CS 391 | Social and Ethical Issues in Computer Science

Contact the instructor

1. Use this online form: Email Ms. Van Londen. Follow Email Etiquette.
2. Visit my office:
   1105 Kelly Engineering Center (KEC)

Syllabus

Official Description

In-depth exploration of the social, psychological, political, and ethical issues surrounding the computer industry and the evolving information society. (Bacc Core Course, 3 credits).

Prerequisites CS 101 or computer literacy. For Fall 2010, this course is offered on campus and online. This syllabus is for the online version.

Introduction

For many in the advanced field of computer science, the technological progress seems painfully slow. And yet, there are many who argue that the forces of technology are already too strong and changing the face of the earth too fast for society to cope. Clearly, there seems to be a need to pause and confront the social, legal, and ethical issues presented to us by the problems and advances in computer science if we are to be socially responsible producers and consumers of this technology.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Evaluate benefits and risks of current information technologies.
2. Infer benefits and risks of proposed information technologies.
3. Analyze a moral problem related to information technology from the point of view of consequentialist and non-consequentialist ethical theories.
4. Explain the roles and responsibilities of a computer professional.
Required Readings

- Ethics for the Information Age, 4th Edition

Summary Slides

PowerPoint slides converted to .PDF for each chapter:

- Chapter 1
- Chapter 2
- Chapter 3
- Chapter 4
- Chapter 5
- Chapter 6
- Chapter 7
- Chapter 8
- Chapter 9

Rubrics

- Ethical Theories (.htm)
- Debate (.htm)
- ImpactCS (.htm)
- Security Checklist

Supplemental Readings

These and other popular and professional publications can provide interesting support for your weekly discussions and research paper. I recommend you subscribe to them with RSS so you can see recent headlines in your browser's bookmark/favorites toolbar.

- Wired Magazine
  - Daily technology news website which often mirrors its print version.
- Slashdot
  - News aggregator for all things tech.
- Singularity Hub
  - News network covering the latest in robots, genetics, longevity, artificial intelligence, aging, stem cells, and more. The singularity is the point in mankind’s future when we will transcend current intellectual and biological limitations and initiate an intelligence and information explosion beyond imagining.
- Popular Science
A leading source of science and technology news since its inception way back in 1872. PopSci.com first came online in 1999

- **h+ Magazine**
  - Covers technological, scientific, and cultural trends that are changing — and will change — human beings in fundamental ways.
- **OSU’s Valley Library list of Journals related to technology and ethics**

## Course Logistics

By following these guidelines, you'll succeed in this course:

- **Check Bb frequently for the week's requirements and announcements.**
- **Put in the necessary time.**
- **Discussions and Quizzes are due Mondays by noon.**
- **View my comments on your Persuasive Research Paper submittals within the assignment area.**
- **Ask questions about course logistics and scores via email.**
  - Remember that I am here to help you.
  - Follow [email etiquette](#).
  - Always be polite. If you are rude, I will ignore you.

## Schedule

Each week, read the appropriate chapter, take the online quiz, participate in discussions/activities, and prepare your research paper:

1. **Chapter 1**
   - Take the first quiz.
   - Research paper topics.
   - Participate in discussions/activities.
2. **Chapter 2**
   - Take the second quiz.
   - Research paper topics.
   - Participate in discussions/activities.
3. **Chapter 3**
   - Take the third quiz.
   - Research paper topics.
   - Participate in discussions/activities.
4. **Chapter 4**
   - Take the forth quiz.
   - Declare the topic of your paper.
   - Participate in discussions/activities.
5. **Chapter 5**
   - Take the fifth quiz.
   - Begin outlining your paper.
6. Chapter 6
   - Take the sixth quiz.
   - Submit an outline of your paper.
   - Participate in discussions/activities.

7. Chapter 7
   - Take the seventh quiz.
   - Continue writing a draft of the paper.
   - Participate in discussions/activities.

8. Chapter 8
   - Take the eighth quiz.
   - Present your paper in the Peer Review forum.

9. Chapter 9
   - Take the ninth quiz.
   - Revise your paper draft.
   - Participate in discussions/activities.

10. Dead week
    - Revise your paper draft.
    - Participate in discussions/activities.

11. Finals Week
    - Submit your final paper

**Methods of Evaluation and Grading**

OSU’s definitions and guidelines for quarter credits implies that 90 hours of your time will be needed to read and understand the lecture notes, participate in interactive activities, and complete work for this 3-credit course (that's 9 hours per week).

