

# School of Information Sciences

## The iSchool at Illinois

### **Information Ethics**

Instructor: Emily Knox, Ph.D., MSLIS

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### **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:*

- Rachels, James & Rachels, Stuart. (2015). *Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Kidder, Rushworth M. (1995). *How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving the dilemmas of ethical living*. New York, NY: Harper.
- Buchanan, E.A. & Henderson, K.A. (2008). *Case Studies in Library and Information Science Ethics*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland. (\$15 on Kindle)

Other required readings are available online or on reserve.

*Recommended Texts:*

- Moore, Adam D. (2005). *Information Ethics*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press. (IE)
- Preer, Jean. (2008). *Library Ethics*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited. (LE)

### **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
- Mathiesen, K. (2004). What is information ethics? *Computers and Society*, 34(1).
- Spinello, R.A. (2012). Information and computer ethics: A brief history. *Journal of Information Ethics*, 21(2), 17-32.
- Visvanathan, S. (2009). “The search for cognitive justice.” In *Knowledge in Question: A Symposium on Interrogating Knowledge and Questioning Science*, Seminar, 597.

*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)
- Held, V. (1990). Feminist transformations of moral theory. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 50, 321-344.
- Cappurro – Intercultural Information Ethics (In *Case Studies*)
- Barreto, J-M. (2014). “Epistemologies of the South and Human Rights: Santos and the Quest for Global and Cognitive Justice.” *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 21(2), 395–422.

**Week 3 – LIS and Ethics**

- Review codes of ethics
- Rubin, R. & Froehlich, T.J. (2010). Ethical aspects of library and information science. In Bates, M.J. & Niles Maack, M. (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*, 3rd ed. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press. DOI: 10.1081/E-ELIS3-120044430
- Floridi, L. (2010) Information ethics. *Cambridge Handbook of Information and Computer Ethics*. Cambridge University Press. 77-97
- 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
- Smith Rumsey, Abby. (2016, May 4). The risk of digital oblivion. *The Chronicle Review*. <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Risk-of-Digital-Oblivion/236342>

#### Background

- Ess, C. (2009.) Floridi's Philosophy of Information and Information Ethics: Current Perspectives, Future Directions. *The Information Society*, 25, 159-168.

#### Recommended:

- Bunge, C.A. (1999). Ethics and the reference librarian. *The Reference Librarian*, 31(66), 25-43.
- Cappurro, R. (2006). Towards and ontological foundation of information ethics. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 8(4), 175-186.

### Week 4 – Information Access and Free Speech

Pick one case from Buchanan & Henderson Chapter 2

- Preer – Chapter 4
- Hauptman, R. (1976). Professionalism or culpability: An experiment in ethics. *Wilson Library Bulletin*, 50, 626-627.
  - Hauptman, R. (1996). Professional responsibility reconsidered. *RQ*, 35(3), 327.
- Bossaller, J. S., & Budd, J. M. (2015). What We Talk about When We Talk about Free Speech. *The Library Quarterly*, 85(1).
- Epps, G. (2015, Nov. 2). Who pays the price for the first amendment? *The Atlantic*. <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/first-amendment-troubling-shadow/413611/>
- Hoppers, Catherine A. Odora. "Knowledge, Democracy, and Justice in a Globalizing World." *Nordic Studies in Education* 27, no. 1 (2007): 38–53.
- Jordan, T. (2009). Hacking and power: Social and technological determinism in the digital age. *First Monday*, 14(7). doi:10.5210/fm.v14i7.2417
- Gleick, J. (2014). Today's dead end kids. Review of *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous*. *New York Review of Books*, 61(20), 36-40.

#### Recommended

- Watters, P. (2015). Censorship is futile-possible but difficult: A study in algorithmic ethnography. *First Monday*, 20(1). doi:10.5210/fm.v20i1.5612
- Danielson, E.S. (1989). The ethics of access. *The American Archivist*, 52, 52-62.

