



# Information Ethics

Fall 2013

## **I453 Information Ethics:**

This course explores the ethical and professionalization issues that arise in the context of designing and using information technologies. We will study the major ethical theories and frameworks that have shaped the field of information ethics and use them to address topics relevant to the informatics profession, including privacy, intellectual property, cybercrime, games, social justice, gender equity. This course will help you read the literature of ethics to develop, articulate, and refine your own ethical framework; analyze the information issues and debates you encounter in light of that framework; and argue your position effectively in written and oral form.

This course meets on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 1-2:15 in Informatics East 150.

## **Course Objectives:**

The aim of the course is not to tell you *what* to think about ethical issues, or what the proper views in computing ethics are. Rather, the aims are to increase your ability to:

1. Develop mature stances with regard to issues of professional ethics in general and computing ethics in particular, and
2. Present these stances in a manner that is persuasive to your peers, the most important audience for the articulation of your ethical views.

## **Instructor:**

Professor Nathan. Ensmenger  
303 Informatics West  
Office Hours: T 9-10 am, Th 2:30-3:30 pm  
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## **Assistant Instructor:**

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**Readings:**

All of the readings will be posted on-line using OnCourse. It is your responsibility to check the OnCourse site regularly for announcements and updates.

**Attendance Policy:**

You can miss up to 2 classes without any excuses needed. After that for an absence to be excused it must be cleared with one of us ahead of time. Each unexcused absence will knock one point off of your participation grade.

**Student Responsibilities:**

Students are expected to attend class, do the readings, and be prepared to discuss the readings and issues with enthusiasm and civility. This course will engage with controversial issues. Students are expected to maintain respectful behavior toward one another and toward the teaching staff, even if they disagree with the ideas presented. If you feel uncomfortable with certain aspects of the course material, come and see me.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. If you have any questions about what might constitute plagiarism, please review the IU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct. All students are expected to submit their own original work. If you need any accommodations due to a documented disability, please let me know as early in the term as possible.

**Grading:**

Your grade for the course will be based on the following components:

**Reading quizzes: 20%** : You will be asked a short question about the reading approximately 10 times during the semester. These will be graded with 0, 1, or 2 points.

**Midterm Exam: 20%** : You will have a midterm exam before Thanksgiving break on the first eight weeks of class material.

**Participation: 23%** : Participation means more than just showing up. It means actively engaging in the material and discussions with your classmates and instructors. In-class exercises, presentations, contributions to discussions, blog postings, and attendance will all go toward your participation grade.

**Projects: 30%** : There assignments for this class will include blog postings (10%), reading response papers (10%), a personal statement of ethical principles (10%), and a final design project (10%). More details on all of these projects will be provided at the beginning of the second week of class.

**Blog Postings:**

You will be required to make at least six postings to the class blog (<http://i453ethics.wordpress.com>) over the course of the semester. Blog postings are an opportunity for you to respond to the reading, post class-related materials (news stories, YouTube videos, etc.), and engage with your fellow students on class-related themes. You may begin your own thread or respond to the postings of others. The best blog postings go beyond stating "this is interesting" and develop an analytical or critical perspective. These will be graded with 0, 1, or 2 points.

**Email Etiquette:**

Please give us up to 24 hours to reply to your emails, and we will do the same for you. Please put the course number in the Subject line and remember to sign your email with your name. We expect the language and structure of your emails to be professional. This includes punctuation, salutations/signature, etc.

The best address to receive a timely response is [i453ethics@gmail.com](mailto:i453ethics@gmail.com).

**Course Schedule:**

Week I

**August 27: Introduction to Information Ethics**

First Meeting. No readings. Show up. Say smart things.

**August 30: Why Computer Ethics?**

Deborah Johnson, *Computer Ethics* (4th Edition). Prentice Hall, 2009. Chapter One, "Introduction to Sociotechnical Computer Ethics"

Week II

**September 3: Intellectual Property: Theory and Law**

Baase, *A Gift of Fire*, Chapter 4, "Intellectual Property"

Loshin, Jacob. "Secrets Revealed: How Magicians Protect Intellectual Property Without Law" (2007)

**September 5: Free as in Speech, Free as in Beer**

Stallman, Richard. "Why Software Should Be Free."

Week III

**September 10: Ethical Theory, Ethical Practice**

Johnson, *Computer Ethics*, Chapter Two, "Ethics and Information Technology"

**September 12: The Nazis did it first ...**

Jack Goldsmith and Timothy Wu. *Who Controls the Internet?: Illusions of a Borderless World*. Oxford University Press, 2006. Excerpts.

Week IV

**September 17: I know what you did last summer**

Facebook users unwittingly revealing intimate secrets, study finds. *The Guardian* (3/11/2013). Available online.