A total of 185 points are possible to accumulate on interactions, quizzes, and a research paper. All assignments turned in past the deadline may be docked 1 point per day late. Scores result in the following grades:

- A = 145 to 165 points
- B = 125 to 144 points
- C = 105 to 124 points
- D = 85 to 104 points
- F = 0 to 84 points

**Incompletes**: I give Incomplete (I) grades only in emergency cases (usually only for a death in the family, major illness or injury, or birth of your child), and if the student has turned in 80% of the points possible (in other words, usually everything but the final paper). If you are having any difficulty that might prevent you completing the coursework, please don’t wait until the end of the term; let me know right away.

**To be successful in this class, you need to complete the following:**
1. **Discussions/Activities** (4 points per week; total of 40 points.)
   - Each week’s goal(s) include learning at a high level on Bloom's Taxonomy, i.e., rather than just reading slides which summarize the textbook (low-level knowledge acquisition), students will interact with each other to evaluate, analyze, and construct discussions/presentations (high-level skills acquisition) based on scenarios in the textbook and current events.
   - Activities include presentations, interviews, and textbook exercises.
   - Be prepared to actively participate in discussions.
   - You will not be able to make up this work if you are absent or miss the deadline.
   - Discussions are due by 12:00pm (noon) on Mondays.

2. **Quizzes** (45 points)
   - Read one chapter per week and take a quiz by 12:00pm (noon) on Mondays.

3. **Persuasive Writing and Presentation** (80 points)
   - Research, writing, and presentation of a persuasive paper analyzing a moral issue related to information technology in your career field.
     - Topics are declared sometime week 3. (2 points)
     - Outlines are due sometime week 6. (3 points)
     - Peer Reviews are done during week 8. (NOTE: The Peer Review points are accounted for in the Discussions/Activities section above.)
     - Final Paper is due Week 11 (Finals week). This project must be turned in to receive a grade for the course. (75 points)
   - Instructions for submittal are noted in each assignment item in Bb.

**Checking scores and assignment comments**

In the Bb Grade Center, you can click on a score to see instructor notes about an assignment.

- Discussion Board activities will have no notes.
- Persuasive Research Paper comments are visible by clicking on the score in the Grade Center or by clicking on the assignment name in the weekly folders.

Use the key below to understand what is happening in your Gradebook in the Check Scores area:

![Gradebook key]

**Philosophy of Teaching**

I prefer to mentor, demonstrate, and share methods rather than mandate the memorizing of information. This approach, along with ample opportunity to explore and practice methods...
allows creative students to put themselves in a professional mode right away, if they're up for it, and use the freedom to study in a direction that interests them.

Technical challenges are opportunities to find solutions, through exploration, systematic troubleshooting, and group interaction. In group interactions, students have the opportunity to teach others; a highly successful way to learn. I like to engage students by bringing them to the podium to share their own methods. When teaching/learning online, this work happens in the discussion forums and blogs; again modeling the way professionals often solve problems.

Course content is presented in a variety of formats to aid a diverse student population. Links to multimedia-rich online tutorials aids the auditory and visual learners. Well-organized and well-designed course materials aid the visual learners and the learners who need only to read to understand new concepts and procedures.

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Communications

This course will be delivered via Blackboard, which allows students to read project objectives, introductions, scoring criteria, instructions, tutorials, and submit work to be scored. It also provides a forum for the Discussion of Readings. In addition, Bb allows you to email me for help. Please read the Course Logistics section below for more detail.

Read the Email Etiquette page to learn best practices for communicating with the instructor.

Technical Assistance:
If you experience computer difficulties, need help downloading a browser or plug-in, assistance logging into the course, or if you experience any errors or problems while in your online course, contact the OSU Help Desk for assistance. You can call (541) 737-3474, email osuhelpdesk@oregonstate.edu or visit the OSU Computer HelpDesk online.

Important Information

Religious Holidays Oregon State University strives to respect all religious practices. If you have religious holidays that are in conflict with any of the requirements of this class, please see me immediately so that we can make alternative arrangements

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Disability Access Services (DAS) with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 541-737-4098.
**Expectations for Student Conduct**

Student conduct is governed by the university’s policies, as explained in the [Office of Student Conduct](#).

- **Acceptable Use of University Computing Resources**
- **FileSharing@OSU**
- **Student Conduct and Community Standards**
- **Technology Support Services**
- **Disabilities Services**
- **University Information**
- **Computer Help Documents**
- **Computer HelpDesk**

**Course Evaluation**

We encourage you to engage in the course evaluation process each term – online, of course. The evaluation form will be available toward the end of each term, and you will be sent instructions by Ecampus. You will login to “Student Online Services” to respond to the online questionnaire. The results on the form are anonymous and are not tabulated until after grades are posted.