CSC 208-502
Ethics in Technology
Winter Quarter 2020-2021
DePaul University

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Rosiak

Time and Location: Remote, but Synchronous! We meet through Zoom every Monday and Wednesday from 11:50 AM to 1:50 PM

Course Management System Desire2Learn (D2L)

Contact: drosiak@depaul.edu (I will usually respond to emails within 24 hours)

Office Hours: Since this is a remote section, I have blocked off Wednesdays from 4:00-5:30 pm to be available for meeting virtually on Zoom. To visit me during my office hours, go to the Content page on D2L and look for the Office Hours tab. There, I have embedded a permanent link to the "room" and there are directions for how to access this on that page.

Course Description

Computing Technology and the rapid pace in which it has advanced have had a tremendous impact on our lives. Changes have been swift and the human capacity to deal them limited. It has been said that our technology has outpaced our humanity. This course will research the new responsibilities technology presents and our ability to deal with these changes in an ethical manner. Students will employ a framework for ethical analysis, which integrates computer science and ethics, to develop the skills required to examine different sets of assumptions and question them, resulting in an informed evaluation of issues.

Prerequisites

No prior knowledge of computers, programming, or philosophy/ethical theory is assumed, or necessary.

Course Method and Overview

The course will investigate and critically examine ethical theory from a variety of perspectives, and will give the student the capacity to analyze, assess, and propose principled resolutions to particular ethical dilemmas in the fields of Technology. While we will look closely at a number of prominent ethical *theories* – including Utilitarianism, Kantian (Deontological) ethics, Moral Rights, Social Contract theory, Virtue Ethics, and more – an equal part of the course will be devoted to applying and considering these ideas in the context of various "cases" and applications. In this course, students will develop the skills to make reasoned

arguments about ethical dilemmas and situations, to defend and argue against a position, and to develop a heightened sense of ethical awareness and responsibility.

The course will mainly involve learning how to think hard and systematically about problems worth thinking hard about, problems that you have likely *already* wondered about. Among other things, this involves learning how to think critically; reading and discussing primary philosophical texts; and learning how to develop your own arguments and ideas in a systematic and productive way, as well as engaging meaningfully with the ideas and arguments of others. The student will be evaluated in terms of weekly "lab" assignments, quizzes, participation in the class meetings and discussion forums, and two papers (midterm and final).

Important Note on Remote Course

Because this course has been migrated to remote delivery, you will be responsible for keeping up with assignments each week. All assignments, deadlines, and other relevant course materials are on the course D2L page, and the Weekly Modules can be found under the **Content** tab.

Learning Domain Description

CSC 208 is included in the Liberal Studies program as a course with credit in the Philosophical Inquiry domain. Courses in the Philosophical Inquiry domain address conceptual issues fundamental to reflection on such philosophical topics as **metaphysics** (e.g., being and nonbeing, the one and the many, the nature of reality, same and other, self and other); **epistemology** (e.g., the nature and possibility of knowledge, different ways of knowing, knowledge vs. opinion, truth and falsity); **ethics** (e.g., right and wrong action, good and bad, objectivism and relativism in ethics, social and political philosophies, the idea of value, the problem of evil); and **aesthetics** (e.g., the nature of beauty, aesthetic value, the possibility of aesthetic valuation). These courses address questions of how such topics impinge upon, shape, and challenge student lives.

This course also emphasizes writing, requiring a minimum of 10 written pages throughout the quarter.

Philosophical Inquiry Learning Domain Writing Expectations

Students will be expected to complete a minimum of 10 pages of writing for this course. Students will meet this requirement by weekly "lab" assignments, a Midterm essay, and a Final essay (building your own Ethical Toolkit, or Personal Code of Ethics).

Learning Objectives

By the end of the quarter, students will demonstrate an ability to do the following:

1. Identify, address, critically think about, and analyze philosophical questions and problems, specifically as they relate to a **developing sense of ethical judgment and responsibility** in the areas of technology.

2. Analyze, interpret, and compare the methods used by philosophers in addressing philosophical questions, issues, and/or problems, specifically the ways in which **ethical theories are developed and applied** to address ethical situations native to the fields of technology.

3. **Engage with** philosophical topics through **primary sources** to evaluate the relative merit of ethical theory as a means to address ethical issues in the fields of technology.

4. **Learn methods for testing and systematically comparing ethical theories** against real-world situations.

5. **Write an analytic essay** treating a philosophical question, issue and/or problem that forwards an identifiable thesis, argument, and conclusion, specifically an ethical analysis of a particular ethical issue in technology.

Textbooks

In fulfillment of the Philosophy Inquiry (PI) domain requirements, this course will often use primary source material (on D2L or through links on the Course Calendar). We will also use media (also provided on D2L or through links on the Course Calendar). However, a large portion of the reading assignments will come from the following textbooks (which you need to acquire, and the first of which serves as the main text for this course).

