Course Description:
This course investigates the ethical foundations of contemporary information technology. Through lectures, readings, group and independent projects, we will analyze and engage contemporary challenges ranging from privacy in big data, mobile computing and national security environments, diversity and the digital divide, the nature of innovation, property, access and collaboration in an increasingly networked world, to the role of professional codes of ethics. The course draws on cases from the fields of library and information science, health care, education, politics, and international development, but above all it draws on YOUR experiences as a use, consumer, builder, and contributor to the global world of technology. Through this core you’ll learn about key theories, methods, frameworks, laws, and institutions that govern, shape, and inform the contemporary world of technology. You'll also learn core writing and presentation skills central to success in virtually all organizational settings. Above all, you'll learn to critically and strategically engage with the worlds of information and technology around you, deciding what kind of information consumer, user, citizen, and professional YOU want to be.

Course Objectives:
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:
- Understand and critically assess key ethics-related principles, concepts, theories, and/or philosophies (historical and/or contemporary, Western and/or non-Western, derived from philosophy, law, etc.)
- Cultivate leadership potential by recognizing, analyzing, and considering strategies to address the complex nature of ethical issues in the information field.
- Apply ethical frameworks across multiple scales (e.g. self, group) and diverse contexts (e.g. geographic, cultural, institutional, governmental).
- Understand how professional codes of ethics relate to ethical principles, concepts, issues, and/or philosophies underpinning the preservation and communication of information via emerging technologies.
- Communicate ethical issues analysis clearly, concisely, and persuasively, using both written (e.g. case studies, briefs) and verbal (e.g. presentations) methods.

Sample Grading and Assignments:
- Policy Memos 3 x 15 45%
- Position Paper 10%
- Presentation 10%
- Final Exam 20%
- Class preparation, attendance and participation 15%
Sample Topics:

- **Foundations**
  - Includes: theoretical and/or philosophical underpinnings of information ethics
  - Indicative readings:

- **Access**
  - Includes: access to information and/or information technologies, equity and information access, digital divide, libraries
  - Indicative readings:

- **Diversity**
  - Includes: information technology and identity, power, social stratification
  - Indicative readings:

- **Gaming**
  - Includes: video games, virtual environments
  - Indicative readings:

- **Global & Networked Computing**
  - Includes: networked computing, global networked societies
  - Indicative readings:
Special Topics: Information Ethics
(sample syllabus)
Alissa Centivany
Fall, 2015


- Governance
  - Includes: regulation, network infrastructure, policy, governance, competition, network neutrality
  - Indicative readings:

- Human-Computer Interaction
  - Includes: robotics, intelligent systems
  - Indicative readings:

- Intellectual Property
  - Includes: intellectual property, copyright, trademark, trade secret, the commons, plagiarism, cultural property
  - Indicative readings:
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• Politics & IT
  ○ Includes: freedom of expression, history and politics of technology
  ○ Indicative readings:

• Privacy & surveillance
  ○ Includes: privacy, information privacy, surveillance, big data
  ○ Indicative readings:
    • Ambrose, M.L. (2012). You are what Google says you are: The right to be forgotten and information stewardship. International Review of Information Ethics. 17, 21-30.

• Professional Ethics
  ○ Includes: codes of ethics, codes of conduct, professional ethics and behavior, organizational values, conflicts of interest, whistleblowers
  ○ Indicative readings:
    • Codes of ethics for various information professions (e.g. ALA, SAA, ASIS&T, ACM, ALISE, etc.)

• Security
  ○ Includes: network security, computer security, cybercrime
  ○ Indicative readings:
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- Social Computing
  - Includes: social computing, social networks, community, identity, virtual worlds, virtual reality
  - Indicative readings:

- Work
  - Includes: work & wealth, divisions of labor in a networked society
  - Indicative readings:

Sample assignments:
- Policy memo: concise and tightly argued piece directed at a specific stakeholder to justify, defend, or convince them of a particular course of action.

- Position paper: explain and defend, in as clear and compelling language as possible, your own ethical/legal stance or interpretation of the issue in question. Students should come to class prepared to explain and defend their positions, in dialogue with other students who may have arrived at different or contradictory positions. Once during the term, students will be asked to formally present their paper to the class. Your paper should:
  - a) clearly indicate your ethical position, main argument, or core finding on the case
  - b) provide a clear and explicit rationale for the position you’re taking; and
  - c) acknowledge possible alternative positions and counter arguments. You should also come to class prepared to explain and defend your position, including in dialogue with other students who may have arrived at different or contradictory positions.
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- **Code of Ethics Analysis:** critically review and analyze at least 2 codes of ethics of professional information organizations. Compare and contrast them with codes of ethics issued by other professional organizations (e.g. medicine, law, etc.)

- **Peer review paper:** review and provide feedback on another student’s work

- **Practical engagement and journaling:** consider the ethical dimensions of current practice/employment and write journal entries reflecting on the issue and the student’s thinking, response, etc.

- **Critical engagement and journaling:** consider the ethical dimension of aspects of your daily existence (via news coverage, personal interactions, etc.) and write journal entries reflecting on the issue and the student’s thinking, response, etc.

- **Discussion lead/moderator:** lead the in-class discussion for one session.

- **Presentation:** position paper, case brief, literature review, biographical sketch of philosopher, etc.

- **Create/revise MediaWiki content:** private class wiki on IE topics

- **Final research paper:** explores a topic in detail

- **Final case brief:** select a specific contemporary IE dilemma and build a case study involving multiple stakeholder perspectives. Each case must involve:
  1. a) a case description
  2. b) three stakeholder roles with role descriptions
  3. c) a scenario description for each role
  4. d) sequential binary decisions for each role

- **Exam (mid-term/final):** short answer/essay, take-home/in-class.

- **Participation:** in-class/online (discussion forums, blogs, etc.); synchronous/asynchronous; full-class/small group