INF2199H
Special Topics: Information Ethics
FALL 2016
Thursday, 9:00-12:00 BL 313
Sept. 15- Dec. 8

Instructor: Roberta Buiani
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Description and Objectives
This course investigates the ethical foundations of contemporary information technology. Throughout this course, we will engage with a variety of scholarly, fictional and technical texts interpreting and confronting the significance of information ethics from different disciplinary and socio-political angles. This includes issues of access, privacy, mobility, surveillance; practices such as mapping, gaming, the management of big data in social media and the health industry. We will study how information ethics affect the construction of identity, the management and regulation of intellectual property and copyright, the interpretation of piracy and open access. Ultimately, navigating this broad body of work is necessary to understand how information ethics shape and inform both the world directly concerned with Information Technology and the contemporary everyday world.

Intended Learning Outcomes
During this course you are expected to

1) Learn to critically and strategically engage with the ambiguities and the controversies that characterize the worlds of information and technology around you, whether you are a consumer, a producer or an aspiring policy maker.

2) You are expected to achieve a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of said controversies.

3) You will be expected to learn how to problematize, critically articulate and communicate informed analyses on given topics and case studies.

Relationship between Course Learning Outcomes and Program Learning Outcomes
Generally speaking, this course rigorously follows all the learning outcomes recommended by the Master of Information Program http://current.ischool.utoronto.ca/studies/learning-outcomes . More specifically, it has been designed to meet the following goals: 1. To “become conversant with fundamental concepts, theories, practices, and the diverse horizons of information disciplines, and can respond to changing information practices and needs of society”; 3. To “develop the ability to contribute through research and publication, to the continuous expansion and critical assessment of the body of knowledge underlying the information and archives sciences”; and 4. To “develop an understanding of the development of theory concerning information, where it is found, and how it is used”

Readings
Available on Blackboard

Assignments
Discussion questions and class participation 20%
Because of their diverse articulation, Information Ethics tend to be controversial by definition and are widely debated. I hope to find a high level of engagement from this class. I trust that discussion will occur in a respectful, thoughtful and mature manner. We will often engage in
moderated discussions, so, please, try not to miss classes and come prepared to ask questions in order to get the discussion going. Discussions will be prompted by your questions and examples. Questions will be used in class for group discussions. We will use these questions to connect and hold together the readings question their tenets etc.
Throughout the term, you are required to find at least 4 examples and 3 sets of questions illustrating, or related to, the readings. Instructions to follow on Week 2.

Reading Responses 15% x 2 = 30%
Pick two readings (in different weeks), write a response that briefly summarizes the main arguments of each in a written commentary (MAX 500 words each), and prepare a succinct (5 minutes, Pecha-Kucha style, we will time you) presentation that encourages discussion

NOTE ON THESE 2 PORTIONS OF ASSIGNMENTS: Final date to drop this course without academic penalty is Oct 31. Please, submit at least a portion of the above assignments by Oct 27 in order to get feedback (I won’t accept assignments on Oct 31 for grading)

Group Report 20% Due on Dec. 8
A written ethical review report on a specific case study or a policy decision making. Report has to be well researched and accompanied by appropriate bibliography.
Instructions to be distributed on Week 3 and Groups will form on Week 4

Research Paper or Project 30% due on or before Dec. 15
A 3000 words essay or a creative/professional project (upon consultation) pertaining to one particular ethical topic studied during the course.
Instructions on Week 4

Late Assignments
Please, respect the deadlines. Students will not receive credit for late assignments. In case of emergency, or any other circumstance that may prevent you from reaching the deadlines, please, do contact me as soon as possible and we will try to find reasonable accommodation.

Grading

Writing Support: Please make use of the writing support provided to graduate students by the SGS Office of English Language and Writing Support (http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/English-Language-and-Writing-Support.aspx). The services are designed to target the needs of both native and non-native speakers and all programs are free. Please consult the current workshop schedule (http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/Current-Years-Courses.aspx) for more information.

Academic integrity: Please consult the University’s site on Academic Integrity (http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/). The iSchool has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism as defined in section B.I.1.(d) of the University’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppjun011995.pdf). You should acquaint yourself with the Code. Please review the material in
Cite it Right and if you require further clarification, consult the site How Not to Plagiarize (http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize).

Cite it Right covers relevant parts of the U of T Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (1995).

It is expected that all iSchool students take the Cite it Right workshop and the online quiz. Completion of the online Cite it Right quiz should be made prior to the second week of classes. To review and complete the workshop, visit the orientation portion of the iSkills site: uoft.me/iskills

Accessibility Services
If you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodation, please feel free to approach me and/or the Accessibility Services Office as soon as possible (http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Sept. 15 Week 1 Introduction

Sept. 22 Week 2 What is Information Ethics? Learning from Science Fiction.


Sept. 29 Week 3 Access


Oct. 6 Week 4 - Mobility


Oct. 13 Week 5 Space and mapping


Oct. 20 Week 6 Social Media

Dean, J. (2003). Why the Net is not a Public Sphere. *Constellations, 10*(1), 95–112.


Oct. 27 Week 7 Identity and Citizenship


Nov. 3 Week 8 Privacy and Surveillance


Nov. 10 - NO CLASS

Nov. 17 Week 9 Intellectual Property, Biosecurity


Nov. 24 Week 10 Big Data


Dec. 1 Week 11 Gaming


Nov. 8 Week 12 Artificial Intelligence