Information Ethics
INF 385T
28825

"A wealth of information creates a poverty of attention" – Herbert A. Simon

"Eliminating the distinction between information rich and poor countries is critical to eliminating economic and other inequalities" – Nelson Mandela

"Technology is neither good nor bad; nor is it neutral"
– Melvin Kranzberg

"Technological progress is like an axe in the hands of a pathological criminal" – Albert Einstein

"Our intuition about the future is linear. But the reality of information technology is exponential, and that makes a profound difference. If I take 30 steps linearly, I get to 30. If I take 30 steps exponentially, I get to a billion." – Ray Kurzweil

"It is impossible to work in information technology without also engaging in social engineering."
– Jaron Lanier

Fall 2014
UTA 1.504
Mondays 12:00 pm – 2:45 pm

Instructor:	Dr. Kenneth R. Fleischmann
	UTA 5.534, kfleisch@ischool.utexas.edu
Office Hours:	Mondays 11-11:30 am, Wednesdays 11-11:30 am, and by appointment (or via e-mail)
TA:	Rachel Simons
	rnsimons@ischool.utexas.edu

I. Rationale:
Recent advances in the production, use, and management of information present many new opportunities, and also raise ethical challenges that we must confront. Is it wrong to create technologies that replace human labor, leading to unemployment? Is it morally acceptable for law enforcement officers to pose as children online to catch child predators? Is it wrong to share music with friends using peer-to-peer networks? Is it morally acceptable to use body scanners that violate personal privacy to prevent acts of terrorism? Is it wrong to release software with known bugs that might have unintended consequences, potentially including loss of life? Is it morally acceptable to require citizens to vote online when there are security concerns and not every citizen has access to or the skills to use the Internet? This course covers past, current, and future issues in information ethics, and encourages you to develop your own standpoint from which to address the diverse range of ethical challenges facing us in the information age. During the course, you will learn about a wide range of ethical theories, including non-Western and feminist theories, and you will then apply these theories to confront ongoing critical information ethics issues.

II. Course Aims and Objectives:
Upon successfully completing this course, you will be able to:
•   Identify key problems in information ethics and propose solutions to these problems
•   Gain awareness of a wide range of ethical theories and learn to apply them to key problems in information ethics
•   Articulate your own values and understand and appreciate the values of others

III. Tentative Course Schedule: ***This syllabus is subject to change with advance notice.*

Date	Main Topic(s)	Work to do at home Readings – to be completed <u>before</u> class	Evaluation
9/8	Introduction		
9/15	The Information Age	Quinn, Chapter 1	
9/22	Ethics	Quinn, Chapter 2	
9/29	Additional Ethical Perspectives I	Indian ethics Islamic ethics Ubuntu culture and participatory management Rational egoism: A profile of its foundations and basic character	
10/6	Additional Ethical Perspectives II	Buddhist ethics Classical Chinese ethics Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective Gender identity and the ethics of care in globalized society	Paper Proposal
10/13	Professional Ethics	Quinn, Chapter 9 Codes of Ethics posted in Canvas	
10/20	Networking	Quinn, Chapter 3	
10/27	Intellectual Property	Quinn, Chapter 4	
11/3	Privacy	Quinn, Chapters 5 & 6	Draft Paper
11/10	Computer and Network Security	Quinn, Chapter 7	
11/17	Computer Reliability	Quinn, Chapter 8	
11/24	Work and Wealth	Quinn, Chapter 10	
12/1	Research Paper Presentations		Final Paper

IV. Course Requirements:

1. Attendance and Participation:

(a) Attendance Policy: Because the vast majority of the learning in this class will occur within the classroom, you are required to attend class regularly. Attendance will be taken during each class period. Absences will only be excused in situations following university policy (illness, religious observances, participation in University activities at the request of university authorities, and compelling absences beyond your control) with proper documentation and timely notification (prior to class for non-emergencies). Excessive tardiness may be considered as an unexcused absence except in situations following university policy.

(b) Class participation is a critical element of this course. The effectiveness of the course will be significantly impacted by the quality of your participation. Class participation is not merely attendance, but rather factors in your overall contributions to the collaborative learning environment, based on both the quantity and quality of your interactions in all aspects of the course. Discussion of class participation with the instructor is encouraged in order to ensure that you are making the most of the classroom experience and the accompanying opportunities for learning. You are expected to participate in all aspects of class discussion. You should come to class prepared to discuss the required readings, as well as your perspectives on these readings. You should strive for balance in your contributions, and your participation will not be based on who speaks the loudest or the longest, but on consistent participation of significant quantity and, most importantly, quality.

(c) Calculation of Attendance and Participation Grade: Your attendance and class participation grade will be calculated by multiplying the numerical assessment of your class participation by the percentage of classes that you attend (with exceptions made for documented, university-recognized absences as noted above). Please note that regular attendance and active participation in each class session are critical for receiving a good grade in this course. For example, by actively participating in each class, you will receive a full letter grade higher than if you were to skip half of the classes or to be half-awake for all of the classes.

(d) By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

2. Course Readings/Materials:

Quinn, M.J. (2014). Ethics for the information age (6th Ed.). Boston: Addison Wesley.
Additional readings are available on the course Canvas site or are free Web-based materials.
All course readings must be completed prior to the course meeting for that week.

3. Discussion Questions

What: Post a discussion question that addresses a theme that spans multiple readings; look for that which is worth discussing, such as gaps in reasoning or segments you find confusing. Perhaps an article raises new questions for you or you would like to apply ideas to a particular context. The key to writing successful questions is synthesis and synergy across readings. Before class, examine your colleagues' questions and be prepared to discuss them in class. Your reactions to and insights on the readings will seed our discussion.

