Steve Cooper

Handout #1
July 4, 2016

Course Information

Professor: Steve Cooper

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I will try to be available before or after the class to meet with students.

Course descriptions

This course is a modification of a course I created at Stanford University. In class, I'll discuss a bit of the history of the course. It met a requirement that all undergraduate students needed to take a course on ethical reasoning. In practice, during the past 5 years, the course went from being offered once a year to 100 students to being offered 3 times a year to more than 150 students per offering. This class works best as a seminar with discussion, and I hope to run it in such a fashion here. Below is the technical description of the course I taught:

> **CS 181: Computers, Ethics, and Public Policy**
> Primarily for majors entering computer-related fields. Ethical and social issues related to the development and use of computer technology. Ethical theory, and social, political, and legal considerations. Scenarios in problem areas: privacy, reliability and risks of complex systems, and responsibility of professionals for applications and consequences of their work. Prerequisite: 106B or X.
> **Terms: Aut, Win, Spr | Units: 4 | UG Reqs: GER:ECEthicReas | Grading: Letter or Credit/No Credit**
> **Instructors: Cooper, S. (PI), Roberts, E.**

Goals

This course has three main goals:

1. To encourage you to take ethics and social responsibility seriously—to regard these issues as integral aspects of your technical work and not as irrelevant concerns better relegated to those in the non-technical disciplines.
2. To provide you with analytical tools from theoretical and applied ethics that will help you understand ethical questions that arise in the discipline of computer science.
3. To introduce various social policy questions raised by modern computing.

Note that I have never taught this course in a compressed format before. I am hopeful that it will go smoothly, but reserve the right to make changes based on how the course is going.

Lectures

Because this class is being offered over 2 weeks, my intention is to have two "lectures" each day, from Monday to Thursday. When I write "lectures", I really mean that I am preparing material that I will present, but that I expect you to join in the conversation. Ethics is best learned via small group discussion, and I expect you to be involved in the

conversations. To encourage group conversation, I am planning to ask you to prepare brief responses (approximately one page) to questions I have regarding the readings. My intention is to try to spend approximately 45 minutes to one hour at the end of each class day where you discuss your responses with me and with each other.

Prerequisites

There are no formal pre-requisites for this course. However, if it is possible, I would like each team to create a project web page for the final project. Assuming it is possible to require students to create project web sites, it is essential that you have someone on your team familiar with website creation or can use a commercial web site creation service.

Texts

None –we will mostly be reading articles.

Course requirements

Reaction papers To make sure that everyone has thought about the reading before going to section, you will be responsible for a short (one to two pages) reaction paper every day. These papers will not be graded as formal writing assignments, but I will note whether you have made a reasonable effort on each paper and use that determination as a major component of the participation grade.

Debate During the class of July 8, we will conduct a series of pair-wise Lincoln-Douglas style debates. I am hoping that they will help to make the transition to considering aspects of public policy, as you will be advocating for/against a certain policy position. The purpose of this (which is likely to be repeated for the final presentations as well) is to give you practice in responding to a presentation of others.

Paper I am going to be asking you to prepare a policy recommendation related to cybersecurity. I will provide you with some US-governmental documents to get you started on thinking about possible policies to recommend. The initial draft of this paper is due on July 13. You will receive comments—both on the technical content and the writing—by July 15 and must submit a revised version of the paper on July 25.

Final project The most important part of your work for the course is a group project in which you research and develop materials on some aspect of computer science that raises significant ethical or public policy issues. The final projects will be presented at a miniconference held the last day of class, July 15. All topics must be approved by me and will usually be chosen from a list circulated at the beginning of the third day. The deliverables are as follows:

1. An abstract for the project, which is due on July 11.
2. An annotated bibliography due on July 13.

3. A 15-minute oral presentation at the mini-conference.
4. A team web site, due July 25.

Grading

Final grades for the course will be determined using the following weights:

25% Paper #2
15% Debate
20% Participation
Your "participation" will include writing 1-2 page reactions to questions I pose, as well as attending and participating in discussions.
40% Final project

There are no exams in this course.