



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
Department of Philosophy

PHIL 314 Lec 01
Information Technology Ethics
Spring 2022
MW 13:00-15:45, in ES 054

COURSE OUTLINE

Instructor Name: Nick Kerklaan

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Office: Social Sciences 1235

Office Hours: MW 11:00AM-12:00PM, in-person, or by appointment over Zoom

COURSE INFORMATION

This course centers on moral problems which arise from the heretofore-unprecedented ability afforded by modern technology to gather, transmit, and synthesize information. We will explore three main topics: (1) privacy and the use (or misuse) of personal data, e.g., by corporations and governments; (2) the tension between, on the one hand, the view that information ought to be freely available and distributed, and, on the other, the view that individuals or corporations have a right to exclusive control over at least certain kinds of information, e.g. intellectual property, (3) issues around whether (and, if so, to what extent and in which contexts) to limit or forbid the transmission and proliferation of certain kinds of information, e.g. hate speech or misinformation. We will explore these topics both through what philosophers who specialize in such issues have to say about them, and through examination of real-world examples.

PREREQUISITE(S)

There are no prerequisites for this course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES

The primary aims of this course are to introduce students to some key ethical issues around information technology, and to equip them with the tools to fruitfully engage in philosophical discussion of those issues. As a secondary, more general aim, students should come away from this course being able to identify, analyse, and evaluate philosophical arguments.

REQUIRED/RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS, READINGS AND MATERIALS

All readings will be articles or book chapters available through the University of Calgary library, or otherwise freely available online. A list of readings and links to them will be posted on D2L under Content.

COURSE ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Assessments in this course test students' ability to thoughtfully engage with ethical issues around information technology, and with the material we will cover in particular. Because these assessments take the form of written work, students' ability to communicate clearly and concisely in writing is also a factor in evaluation.

There is no midterm or final exam for this course.

A passing grade on any particular assessment is not required to pass the course as a whole.

Assessment	% of course grade	Due date
Critical response comments	25 (five at 5% each)	Variable (see below)
Article analysis #1	20	Friday, May 20 @ 11:59 PM
Article analysis #2	25	Friday, June 10 @ 11:59PM
Case study	30	Monday, June 20 @ 11:59 PM

Critical Response Comments

Starting with the week of May 9, there will be a discussion topic on D2L for one reading per class – these will be philosophical papers, as opposed to the kinds of less academic sources we will also look at for case studies, context, etc.

At least five times during the semester, students will write a 100-150 (or so) word comment on one of these D2L topics. These comments should engage thoughtfully with the article in question in some way – they can raise questions, criticisms, attempt to illustrate some aspect of the paper with personal examples, walk us through your thought process with regard to some aspect of the paper’s argument, and so on (you should also feel free to respectfully respond to your classmates’ responses, but this is not considered part of the assignment). These critical responses will be graded out of five points; what I’m looking for are comments which are focused on and relevant to the article in question, and demonstrate thoughtful engagement, even if the substance of the comment may turn out to not quite be correct, or indeed even if the comment expresses some confusion about the article (but should explain the source of that confusion, rather than simply leaving things at “I’m confused.”). Each comment is worth 5% of the total course grade, for a total of 25%.

Comments will not be graded beyond the beginning of the class in which the article is scheduled to be discussed – students should of course feel free to leave comments past this point, but for the purposes of assessment, the beginning of each class constitutes the deadline for comments on that article. Students should also feel free to post more than five comments. For students who post six total comments, all six will be graded, with the lowest grade being dropped for purposes of calculating final grades. Comments beyond the sixth will not be graded.

Article Analyses

Students will write two short analyses on articles which I will assign in each case (every student will write on the same article). These articles will fall under topic areas which we have covered up to that point in the course, but which are not part of the assigned reading and which we will consequently not have discussed in class. In the first analysis, due May 20, you will be asked to explain the article’s thesis or conclusion, and one of the arguments which it uses to support that conclusion. For the second analysis, due June 10, you will do the same, but here you will also raise an objection to the argument that you discuss (hence the second analysis being worth 5% more than the first). More detailed instructions for the analyses will be given further into the semester. Students will submit both analyses, by 11:59 PM on their respective due dates, through D2L.

Students will receive feedback on the first analysis well in advance of the second analysis being due, in order to incorporate and learn from it for the second analysis.

Case Study

Students will come up with, research, and evaluate a real-world example of the sorts of ethical issues with information technology that we discuss in class. It can be a case that comes up in the readings or in class discussion, or something else that students find on their own. Either way, I encourage students to discuss their case with me earlier in the semester, before they begin researching and writing. More detailed instructions on the case study will be given near the beginning of the semester. Students will submit their case studies by 11:59 on June 20 through D2L.