When: Fridays at noon, Weeks 2-12

Why: Developing critical reading skills and intellectual curiosity are essential for success in the information field and in this course. The discussions initiated by the discussion questions contribute to all three course objectives.

How: Read and synthesize the assigned material thoroughly and develop your own information ethics perspective.

Grading criteria: Effective, challenging questions with the capacity to spark and enrich our discussion.

TIPS: Make sure to explicitly refer to and synthesize multiple readings to improve your grade.

4. Critical Examples

What: Identify an example of the reading(s) from everyday life. This critical example may pertain to one or more readings or to a theme/question the readings inspire.

When: Fridays at noon, Weeks 2-12

Why: The information interactions that we experience can help bring the course concepts to life. The discussions initiated by the critical examples contribute to all three course objectives.

How: Apply concepts from the assigned readings to everyday life, finding examples to which others can relate.

Grading criteria: Effective, challenging critical examples with the capacity to spark and enrich our discussion.

TIPS: A few targeted minutes of reading/watching news can help identify examples relevant to the information age.

5. Research Papers

What: The research paper involves focusing on a particular information ethics issue and applying at least three ethical theories to address that issue (including at least one from Quinn, at least one from the additional readings, and at least one from outside of the course readings). Your work on this paper will be incremental and will occur throughout the semester, with timely feedback at critical stages of the paper. Please make sure to fully address all assignment guidelines as well as all feedback provided on the paper proposal and draft paper.

When:

Each student will submit a paper proposal via Canvas by noon on Monday, October 6, 2014.

Each student will submit a draft paper via Canvas by noon on Monday, November 3, 2014.

Each student will submit a final paper via Canvas by noon on Monday, December 1, 2014.

Each student will submit presentation slides via Canvas by noon on Monday, December 1, 2014.

Why: Research papers give you the opportunity to explore a contemporary information ethics issue in depth, and to apply a wide range of ethical theories to understand that issue.

How: Please use APA format: http://www2.liu.edu/CWIS/CWP/library/workshop/citapa.htm

Project Proposal: You will submit a one-page proposal addressing:
i) What contemporary information ethics issue have you selected? Please provide a brief description.
ii) Why did you select this contemporary information ethics issue?
iii) What information ethics theories have you selected? Please provide a brief description of each.
iv) Why did you select these ethical theories?
v) What overall approach will you use to apply the ethical theories to the contemporary information ethics issue?

Draft Paper: Your draft paper should be 10-20 pages in length, and must thoroughly introduce and discuss a contemporary information ethics issue and apply at least three ethical theories (at least one from Quinn, at least one from the additional readings, and at least one from outside of the course readings) to the contemporary information ethics issue, incorporating feedback from the paper proposal.

Final Report: Your final paper should be 15-20 pages in length, and must thoroughly introduce and discuss a contemporary information ethics issue and apply at least three ethical theories (at least one from Quinn, at least one from the additional readings, and at least one from outside of the course readings) to the contemporary information ethics issue, incorporating feedback from the paper proposal and draft paper.

Final Presentation: Each presentation will be 20 minutes in length, plus 10 minutes for questions and discussion.

TIPS: Try to pick a contemporary information ethics issue of relevance to your career and/or life, which is not already covered in depth in the course readings (I will work with you to help you identify appropriate issues).

6. Late Assignment Policy

All assignments are due at the start of class. Late assignments will only be excused in situations following university policy (illness, religious observances, participation in University activities at the request of university authorities, and compelling absences beyond your control) with proper documentation and timely notification (prior to the deadline for non-emergencies). In all other cases, assignments received after the deadline will be penalized 10% per 24-hour period. If you turn in an assignment (without prior authorization or extreme emergency circumstances) even one minute late, you will have an automatic deduction of 10% prior to grading of the assignment; if you are 5 days late, even an otherwise perfect assignment will only receive half-credit; and any assignment turned in 10 days late will receive a 0.)

7. Use of *Canvas* in class
To supplement our in-class discussions we will use Canvas to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post questions and grades, and to submit assignments. You can find Canvas support at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 am to 6 pm, so please plan accordingly.

V. Grading Procedures

Grades will be based on:
(a) 20% Attendance and Participation
(b) 15% Discussion Questions
(c) 15% Critical Examples
(d) 10% Paper Proposal
(e) 15% Draft Paper
(f) 15% Final Paper
(g) 10% Paper Presentation

Grading Scale:

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

VI. Academic Integrity

University of Texas Honor Code
The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work, although collaboration is allowed and required in the project proposal, group report, group presentation, interactive activity, and synthesis.

The projects combine teamwork with individual accountability. For the project proposal, you will need to work with your team members. For the individual report, you will need to complete your own report without help from other students. For the final project and presentation, you will need to share your individual project results with your team members (after first submitting them to the instructor).

VIII. Other University Notices and Policies

Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence

- All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at **http://www.utexas.edu/its/help/utmail/1564** .

Documented Disability Statement

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). Faculty are not required to provide accommodations without an official accommodation letter from SSD.
- Please notify me as quickly as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible (e.g., instructional videos need captioning, course packets are not readable for proper alternative text conversion, etc.).
- Please notify me as early in the semester as possible if disability-related accommodations for field trips are required. Advanced notice will permit the arrangement of accommodations on the given day (e.g., transportation, site accessibility, etc.).
- Contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone) or reference SSD's website for more disability-related information: http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/for_cstudents.php

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal.

Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:
- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors.
Do not re-enter a building unless you are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.