### Week 5 – Privacy, Surveillance & Security

Pick one case from Buchanan & Henderson Chapter 3

- Solove, Daniel J., 'I've Got Nothing to Hide' and Other Misunderstandings of Privacy. *San Diego Law Review*, Vol. 44, p. 745, 2007; *GWU Law School Public Law Research Paper* No. 289. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=998565>
- 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](http://www.slate.com/blogs/future_tense/2016/05/03/mass_surveillance_chills_online_speech_even_when_people_have_nothing_to.html)
- Glenn Greenwald and Ewen MacAskill (2013, June 7). "NSA Prism Program Taps in to User Data of Apple, Google and Others," *The Guardian* <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/06/us-tech-giants-nsa-data>.
- Nissenbaum, H. (2011). [A Contextual Approach to Privacy Online](#). *Daedalus* 140(4), 32-48.
- van den Hoven, J. (2008). Information technology, privacy, and protection of personal data. *Information and Moral Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge.
- Bob Braun on Pearson <http://www.bobbraunsledger.com/breaking-pearson-nj-spying-on-social-media-of-students-taking-parcc-tests/>
- Monahan, T. (2011). Surveillance as cultural practice. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 52(4) 495-508.
- Zurawski, N. (2011). Local practice and global data: Loyalty cards, social practices, and consumer surveillance. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 52(4) 509-527.

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

Pick one case from Buchanan & Henderson Chapter 4

- Moore, A. Personality-Based, Rule-Utilitarian, and Lockean Justifications of Intellectual Property. *Handbook of Information and Computer Ethics*. New York, NY: Wiley 140-165
- Boyle, James. (2008). *The Public Domain: Enclosing the Commons of the Mind*. Yale University Press. Chapter 1.  
<http://www.thepublicdomain.org/download/>
  - Center for the Study of the Public Domain. (2017, January 1). What could have entered the public domain on January 1, 2017? <http://web.law.duke.edu/cspd/publicdomainday/2017/pre-1976>
- Lessig, L. (2004). *Free Culture*. Preface, Intro, and Chapter 1. [http://www.jus.uio.no/sisu/free\\_culture.lawrence\\_lessig/sisu\\_manifest.html](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>
- Dryden, A. (2013, Nov. 13). The ethics of unpaid labor and the OSS community. <http://www.ashedryden.com/blog/the-ethics-of-unpaid-labor-and-the-oss-community>

- Digitizing books obscuring women's work  
<http://adanewmedia.org/2016/05/issue9-hoffmann-and-bloom>
- Geffert, B. (2016, Sept. 4). Piracy fills a publishing need. *The Chronicle Review*. <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Piracy-Fills-a-Publishing-Need/237651>

### **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-CA<sup>2</sup> Workshop (ETHics In Corpus Collection, Annotation & Application), *10th Language Resources and Evaluation Conference (LREC)*, Portoroz, Slovenia.
- Zimmer, M. (2016, May 14). OkCupid study reveals the perils of big-data science. *Wired*. <https://www.wired.com/2016/05/okcupid-study-reveals-perils-big-data-science/>
- Mai, Jens-Erik. (2016). Big data privacy: The datafication of personal information. *The Information Society*, 32(3).
- Unsworth, K. (2016). The Social construct and big data. *Journal of Information Ethics*, 25(1), 83-97.
  - McNally, M.B. (2016). Response to Unsworth. *Journal of Information Ethics* (25)1, 98-100.

### **Week 8 – Wrap-Up**

- Ferguson, S., Thornley, C. & Gibb, F. (2016). Beyond codes of ethics: How library and information professionals navigate ethical dilemmas in a complex and dynamic information environment. *International Journal of Information Management*, 36(4), 543-556.
- 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

### **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<sup>i</sup>

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:

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Points Possible</b>	<b>Points Earned</b>
Realism of context/background	Grounded description of the institution, protagonists	5	
Definition of conflict	Sophisticated problem/issue presented	10	
Questions	Thoughtful and provocative	10	
Response including references to relevant literature, application of moral reasoning	Insightful analysis that addresses all of the issues presented, supported by thoughtful application of ethical theories and support from readings in the course	10	
Grammar, style, syntax, format, clarity	Flow of writing, clarity, few grammar, spelling, syntax errors	5	
<b>Total</b>		<b>40</b>	



*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](http://ils.unc.edu/courses/2013_fall/inls584_001/584-assign.htm#MajorPaper)

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<sup>i</sup> Lisa A. Ellis, "Beyond a Common Approach: Teaching Students the Ethical Practice of Reference," *The Reference Librarian* 55, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 212–23, doi:10.1080/02763877.2014.911009.