WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2020-21
Phil 2078G (001):

Ethics for a Digital World

Winter 2021
Asynchronous

Instructor: Dr. Ryan Robb
Office: Zoom
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
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Antirequisites: Phil 2998 (F/W 2019-20), Phil 2268

TOPICS

We spend a considerable portion of our lives in the digital world. What moral considerations ought to guide our conduct as cyber-citizens, given the possibility that online behaviour is morally distinct from real world behaviour? This class will engage materials that address the philosophical issues raised by these two questions: Specifically: What's the relationship between our virtual identities and our physical identities? How is online activity changing our interpersonal relationships? What are our rights and responsibilities toward others in the cyber-world? How do we trade between the potentially conflicting values of anonymity and accountability? How do we balance copyright claims against demands for open access? Is piracy always wrong? Does a hacker's code of ethics make any sense? How should we respond to forms of hate and exclusion in online communities?

TEXTS

All the readings for this course will be made available through OWL

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this course is to help students improve their critical thinking skills. Specifically, students should expect to improve their abilities to understand the arguments made in the readings and respond with arguments of their own in their online discussion posts, their online participation, and their term papers.

The secondary goal of the course is to familiarize students with recent attempts by scholars to identify and address the ethical issues that emerge in our increasingly digital lives. This goal will be satisfied by testing student comprehension of the materials with online quizzes, and on the final exam.

REQUIREMENTS

Quizzes: 15% (11 multiple choice quizzes, worth 1.36% each)
Discussion Posts: 30% (two 400 – 600 word posts, worth 15% each)
Discussion Participation: 10% (8 responses, worth 1.25% each)
One 1100 – 1300 word term-paper: 25%
Final Exam: 20% (short answer questions, scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during the April 2021 Final Exam period)

AUDIT

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

COURSE POLICIES

1. Extensions

   If you fail to meet the submission dates for the two discussion posts, extensions may be granted only as a result of a petition to the Academic Counselor of the student's faculty (barring a student's use of the 48 hour 'Self-Reported Absence Form'). **Instructors have no authority to waive this requirement, and any unofficial arrangements they make with students will not be respected by the administration.**

2. Late Assignments and penalties

   Quizzes**:** Quizzes not completed prior to the end of the relevant Unit **cannot** be made up.

   Unit Discussion Posts: Late discussion posts will lose 1 (out of 15) mark per day for each day they are late; after 9 days (weekends included), a grade of 0 will automatically be recorded.

   Discussion Responses/Participation: A failure to respond with the required number of replies (four in Unit 2 and four in Unit 4) to your classmates' discussion posts before the deadline specified on the schedule below **cannot** be made up.

   Term Papers: The term papers are due on the last day of classes for the term (Monday, April 12th). In accord with UWO Senate guidelines, **no term papers will be accepted after the last day of classes, i.e., Monday, April 12th 2021**. **ANY PAPER NOT SUBMITTED BY THIS TIME WILL** (regrettably) **RECEIVE A GRADE OF 0**.

READING AND ASSIGNMENTS SCHEDULE

NOTE: All of the readings listed in this section are, and will remain, available for the duration of the course under the 'Resources' tab on OWL. Links to each will also be included in the relevant Unit tabs, released when each Unit begins.

Also NOTE: This section includes submission/completion deadlines for each element of the course, with the exception of the final exam. Those deadlines are listed in each of the Unit sections below and repeated separately in the following section.

<u>Unit 1 (Weeks 1 and 2, January 11th – 24th):</u> What is Philosophy, What is Ethics, What is Digital Ethics?

Week 1: Introduction to Philosophy and Ethics

Readings: Lecture Notes – What is Philosophy?
Lecture Notes – What is Ethics?
Steve Matthews – Internet Ethics
Assignment: Quiz #1

Week 2: Ethics in the Digital World… same old story, or something new?

Readings: Antonio Marturano – The Role of Metaethics and the Future of Computer Ethics
Zonghao Bao and Kun Xiang – Digitalization and Global Ethics
David M. Douglas – Toward a Just and Fair Internet: Applying Rawls's Principles of Justice to Internet Regulation
Assignment: Quiz #2 (The 2 quizzes for Unit 1 must be completed by Sunday, January 24th at 11:55 p.m. EST)

<u>Unit 2 (Weeks 3 and 4, January 25th – February 7th)</u>: Personal Identity and the Possibility of Friendship in the Digital World

Week 3: Me, My Online Identity, and the Possibility of Moral Wrong

Reading: Marya Schechtman – The Story of my (Second) Life: Virtual Worlds and Narrative Identity
Jessica Wolfendale – My Avatar, My Self: Virtual Harm and Attachment
A.J. Craft – Sin in Cyber-Eden: Understanding the Metaphysics and Morals of Virtual Worlds
Assignment: Quiz #3

Week 4: Can we Make Friends Online?

Readings: Robert Sharp – The Obstacles Against Reaching the Highest Level of Aristotelean Friendship Online
Sofia Kaliarnta – Using Aristotle's Theory of Friendship to Classify Online Friendships: A Critical Counterview
Assignments: a. Quiz #4 (The two quizzes for Unit 2 must be completed by Sunday February 7th, no later than 11:55 p.m. EST)
b. **<u>First</u>** 400 – 600 word Unit Discussion Post due no later than **<u>11:55 p.m. EST Friday February 12th</u>**.

