Ethics and Computer in Society: CS 404

Winter 2017

Sections 001 & 002

**Class Hours & Location:**

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| T/Th. 9:30 – 10:45 (section 001) 254 CB & 3:00- 4:15 (section 002) |  | 211 JKB |

**Professor**: Darin Gates, Ph.D.

4077 JFSB, 422-4203, [dgates@byu.edu](mailto:dcg8@email.byu.edu)

**Office Hours:** W/F 1:00 - 1:50

**Required Text:**

* *Business Ethics Field Guide*, Agle, Miller, O’Rourke

**Course Description**:

This is a course on ethics with an emphasis on issues relevant to the software/computer industry. We will begin with a study of the foundations of ethics by examining the major ethical theories in our tradition---from Utilitarian-consequentialism, to Non-consequentialism, to Intuitionism, to Virtue Ethics and other moral theories. This will take up the first four weeks. After this we will be in a position to focus on more specific issues related to the computer/software industry in order to apply what we have learned. Some of the ethical issues we will cover include those related to privacy, digital intellectual property, automated vehicle and other AI ethical issues, the ethics of video games, social media, as well as the ethical standards expected from those in the computer/software field. Since most who pursue computer related careers will be involved in businesses of some kind, we will spend part of the semester dealing with business ethics issues, always with an eye to the computer/software industry. In the latter part of the semester, we will divide you into groups to do a project analyzing the ethics of a particular software/computer related company. You will present your findings in class.

**Learning Outcomes:**

**Common Ethical Issues**

Identify and address common ethical issues that arise for individuals, managers, and organizations in the computer/software industry.

**Resolve Ethical Dilemmas**

Use contemporary and classic frameworks to analyze and suggest resolutions to ethical dilemmas.

**Influences in Judgment** Recognize how cognitive barriers, as well as rationalization and self-deception, can influence ethical judgment.

**Organizational Ethics and Laws**

Identify key laws and organizational policies that apply to ethical conduct related to computer/software related industries.

**Course Requirements:** The course requirements are *timely and thorough reading* of the required assignments*, regular* (and punctual) *attendance* at class*,* 2 *reading analyses*, 8 reading *quizzes*, two reading summaries, a group presentation, and two exams.

**Reading Analyses:** You will write two 3-4 page reading analyses. I will give you the details of how each analysis should be done prior to the due date. They should be typed (double spaced, 12 pt. font) and are to be submitted at the beginning of class the day they are due (both a hard copy and on Learning Suite).

**Exams**: There will be **2 exams** that will consist of multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. The final exam will be comprehensive. I will post exam review study guides on Learning Suite before each exam. You will find these are quite helpful, but they will not necessarily cover everything that will be on the exams. However, if there is something on the exam that was *not* on the review sheets, it will be a prominent point from the readings and lectures—something one clearly should have known from coming to class.

**Reading Quizzes**: There will be 9 reading quizzes, 8 of which will be unannounced at the beginning of certain classes during the semester, and one online announced quiz. These cannot typically be made up; however, we will drop your lowest score.

**Reading Summaries:** You will write four summaries of selected readings. These are 1 page, single-spaced, typed summaries of the main points of the reading in your own words.

**Software Related Companies Ethical Codes Group Report:** You will be divided into groups (with approximately 5 members each) and do analysis/report of the ethical codes of software related companies, as well as particular ethical problems they have encountered, and will likely encounter. You will also present your findings in class (each group will be given 20 minutes to do so on select days).

**Grading**

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| **Assignment** |  | **Percent of Grade** |
| Reading Analysis I | 40 points | 5% |
| Reading Analysis II | 40 points | 5% |
| Reading Quizzes | 80 points | 20% |
| Reading Summaries | 40 points | 10% |
| Mid-Term Exam | 80 points | 20% |
| Group Presentation | 60 points | 15% [40 points for written report/20 for oral] |
| Final Exam | 100 points | 25% |

**Late work**: I will accept late reading analyses and summaries, but I will take off 10% for each day they are late. The first late day will always be the time between the time the analysis is due (beginning at 10 minutes after class begins) and the end of the day when it is due. When you turn in a late analysis, mark at the top of the assignment the **date and time** it was due and the **date and time** you turned it in.

**Extra Credit:** There is no extra credit.Use the time that you would spend doing extra credit to complete assigned readings and adequately prepare a quality reading analyses, etc. The course requirements are clearly stated in this syllabus.

**Classroom Courtesy**: Laptop computers are welcome *so long as they are being used to take notes* and do not distract others. Please do not use them for any other purposes during class. We will have several **laptop-free days** (see schedule). Furthermore, texting during class is inappropriate, so please turn off you phones and put them away when class begins. I reserve the right to lower your final grade for consistently discourteous class behavior.

**Lecture and Discussion**: This course will involve both lecture and discussion. Come prepared to both follow a lecture on the material and ask thoughtful and relevant questions. In order to allow a good discussion, please adhere to the following practices: First, raise your hand if you have a comment to make. Although it is sometimes appropriate to answer without raising your hand, it is *not* appropriate to interrupt while either someone else is speaking or when I have not directed an inquiry toward the students. Second, a single student should not dominate the discussion. These practices should ensure we will have the most enjoyable and helpful discussions.