Late Policy and Extensions

With regard to the critical response comments, because the idea is to get students engaging with and thinking about the readings before we have gone over them in detail in class, and because there is a great deal of flexibility in when and on which article students will write, no late comments will be graded and no extensions will be granted.

With the other three assignments (the two analyses and the case study) late submissions will be assessed at -10% of the total grade for each day, starting from immediately after the initial deadline. All students may make use of **one** no-questions-asked “stress-buster” 24-hour extension for **one** of these three assignments. To do so, students need simply email me to let me know they are using it **before** the original submission deadline passes. *Please do not just inform me in-person. Email helps me keep everything straight and track who has taken the extension for which assignment.*

Beyond this, extensions will only be granted on a case-by-case basis for extenuating circumstances.

Grading Scale

Letter grades will be assigned based on percentage scores as follows.

0-45	F	71-75	B-
46-50	D	76-80	B
51-55	D+	81-85	B+
56-60	C-	86-90	A-
61-65	C	91-95	A
66-70	C+	96-100	A+

IMPORTANT DEPARTMENTAL, FACULTY AND UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

Academic Accommodations

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations according to the University policies and procedures. The student accommodation policy can be found at ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Student-Accommodation-Policy.pdf.

Students needing an Accommodation because of a disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Accommodation-for-Students-with-Disabilities-Procedure.pdf. Students needing an Accommodation in relation to their coursework or to fulfil requirements for a graduate degree, based on a protected ground other than disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to their instructor.

Absence or Missed Course Assessments

Students who are absent from class assessments (tests, participation activities, or other assignments) should inform their instructors as soon as possible. If the reason provided for the absence is acceptable, instructors may decide that any arrangements made can take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.

Student Support and Resources

Full details and information about the following resources can be found at ucalgary.ca/current-students/student-services

- Wellness and Mental Health Resources
- Student Success Centre
- Student Ombuds Office

- Student Union (SU) Information
- Graduate Students' Association (GSA) Information
- Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points
- Safewalk

Academic Advising

If you are a student in the Faculty of Arts, you can speak to an academic advisor in the Arts Students' Centre about course planning, course selection, registration, program progression and more. Visit the Faculty of Arts website at

<https://arts.ucalgary.ca/current-students/undergraduate/academic-advising>

for contact details and information regarding common academic concerns.

For questions specific to the philosophy program, please visit arts.ucalgary.ca/philosophy. Further academic guidance is available by contacting Jeremy Fantl (Undergraduate Program Director jfantl@ucalgary.ca) or David Dick (Honours Advisor dgdick@ucalgary.ca).

Writing Assessment and Support

The assessment of all written assignments—and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses—is based in part on writing skills. This includes correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.), as well as general clarity and organization. Research papers must include a thorough and accurate citation of sources. Students are also encouraged to use Writing Support Services for assistance. For more information, and other services offered by the Student Success Centre, please visit ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success.

Required Technology

In order to successfully engage in their learning experiences at the University of Calgary, students taking online, remote, and blended courses are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security, and malware updates;
- A current and updated web browser;
- Webcam (built-in or external);
- Microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone;
- Current antivirus and/or firewall software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection.

Most current laptops will have a built-in webcam, speaker and microphone.

Responsible Use of D2L

Important information and communication about this course will be posted on D2L (Desire2Learn), UCalgary's online learning management system. Visit <https://ucalgary.service-now.com/it> for how-to information and technical assistance.

All users of D2L are bound by the guidelines on the responsible use of D2L posted here:

<https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/commitment-to-the-responsible-use-of-d2l/>. The instructor may establish additional specific course policies for D2L, Zoom, and any other technologies used to support remote learning. Instructional materials, including audio or video recordings of lectures, may not be posted outside of the course D2L site. Students violating this policy are subject to discipline under the [University of Calgary's Non-Academic Misconduct policy](#).

Media Recording

Please refer to the following statement on media recording of students: https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Media-Recording-in-Learning-Environments-OSP_FINAL.pdf

Academic Misconduct/Honesty

Cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination is as an extremely serious academic offense, the penalty for which will be an F on the assignment or an F in the course, and possibly a disciplinary sanction such as probation, suspension, or expulsion. For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html.

Intellectual honesty requires that your work include adequate referencing to sources. Plagiarism occurs when you do not acknowledge or correctly reference your sources. If you have questions about referencing, please consult your instructor.

University Policies

The Instructor Intellectual Property Policy is available at ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Intellectual-Property-Policy.pdf

The University of Calgary is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act, as outlined at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/access-information-privacy>. The instructor (or TA) must return graded assignments *directly* to the student UNLESS written permission to do otherwise has been provided.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Acceptable-Use-of-Material-Protected-by-Copyright-Policy.pdf>) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>).