able to:

a) Articulate the relationship between personal and professional success as a computer professional and one's responsibilities to clients, employers, and users of computing artifacts
b) Articulate the diverse local and global impacts of the computer revolution and the role of computer professionals in debates about these

Rubric v. 1.1 for papers in PHI/CSC 324

The following criteria are offered to communicate expectations, not as a contract regarding grading. There is no simple algorithm for translating an essay's score on this rubric with one's grade. Students are strongly cautioned against using this rubric as a simple checklist in preparing their essays. The ultimate judgment regarding the final grade for an essay will always take as its standard the essay's clear, concise, and coherent defense of its thesis.

Furthermore, every dimension of the rubric refers only to those elements of the essay that are on topic. One does not get credit for clear and well-formed sentences that are not relevant to one's thesis or the assignment. An essay's score along each dimension will reflect this judgment of relevance. For example, the essay does not count as "coherent" if it hangs together nicely as a defense of some claim other than its stated thesis, or if its thesis is off topic.

	A	B	C	D	F
1. Thesis	The essay starts with a clear and direct thesis in the opening paragraph that addresses exactly the task that was assigned and says exactly what the author is setting out to *prove*.	The essay starts with a thesis in the opening paragraph that addresses the task that was assigned, but the thesis is imprecise or otherwise fails to say exactly what the author is setting out to *prove*.	The essay starts with a thesis in the opening paragraph that addresses only part of the task that was assigned or fails to say what the author is setting out to *prove*. .	The essay has a thesis, but it is not clearly stated.	The essay has no discernible thesis.
2. Argument	The essay presents a compelling argument for the thesis, with plausible premises that are clearly stated and organized.	The essay presents a compelling argument for the thesis, with plausible premises that are clearly stated but may be poorly organized or muddled.	The essay presents an argument that skips crucial steps or is otherwise not clear and explicit, but the argument would be compelling if it were better executed.	The essay unpacks the main ideas in a way that hints at an argument, but the argument is not made explicit, or the essay gives an argument that does not relate to the thesis.	The essay presents little or no real defense of his or her thesis.
3.Organization/ Coherence	The essay hangs together as a single sustained argument for the thesis, with each new idea smoothly transitioned and connected to the whole.	The essay mostly hangs together as a single sustained argument for the thesis, with each new idea smoothly transitioned and connected to the whole.	Transitions are abrupt, but the various points all add up to a single coherent argument.	The essay seems to be checking off bullet points instead of offering a single, sustained argument for the thesis.	The essay is all over the place with little direction or organization.
4. Sentence Level Mechanics	Each sentence is clear and complete with proper conjugation and tense agreement.	Most sentences are clear and complete with proper conjugation and tense agreement.	The essay has several awkward sentence, fragments, run-ons, tense, or conjugation issues.	Some sentences are broken beyond being readable.	Many sentences are broken beyond being readable.

5. Word Level Mechanics and Punctuation	The essay has practically no typos, spelling errors, or pronoun agreement or punctuation issues.	The essay has very few typos, spelling errors, or pronoun agreement or punctuation issues.	The essay has many typos, spelling errors, or pronoun agreement or punctuation issues.	The essay is sloppy or careless about typos, spelling errors, or pronoun agreement or punctuation issues.	The essay is riddled with typos, spelling errors, or pronoun agreement or punctuation issues.
6. Clarity: Key terms/ideas unpacked	The author clearly defines all key ideas and terms without resorting to a mere dictionary definition and uses the terms in accordance with the given definition.	The author clearly defines most key ideas and terms without resorting to a mere dictionary definition uses the terms in accordance with the given definition.	The author seldom defines key ideas and terms or uses the words inconsistent with the stated definition, but seems to understand the key ideas and terms.	The author seldom defines key ideas and terms; it is not clear whether the author understands key ideas and terms.	Key ideas and terms are not well defined or may be used inconsistently.
7. Clarity: Precision and Accuracy in word choice	The author always says exactly what he or she means to say.	The author usually says exactly what he or she means to say.	The author usually says exactly what he or she means to say, but gets things muddled or confused on occasion.	The author is vague and imprecise in stating key premises and ideas, but seems to have the main idea.	The author often does not use the right words to say what he or she means to say.
8. Concise: Economical use of language. Note: an essay is NOT concise if it leaves out important information.	The paper is within in assigned length and includes all the necessary points.	The paper is modestly over the assigned length, but not by much and not because of irrelevant or distracting content, or it leaves out some important information.	The paper is over the assigned length with no irrelevant or distracting content or it runs modestly over because of irrelevant or distracting content, or it leaves out some important information.	The paper is over the assigned length because of a failure to make economical use of language.	The paper runs too long for no good reason. Portions of the essay are irrelevant or redundant.
9. Responds to Objections	The essay successfully addresses important objections.	The essay successfully addresses most important objections.	The essay addresses important objections but not very successfully.	The essay addresses few important objections and not very successfully.	The essay does not address important objections.