**Attendance**: As noted, regular and punctual attendance, as well as participation, are requirements of this course. If your attendance is poor (4 or more un-excused absences), it may count against your final grade for the course. When you do miss class, for whatever reason, you should check with your classmates or with me about any missed announcements, etc. Catching up on what you missed because of absence or tardiness is your responsibility.

**Honor Code**: In keeping with the principles of the BYU Honor Code, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. Academic honesty means, most fundamentally, that any work you present as your own must in fact be your own work and not that of another. Violations of this principle may result in a failing grade in the course and additional disciplinary action by the university. Students are also expected to adhere to the Dress and Grooming Standards. Adherence demonstrates respect for yourself and others and ensures an effective learning and working environment. It is the university’s expectation, and my own expectation in class, that each student will abide by all Honor Code standards. Please call the Honor Code Office at 422-2847 if you have questions about those standards.

**Accessibility Issues:** Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with accessibility issues. If you have any accessibility issues that may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center in 1520 WSC (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities.  Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the UAC office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You should contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB.

**Preventing Sexual Harassment:** Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education and pertains to admissions, academic and athletic programs, and university-sponsored activities. Title IX also prohibits sexual harassment of students by university employees, other students, and visitors to campus. If you encounter sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Office at 801-422-5895 or 1-888-238-1062 (24-hours), or http://www.ethicspoint.com; or contact the Honor Code Office at 801-422-2847.

**Tentative Schedule**

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| **Date** | **Topic** | **Reading** | **Assignment** |
| **January** |  |  |  |
| 10 | Introduction |  |  |
| 12 | Ethics: Ethical Relativism and Objectivism | Read Pojman essay on Learning Suite (LS) |  |
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| 17 | Ethical Theory Overview: Utilitarianism, Ethics of Rights/Duties, Virtue Ethics | Read DesJardins chapter selections (pages 26-37) on Learning Suite. |  |
| 19 | Ethics, Self-Interest, and Moral Obligation | Read Landau chapter on Ethical Egoism (on LS) |  |
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| 24 | The Golden Rule as a basis for Ethical Principles  Laptop-free day | Read Gensler essay (LS). |  |
| 26 | Consequentialism & Utilitarianism: Acting for the Greatest Overall Good | Read Utilitarianism-Consequentialism reading on LS. |  |
| **February** |  |  |  |
| 31 | Non-consequentialism (Kantian ethics)  Laptop-free day | Read selections from Kant Section II (LS); also read Joshua Glasgow essay, “Kant’s Principle of Universal Law” (LS). |  |
| 2 | Non-consequentialism continued: Rights | Read DesJardins chapter on rights (up to page 60—on LS). |  |
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| 7 | The Ethics of Self-driving cars | Reading on LS |  |
| 9 | Intuitionism & conflicting *Prima Facie* Duties | Read Audi selection, “A Framework for Making Ethical Decisions” (LS) |  |
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| 14 | Software Engineering Code of Conduct and Professional Practice  Laptop-free day | Read code (on LS). | **Analysis I due**. |
| 16 | ACM Professional Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct | Read code (on LS). |  |
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| 21 | No class (Monday class schedule) |  |  |
|  | **Mid-Term Exam** | In testing center Tuesday through Friday |  |
| 23 | Standing up to Power | Read *Field Guide* chapter 1 |  |
| **March** |  |  |  |
| 28 | Rationalization & Moral Neutralization: How we rationalize wrongdoing | Read *Field Guide* chapter 15. Also read Neutralization essay on LS. |  |
| 2 | Moral Neutralization & Online Misbehavior  Laptop-free day | Read Harris and Dumas “Online misbehavior” essay on LS. | Neutralization **Analysis** due. |
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| 7 | Information, Privacy, and Avoiding Harm | “Privacy” reading on LS |  |
| 9 | The Ethics of Property Rights, Copyrights, and Patents | “Intellectual Property” reading on LS |  |
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| 14 | The Ethics of Social Media: | Read articles on LS |  |
| 16 | Ethical & Video Gaming | Read articles on LS. |  |
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| 21 | Conflicts of Interest | Read *Field Guide* chapter 4 |  |
| 23 | Conflicts of Loyalty | Read *Field Guide* 9 |  |
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| 28 | Ethics and Software/Computer related Corporations: Ethics Codes of Google, Microsoft, Facebook, etc. Laptop-free day |  | **Group Project Due** |
| 30 | Group Presentations  Laptop-free day |  |  |
| **April** |  |  |  |
| 4 | Group Presentations  Laptop-free day |  |  |
| 6 | No class |  |  |
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| 11 | Sacrificing Personal Value | Read *Field Guide* chapter 10 |  |
| 13 | Ethics and Self-Deception  Laptop-Free day | Read “What We Are” on LS. |  |
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| 18 | Synthesize & Review |  |  |
|  | **Final Exam** | Section 001 April 21st 7:00 AM to 10:00  Section 002 April 21st 3:00 to 6:00 |  |