Required texts

- **Print**. Birsch, Douglas. (2014) *Introduction to Ethical Theories, A Procedural Approach*. IL:Waveland Press, Inc. ISBN: 1-4786-0670-3; ISBN: 978-1- 4786-0670-3 `https://waveland.com/browse.php?t=628`

Supplemental

- (Highly recommended) **Print or E-Copy**. Quinn, M. J. (2020) *Ethics for the Information Age*, 8th edition. NY:Pearson/Addison Wesley. ISBN-13: ISBN-13: 9780135217979

  `https://www.pearson.com/store/p/ethics-for-the-information-age/P100001279357`

Readings on D2L

- The remaining readings and media are posted on D2L and/or are supplied as links directly in the D2L weekly modules.

Assignments/Grade Breakdown

In terms of what this course expects of you, there are basically 5 things:

- **Lab Assignments (weekly, except for Week 1, Week 5, and Week 10)**

  Each week, you will be responsible for completing a "lab" assignment, dedicated to applying the material of that week to certain applications, cases, or issues in technology. There are 8 total. Deadlines for each lab can be found on D2L, but typically these are due on Sundays of the relevant week before midnight. (So, for instance, your first Lab, assigned during Week 2, will be due on Sunday, Jan 17.)

  These 8 labs will together make up 30% of your total grade.

  I will drop the lowest of your 8 lab grades.

- **Weekly Quizzes**

  The weekly quizzes (Week 1- Week 10) are designed to test your completion and comprehension of the reading/media for that week. They cover the material of the week, and are effectively designed to help make sure you are keeping up with the reading, media, and lecture materials. Compared to the Labs, the quizzes should take you less time. Deadlines are on the course calendar on D2L. You should only attempt these after completing all of the reading/media assignments for that week.

  Each quiz is worth 1% of your total grade, so that all the Quizzes together contribute 10% to your final grade.

- **Midterm Paper**

  The **Midterm Paper Assignment** document (Under Content tab) explains this assignment. There are additional resources about paper writing under the "Rubrics, Grading, and Assignment Guidelines" tab on D2L.

  The Midterm Paper is worth 25% of your total grade.

- **Final Paper**

  Same idea as the Midterm. The Final Paper is also worth 25% of your grade.

- **Participation**

  Since this is a remote and asynchronous course, your participation will be evaluated in terms of 2 things:

  1. your engagement in the weekly "**Discussion Forums**" on D2L
  2. your activity in the course and participation in our synchronous meetings.

  Participation contributes 10% of your final grade.

Grading Scale

A: 93-100
A-: 90-92
B+: 87-89
B: 83-86
B-: 80-82
C+: 77-79
C: 73-76
C-: 70-72
D+: 67-69
D: 63-66
D-: 60-62
F: 0-59

Grading Rubrics

Rubrics and Assignment Guidelines (for Papers, Labs, and Discussion Boards) are posted on D2L. Both the midterm and final papers will be 5 pages double-spaced.

Attendance and Participation

Since this is a remote section of the course, "attendance" and "participation" mainly means keeping up with the readings, watching any of the lecture or video materials each week, keeping up with the weekly assignments, and keeping an active presence on D2L and in the course's discussion forums. If you fall behind, the burden will be on you to make sure you are up to speed on the material before the next week. Remote learning is new to most of us, so I understand that there may be an occasional week where you must fall a little behind; but in general it is the best policy for you to always keep up with all the assignments and material each week.

Course Calendar (See D2L)

The detailed course calendar, with all readings/media assignments and coursework, can be found on D2L under **Content**. The schedule is broken down into 10 weekly modules.

For reference, here is a schematic overview of the course plan:

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Winter 2020

CS 208 Course Flow

Main Framework   *Applications/Cases/Ethics in Practice*

Week 1   What is Ethics? ⟨- - - -⟩ Overview of Ethical Issues in Tech

Week 2   Can we even *do* ethics? → Overview of Ethical Theories ⟨- - - -⟩ Challenging Relativism in Practice

Week 3   Utilitarianism vs. Deontological Ethics ⟨- - - -⟩ Self-driving cars, Engineering, Biotech, and new tech

Week 4   Social Contract Theory & Moral Rights Theory ⟨- - - -⟩ Freedom of Speech, Fake News, Intellectual Property

Week 5   Virtue Ethics ⟨- - - -⟩ Networked Communications, Attention Economy

Foundations in Ethics

Ethics in Practice

Week 6   Data Ethics — Information Privacy, Privacy and the Gov

Week 7   Reliability and Liability — Security & Safety Issues

Week 8   Artificial Intelligence — Dangers, Trajectories, Strategies

Week 9   Life in an Algorithmic Economy — The Future of Work, Wages, Cryptocurrency

Week 10   Building your Ethical Toolkit — Professional Ethics