How Much Should People Worry About the Loss of Online Privacy? *The Wall Street Journal* (11/15/2011). Available online.

**September 19: Privacy in the Facebook Era**

Solove, Daniel. " 'I've Got Nothing to Hide,' and Other Misunderstandings of Privacy," 2007.

Reading response paper #1 due in class.

Week V

**September 24: First, do no harm**

Leveson, Nancy, and Clark Turner. "An Investigation of the Therac-25 Accidents." *IEEE Computer*: 18–41.

**September 26: Who watches the watchers?**

Zuckoff, Mitchell, "The Perfect Mark: How a Massachusetts psychotherapist fell for a Nigerian e-mail scam." *New Yorker* (2006)

Michael Gross, "A Declaration of Cyber-War." *Vanity Fair* (2011)

Week VI

**October 1: Globalism, Democracy, Multiculturalism**

Hargittai, E. & Walejko, G. "The Participation Divide: Content Creation and Sharing in the Digital Age." *Information, Communication and Society* 11:2 (2008)

**October 3: Can you hear the people sing?**

Morozov, E. *Technology's Role in Revolution: Internet Freedom and Political Oppression*. *Futurist*.

Week VII

**October 8: Information and the Environment**

Kiera Butler, "Are e-mail attachments good for the environment?"

Williams, et al. "Environmental, Social, and Economic Implications of Global Reuse and Recycling of Personal Computers." *Environmental Science & Technology* 2008 42 (17), 6446-6454

**October 10: Power; water; heat\***

Williams, et al. "The 1.7 Kilogram Microchip: Energy and Material Use in the Production of Semiconductor Devices" *Environmental Science & Technology* 2002 36 (24), 5504-5510

Week VIII

**October 15: Synthesis & Review**

No readings this week.

**October 17: Mid-term Exam\***

In-class mid-term exam.

Week IX

**October 22: Videogames I: The Real vs. the Virtual**

Andrew Hinton. "We live here: Games, third places, and the information architecture of the future." *Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 32(6):17–21, 2006.

Nicholson Baker. "Painkiller deathstreak." *New Yorker*, August 9, 2010.

Week X

**October 24: Videogames II: Addiction?\***

Schull, Natasha Dow. "Digital Gambling: the Coincidence of Desire and Design." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 597: 65–81.

David White, "Residency, Relationships and Responsibility: The Social Side of World of Warcraft," in Panayiotis, Z. and Ang, C. S., (eds.) 2010 *Social Computing and Virtual Communities*, London, Chapman and Hall.

Week XI

**October 29: Videogames III: Violence\***

Reynolds, R. "Playing a 'Good' Game: A Philosophical Approach to Understanding the Morality of Games" (2002)

Waddington, David. "Locating the wrongness in ultra-violent video games." *Ethics and Information Technology* 9:2 (July 2007): 121-128.

**October 31: Videogames IV: Values & Design\***

Week XII

**November 5: Professional Ethics**

Schuler, Doug. *Computer Professionals and the Next Culture of Democracy*. 44:1 (January 2001): 52-57.

*ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct*

**November 7: Values in Computer Design**

Friedman, B. & Nissenbaum, H. (1996). "Bias in computer systems." *ACM Transactions on Information Systems*, 14(3), 330–347.

Flanagan, M. & Nissenbaum, H. (2007). "A game design methodology to incorporate social activist themes." *Proceedings of CHI 2007*. New York: ACM Press, 181–190

Week XIII

**November 12: Social Networks I**

boyd, danah. "Viewing American class divisions through Facebook and MySpace." *Apophenia Blog Essay*. June 24, 2007.

**November 14: Social Networks II**

Gershon, Ilana. *The Breakup 2.0: Disconnecting Over New Media*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. ch. 1.

Week XIV

**November 19: Race, Gender, and Identity**

Hilde G. Corneliussen, "World of Warcraft as a Playground for Feminism"

Eglash, Ron. "Race, Sex, and Nerds: From Black Geeks to Asian American Hipsters." *Social Text* 2, no. 20: 49–64.

**November 21: Cyberbullies**

Readings TBD.

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**Thanksgiving Break**

Enjoy family, eat well, rest up.

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Week XV

**December 3: Tools for Analysis: Opening the Black Box**

Lessig, Lawrence. *Code, and other Laws of Cyberspace*. Basic Books, 1999. Chapters 4-5.

**December 5: Tools for Design: Building Values**

No readings. In-class discussions.

Week XVI

**December 10: Final Design Project Preparation**

No readings. In-class presentations.

**December 12: Final Design Project Presentations**

No readings. In-class presentations.

Week XVII

**December 17: Final Design Project Presentations**

No readings. In-class presentations.

**December 19: The Big Finish, in which all will become clear ...**

There is no final exam for this course.