Information Ethics

Instructor: Emily Knox, Ph.D., MSLIS
Email: knox@illinois.edu

2 or 4 credit hours

Course Description
This class explores issues in information ethics from both a philosophical and practical point of view. The aim of the class is to provide students with the skills and resources needed to address a variety of issues that information professionals face in their institutions. Topics covered include moral philosophy, diverse ethical approaches, intellectual property, privacy, free speech, security, the digital divide, and social networking.

Learning Objectives
At the end of the course students will be able to:
• Explain the difference among various theories of moral philosophy
• Demonstrate familiarity with several areas of information ethics
• Create and respond to an information ethics dilemma and justify their choices
• Apply practical ethical reasoning to moral issues in their professional libraries

Course Materials
Required:

Other required readings are available online or on reserve.

Recommended Texts:

**Assignments and Evaluation**
All assignments are required for all students. Completing all assignments is not a guarantee of a passing grade. All work must be completed in order to pass this class. Late or incomplete assignments will not be given full credit unless the student has contacted the instructor prior to the due date of the assignment (or in the case of emergencies, as soon as practicable).

There are different assignments depending on how many credits you are earning for the class. The weighting of each assignment in the final grade is noted below.

You are allowed one excused absence. If you know that you will miss class, you must email me before class in order to receive an excused absence.

Students missing more than one class—or who regularly arrive late or leave early—will not pass the class unless alternate arrangements are made.

**Assignments, Exercises & Grade Distribution**

*For 2 Credits*
- 2 response papers (25 points each) **or** Book Review (50 points) (50%)
- One case study and response (40%)
- Information Ethics in the News Post (10%)

*For 4 credits*
- Major paper (100 points) **or** Book Review (100 points) (50%)
- One case study and response (40%)
- Information Ethics in the News Post (10%)

**Grading Scale**
- 94-100 = A
- 90-93 = A-
- 87-89 = B+
- 83-86 = B
- 80-82 = B-
- 77-79 = C+
- 73-76 = C
- 70-72 = C-
- 67-69 = D+
- 63-66 = D
- 60-62 = D-
59 and below = F
**Reading and Assignment Schedule**

**Note: Schedule and readings subject to change**

**Week 1 – Introduction to Moral Philosophy and Information Ethics**
- Codes of Ethics and Foundational Documents (All available freely online)
  - ALA Code of Ethics
  - ASIS&T Professional Guidelines
  - Article 18 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
  - FAIFE Code of Ethics
  - Data Science Code of Professional Conduct
  - SAA Code of Ethics for Archivists
- Rachels – Chapter 1 -6
- Kidder – Chapter 1 – 4

**Background:**
- Quinn – Chapter 2
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RrXOtUAvh4

**Week 2 – Ethical Approaches**
- Rachels - Chapters 7-13
- Kidder – Chapter 5-8
- Regan – Introduction to moral reasoning (IE)
- Cappurro – Intercultural Information Ethics (In *Case Studies*)

**Week 3 – LIS and Ethics**
- Review codes of ethics
- Preer – Chapter 1 of Library Ethics
• Dilevko, J. (2015). Ethical issues in data mining and data analytics. *Journal of Information Ethics, 24*(1), 5-8

**Background**


**Recommended:**


**Week 4 – Information Access and Free Speech**

Pick one case from Buchanan & Henderson Chapter 2

• Preer – Chapter 4
doi:10.5210/fm.v14i7.2417

**Recommended**

doi:10.5210/fm.v20i1.5612

**Week 5 – Privacy, Surveillance & Security**

Pick one case from Buchanan & Henderson Chapter 3
• Elizabeth Stoycheff (2016, May 3). "Mass Surveillance Chills Online Speech Even When People Have 'Nothing to Hide','" Slate http://www.slate.com/blogs/future_tense/2016/05/03/mass_surveillance_chills_online_speech_even_when_people_have_nothing_to.html

**Week 6 – Intellectual Property and Open Access**

Pick one case from Buchanan & Henderson Chapter 4

  http://www.thepublicdomain.org/download/
  http://www.jus.uio.no/sisu/free_culture.lawrence_lessig/sisu_manifest.html
• About Creative Commons. http://creativecommons.org/about
• Suber, Peter. A Primer on Open Access.
  http://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/writing/atg.htm
• Digitizing books obscuring women’s work
  http://adanewmedia.org/2016/05/issue9-hoffmann-and-bloom

Week 7 – Data Ethics
Pick one case from Buchanan & Henderson Chapter 5
• Diesner J, Chin C (2016) Gratis, libre, or something else? Regulations and misassumptions related to working with publicly available text data, ETHI-CA² Workshop (ETHics In Corpus Collection, Annotation & Application), *10th Language Resources and Evaluation Conference (LREC)*, Portoroz, Slovenia.

Week 8 – Wrap-Up
• Codes of Ethics and Foundational Documents (All available freely online)
  o ALA Code of Ethics
  o ASIS&T Professional Guidelines
  o Article 18 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
  o FAIFE Code of Ethics
  o Data Science Code of Professional Conduct
  o SAA Code of Ethics for Archivists

Assignment Example

Case Study (40% for 2 credits/40% for 4 credits)

Description
Part I:
Develop a scenario that describes an ethical dilemma. The case should include:
1. Context or background for the protagonists
2. An introduction to the situation
3. Definition of the conflict
4. Questions or commentary

The scenario should be approximately 3-4 pages long (1000 words max.) not including the bibliography.

Part II:
Respond to one of your fellow students. The response should be approximately 2 pages long (750 words max.) Include references to ethical theories and relevant literature. We will discuss these on the last day of the course.

Guidelines for Posts
- If you reference a required reading for the course, you do not need to provide a citation - simply reference the author (e.g., “Radford argues...”). If you are using a quote or referencing a specific passage in a long work, provide a page number in case others want to re-read the salient passage. Of course, if you reference a reading or website from outside our course materials, you should provide a complete citation.

Grading Rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Points Earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realism of context/background</td>
<td>Grounded description of the institution, protagonists</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of conflict</td>
<td>Sophisticated problem/issue presented</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Thoughtful and provocative</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response including references to relevant literature, application of moral reasoning</td>
<td>Insightful analysis that addresses all of the issues presented, supported by thoughtful application of ethical theories and support from readings in the course</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar, style, syntax, format, clarity</td>
<td>Flow of writing, clarity, few grammar, spelling, syntax errors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
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This assignment is based on Barbara Wildemuth’s Major Paper assignment for INLS584 Information Ethics, School of Information and Library Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 
http://ils.unc.edu/courses/2013_fall/inls584_001/584-assign.htm#MajorPaper

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