

Western University, Department of Philosophy
Winter 2014

Digital Humanities 2125G: Ethics for a Digital World

Thursdays 2:30-4:30 pm,

An additional online hour of your choosing—this course is a *blended course* with both in person and online components

INSTRUCTOR



Professor Samantha Brennan

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DESCRIPTION

Through social media, computer gaming, and virtual communities, we spend a considerable portion of our lives in the digital world. What moral considerations ought to guide our conduct as digital citizens? This class will consider the ethics of life online, exploring questions such as the following: What are our rights and responsibilities in the digital world? How is social media changing our relationships? How do we balance copyright claims against demands for open access? How do we trade off anonymity and accountability? What's the relationship between our virtual identities and our physical identities? What constraints, if any, shape our digital identities? Is piracy always wrong? Does a hacker's code of ethics make any sense? Is cyber bullying worse than other forms of bullying? How should we respond to sexism, racism, homophobia and other forms of hate and exclusion in online communities? Ethically speaking, are there events that we ought not to tweet about? Where do and don't smart phones belong? Are there constraints on how we edit and present images online? Students will explore these

questions and others through a study of both ethical theory and a series of cases in the burgeoning and important field of digital ethics.

TEXTS

All readings will be accessible through OWL.

OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of this course is to familiarize students with the ethical challenges in the context of computer use and online interaction. The secondary purpose of this course is to familiarize students with a variety of ethical theories. A third goal is to assist students in producing clear, concise and logically structured written work.

REQUIREMENTS

Online participation, short writing assignments, questions, and responses (assignment details are on the OWL site) 40%

Two short essays due 6th and 12th week of the semester 60%

Antirequisite: Philosophy 2078F/G

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

AUDIT Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.