<u>Unit 3 (Weeks 5 and 6, February 8th – 21st)</u>: The Effect of Digital Life on Truth and Privacy

Week 5: The Internet, Truth, and Anonymity

Readings: Karen Frost-Arnold – Trustworthiness and Truth: The Epistemic Pitfalls of Internet Accountability
R. George Wright – Self-Censorship and the Constriction of Thought and Discussion under Modern Communications Technologies
Nicholas Munn – The New Political Blogosphere
Assignment: Quiz #5

Week 6: Privacy

Readings: Norman Bowie – Privacy and the Internet
Dorota Mokrosinska – Privacy and the Integrity of Liberal Politics: The Case of Governmental Internet Searches
Assignments: a. Quiz #6 (The two quizzes for Unit 3 must be completed by Monday, February 22nd no later than 11:55 p.m. EDT)
b. Four Responses to **FOUR SEPARATE CLASSMATES'** Unit 2 discussion posts must be completed no later than 11:55 p.m. EST on Tuesday, February 23rd.

<u>Unit 4 (Weeks 7, 8, and 9 February 22nd – March 14th)</u>: The Ethics of Open Access, Piracy, and Hacking

Week 7: Open Access

Readings: Michael Parker – The Ethics of Open Access Publishing
John Willinsky and J.P. Alperin – The Academic Ethics of Open Access to Research and Scholarship
Natasha Susan Mauthner and Odette Parry – Open Access Digital Data Sharing: Principles, Policies and Practices
Assignment: Quiz #7

Week 8: Piracy and Hacking

Readings: Paul Graham – Defining Property
Roberts – The Ethics of Piracy
Luc Small – Theft in a Wireless World
Assignments: a. Quiz #8

Week 9: Hacking

Readings: Loyd Blankenship – The Hacker's Manifesto
Ronald Pike – The 'Ethics' of Teaching Ethical Hacking
Philip Serracino-Inglott – Is it ok to be an Anonymous?
Assignments: a. Quiz #9 (The three quizzes for Unit 4 must be completed by Sunday March 14th, no later than 11:55 p.m. EST)
b. Second 400 – 600 word Unit Discussion Post due by **11:55 p.m. EDT Monday March 15th**

Unit 5 (Weeks 9, 10 and 11, March 15th – April 12th): Big Data, Gender, and Cyberbullying

Week 9: Big Data; the Potential and the Problems

Reading: Michael Kelley – Scientists Used Facebook for the Largest Ever Study of Language and Personality
Hannes Grassegger and Mikael Krogerus – The Data that Turned the World Upside Down
Dinah Payne and C.C. Trumbach – Data Mining: Proprietary Rights, People and Proposals
Assignment: Quiz #10

Week 10: Gender and the Internet

Reading: Helen Lewis – Dear The Internet, This is Why You Can't Have Anything Nice
Alison Adam and Jacqueline Ofori-Amanfo – Does Gender Matter in Computer Ethics?
Alison Adam – Cyberstalking and Internet Pornography: Gender and the Gaze
Assignment: Quiz #11 (The three quizzes for Unit 5 must be completed by Sunday, April 11th no later than 11:55 p.m. EDT)

Week 11: The Problem of Cyberbullying

Readings: Tom Harrison – Moral Theory and Research into Cyberbullying
David M. Douglas – Doxing: A Conceptual Analysis
Assignment: a. Quiz #11
b. Four Responses to FOUR SEPARATE GROUP-MATES' Unit 4 discussion posts must be completed no later than 11:55 p.m. EDT on **Monday, April 12th**
c. **TERM PAPER (worth 25% of your final grade) DUE** no later than **11:55 p.m. EDT** on **Monday, April 12th 2021.**

This Reading and Assignment Schedule is Subject to Change Given Sufficient Prior Notice

DUE DATES

The **11 weekly quizzes** (worth a combined total of 15% of your final grade) much each be completed by the end of the Unit in which they appear… so:

Unit 1 quizzes must be completed by Sunday January 24th by 11:55 p.m.
Unit 2 quizzes must be completed by Sunday February 7th by 11:55 p.m.
Unit 3 quizzes must be completed by Monday February 22nd by 11:55 p.m.
Unit 4 quizzes must be completed by Sunday March 14th by 11:55 p.m.
Unit 5 quizzes must be completed by Sunday April 11th by 11:55 p.m.

The **two 400 – 600 word Unit Discussion Posts** (worth a combined total of 30% of your final grade) are due at the end of Units 2 and 4. More specifically:

Unit 2 Discussion Post is due on Friday, February 12th by 11:55 p.m.
Unit 4 Discussion Post is due on Monday March 15th by 11:55 p.m.

For your **On-Line Participation Grade** (worth 10% of your final grade) you need to submit responses to four separate classmates' Unit Discussion Posts in each of Units 2 and 4. The responses for these two Units will need to be completed by:

Unit 2 Responses submitted by Tuesday February 23rd at 11:55 p.m.
Unit 4 Responses submitted by Monday April 12th at 11:55 p.m.

Your **Term Paper** (worth 25% of your final grade) is due on Monday April 12th by 11:55 p.m.

Your **Final Exam** (worth 20% of your final grade) will be posted under the OWL 'Tests and Quizzes' at some point during the April Exam Period, and will need to be completed by a time scheduled by the office of the registrar.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

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.

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this

policy can be found at
http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

SELF- REPORTED ABSENCE FORM

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less.
The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:
http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_322

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com http://www.turnitin.com.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Registrarial Services http://www.registrar.uwo.ca
Student Support Services https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login
Services provided by the USC http://westernusc.ca/services/

Student Development Centre http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.